

***The Big Beat: Origins and Development  
of Snare Backbeat and other  
Accompanimental Rhythms in  
Rock'n'Roll***

**Volume I: Chapters**

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the  
requirements of the  
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## **Abstract.**

This thesis focusses on the origins and development of snare backbeat in rock'n'roll. Some other accompanimental rhythms, such as cymbal rhythms, piano and double bass accompaniments, are investigated in order, firstly, to place snare backbeat within an accompanimental context and secondly, to elucidate some stylistic influences informing the development of snare backbeat.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter One investigates references to rock rhythm in musicological, socio-cultural and journalistic accounts. Clarification of terminology and methodology used in the thesis is located at the beginning of Chapter Two. The latter half of Chapter Two details the frequency of occurrence of snare backbeat and other accompanimental rhythms in the recorded output of Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, Bill Haley, Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, the Platters, Elvis Presley, and Little Richard. Subsequent chapters focus on the origins of snare backbeat: Chapter Three investigates the occurrence of snare backbeat in jazz styles in conjunction with the development of the drum kit; Chapter Four details the influence of rhythm and blues on rock'n'roll rhythm; and Chapter Five explores the rhythmic roots of the rock'n'roll backbeat in gospel and country and western musical styles. Conclusions are presented in Chapter Six.

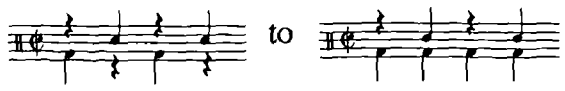
The thesis also contains four appendices. A sample of rock drumming notations are included in Appendix One allowing the reader to observe snare backbeats in their complete context. Appendices Two and Three contain mini-analyses of around 2 500 rock'n'roll and rhythm and blues recordings. Appendix Four focusses on 1940s rhythm and blues produced in Chicago with Judge Riley drumming. The empirical information presented in the latter three appendices informs discussions and conclusions presented in the main body of the thesis.

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## **Preface.**

It is evident from the material covered in the first few pages of Chapter One that published references to rock'n'roll accompanimental rhythm and its stylistic roots are not informed by any extensive empirical evidence. Rather, our received knowledge about such highly common musical structures as snare backbeat is largely based upon commonly held perceptions concerning rock'n'roll's origins and stylistic development. It is quite clear from material presented throughout this thesis that the old canons concerning the roots of rock'n'roll rhythm have been repeated in published accounts without being subject to further analytic inquiry. Although published opinions regarding the origins and development of rock's accompanimental rhythms afford some insight about the ideologies of their authors, it seemed to me that no sensible theoretical constructions could be made without a firm musical-structural basis and empirical evidence. Consequently, the work presented here is mostly of an empirical nature relating to terminology and the identification of musical structures.

In order to determine the extent to which snare backbeat and other accompanimental rhythms occurred in rock'n'roll and its precursory musical styles it was necessary to investigate a vast selection of recorded material. Having decided that basing this study on a small representative selection of recorded material would not entirely solve the problem, I have therefore attempted to cover all of the recorded material by musicians mentioned in this thesis. This has involved repeated listening to literally thousands of recorded works. Considering the size of the material I have been obliged to concentrate on the analytic descriptive level in order to trace the origins and development of snare backbeat and other accompanimental rhythms of rock'n'roll. For this reason, I have chosen to omit from the text large parts of the philosophical/ideological discussion. The latter will be the subject of a future project.

# Chapter One

## 1.1 The Problem.

Since around 1954 people living in Western society have been listening to a type of music that has been listed on popular music charts as “rock and roll” or sometimes just “rock”. Over time, drum-kit rhythms and concomitant accompanimental patterns characteristic of rock have been heard hundreds of times and, consequently, have become familiar units of musical expression to the rock and roll audience. Assuming that average inhabitants of the industrialized world hear an hour of rock related music per day,<sup>1</sup> they will probably hear around 3 000 snare backbeats per day or 1 000 000 backbeats per year.<sup>2</sup> This may appear excessive, but it is a realistic estimate as can be gathered from the frequency of snare backbeats visible in Appendix 1.3. One of the main aims of this thesis is to explain the origins and development of this highly common musical structure.

To gain a better understanding of how drum-kit rhythms function in rock and roll musical structure and how they interface with patterns of behaviour in Western society, we shall explore some insights explicated by several authors representing a cross-section of writing on rock and roll. For convenience, that body of writing with which we are concerned will be divided into three main fields of study: musicological, sociological and journalistic. The differentiations defining these particular fields include consideration of the approach adopted by each author, the readership targeted,

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<sup>1</sup>This conservative estimate is based upon research undertaken by Nemesio Ala, Franco Fabbri et al (1985) concerning the patterns of music consumption in Milan and Reggio Emilia from April to May, 1983.

<sup>2</sup>This has been worked out as follows. An eight bar phrase at 120 beats per minute lasts 16 seconds. Assuming backbeats to occur on every other beat, but discounting drum breaks, fills and rests, there are approximately 12 backbeats in such a 16 second period. There are 3.75 such 16 second phrases in one minute. At 12 backbeats per 16 second phrase there are, therefore, 45 backbeats per minute, 2,700 per hour, and 986,175 per year (365.25 days per year).



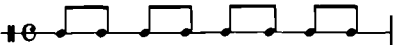
and the nature of the subject matter. Even so, they are differentiations that should not be slavishly applied to that body of writing concerned with rock and roll. Clearly, there are accounts that, for example, lie within the amorphous area between journalistic and sociological fields of inquiry - mostly historical writings that, although targeted for popular consumption, expound arguments, perspectives and insights that reach beyond those indicative of journalistic writing.<sup>3</sup>


## 1.2 Musicological Studies of Rhythmic Organization in Rock and Roll.

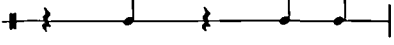
One of the earliest accounts of rhythmic organization in rock and roll is contained in Porter's (1979) investigation of the musical style of the Beatles. Porter includes a preliminary investigation of drum-kit rhythms that serve as a basis for a subsequent discussion of accompanimental rhythmic structure and harmonic characteristics of selected songs from the Beatles' musical repertoire. In his opening chapter, "A Terminology of Rhythm", some attempt is made toward the systematization of particular rhythms as style indicators. Two main rhythmic categories are identified: the "rock rhythm family" and the "jazz rhythm family".<sup>4</sup> Porter (ibid.: 42) argues that the

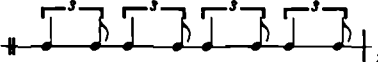
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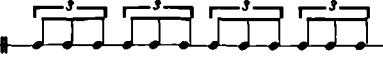
<sup>3</sup>This cross-over is mostly apparent between journalistic and sociological accounts rather than between musicological and either of the other two approaches.

<sup>4</sup>The "straight boogie" figure , the "rock figure"

, and the "early rock'n'roll figure"

 are deemed by Porter (1979: 52-53) to belong to the rock rhythm family. Porter considers such rhythms as distinct from the rhythmic paradigms of the "jazz rhythmic family" (ibid.). Jazz rhythms are defined by Porter (1979: 34-54) as those which subdivide the pulse

in a compound manner in duple meter. "Shuffle" rhythms  and

"Delta Blues figures"  are cited as representative examples of the jazz rhythm family.

rhythms included in both categories find their expression in various rock and roll forms, although it is noted that

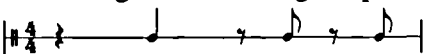
whether or not these early patterns were consciously adopted by later musicians to form the rhythmic bases of the music labelled as “swing” or “rock and roll” or “rock” is a difficult determination to make.

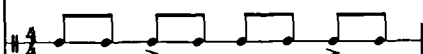
Porter’s subsequent discussion of rhythm in the music of the Beatles is concerned with the whole complex of instruments that characterize the accompaniment (including, for example, guitar and keyboard patterns). In reference to his earlier discussion of rhythmic types in chapter one, accompanimental rhythmic features are sometimes described as “shuffle” or “boogie-woogie” rhythms. Alternately, prominent rhythmic patterns that cannot be discussed according to Porter’s classification of rock and jazz rhythmic types are notated (these notated rhythmic patterns usually comprise a durational period of one bar) and then described. Porter’s description of these rhythms is based on a subjective interpretation of that particular rhythmic pattern’s stylistic connotation. For example, in reference to the Beatles’ *And I Love Her*, Porter states that a duple rock drum pattern is used, against which a syncopated figure is played on the claves.<sup>5</sup> Porter (1979: 223) then concludes that the “total effect is one of a Latin dance with rock pulsations”.

Porter is mostly concerned to elucidate voice-leading characteristics and undertake harmonic analyses of a selected repertoire of songs by the Beatles. Although rhythmic aspects are considered, Porter restricts his study to brief descriptions of those patterns that are generally discernible and prominent in the recording. Implicit in his discussion of accompanimental rhythms is the assumption that the rhythms isolated for analysis function as foreground figures in the recording and that their structural importance is

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<sup>5</sup>Porter is referring to the following composite rhythmic structure:

Claves: 

Drums: 

determined by the frequency of their occurrence. Those rhythmic patterns that are deemed by Porter to be characteristic accompanimental patterns are notated as single, linear rhythmic cells which mostly outline a durational period of one bar of 4/4 time. The notation of drum-kit rhythm events is also reduced to single rhythm patterns without any consideration given to their timbral realization and distribution across the drum-kit. As a consequence, specific reference to drum-kit patterns that occur throughout a song is missing. This means that although Porter's selection of prominent rhythmic paradigms in a given song was sufficient to his general discussion of some characteristic rhythmic patterns in the music of the Beatles, his methodology is not adequate to a detailed investigation of the structure and use of drum-kit rhythmic events and their relationship to other accompanimental patterns that occur throughout a song. Indeed, his recourse to commercially published sheet music as a primary source of song notation severely limits the extent to which drum-kit rhythms and other accompanimental rhythmic patterns can be discussed and analyzed.

Other authors discussing the musical style of the Beatles, however, focus on harmonic, melodic and timbral aspects of selected recordings rather than concentrate on rhythmic aspects. Everett (1985, 1986), for example, adopts a Schenkerian perspective in order to elucidate text painting procedures in the Beatles' *She's Leaving Home*, *Julia*, and *Strawberry Fields Forever*. Other stylistic investigations of the Beatles musical repertoire, including those by Middleton (1972: 167-174, 232-247), Mellers (1973), O'Grady (1983) and Whiteley (1989: 303-386), are also primarily concerned with elucidating harmonic, melodic, timbral and textual aspects of the music. Only cursory reference to drum-kit rhythms is made and drum-kit rhythms are neither notated nor singled out for analysis, either verbally or in notated form. Whiteley, however, does include some discussion of drum-kit rhythms in her analysis of the musical style of other late 1960s rock and roll groups.

Whiteley's investigation of psychedelic coding in progressive rock includes reference to a wide sample of late 1960s rock and roll. However, not all of the recorded output of those artists mentioned in her study is subject to detailed discussion or musical analyses. Stylistic conclusions are mostly based upon evidence derived from analysis and discussion of a selected repertoire of four groups who were deemed by Whiteley to be representative of late 1960s progressive rock and roll style. Aside from the Beatles, selected tracks from the recorded repertoire of Cream, The Jimi Hendrix Experience and Pink Floyd form a primary focus. Complete notations of selected tracks by these artists do not appear in Whiteley's study. Rather, only short excerpts from particular songs are notated and subsequently discussed. Most notations omit drum-kit rhythms, while others simply present a single line of rhythm that represents the combined rhythmic activity of the drum kit.<sup>6</sup> The comparative lack of drum-kit notations against other items of musical code reflects Whiteley's overt concern with melodic, harmonic, timbral and textual elements as appropriate communicative channels through which psychedelic coding may occur. Indeed, only three lengthy notations include some consideration of the timbral realization of drum-kit rhythmic events.<sup>7</sup> In order to understand the methodological problems of analyzing rock rhythms, I have selected *Deserted Cities of the Heart*<sup>8</sup> as a representative example of Whiteley's work in this area.

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<sup>6</sup>See, for example, Whiteley, 1989: 170, 178, 183, 212, and 265.

<sup>7</sup>See Whiteley, 1989: 194-195, 222-223, 264.

<sup>8</sup>From Cream (1968) *Wheels of Fire*, Polygram.

Figure 1.1 Cream *Deserted Cities of the Heart*. Drumming notation, bars 63-70 (Whiteley, 1989: 194-5)

Guitar solo  
Drums 2?

Drums 1

Figure 1.2 Cream *Deserted Cities of the Heart*. Drumming notation, bars 63-70.

Whiteley's notation of *Deserted Cities of the Heart* includes the lead and bass guitar lines, the synthesizer line and a notation of those percussive events executed on the ride cymbal, closed hi-hat and bass drum (ibid.: 194-195). Her notation of the drum-kit based rhythmic events, however, is inaccurate. Specifically, the ride cymbal, hi-hat and bass drum parts<sup>9</sup> are rhythmically incorrect and two crash cymbals are used on the recording rather than the ride cymbal and hi-hat that are detailed in her notation (see, for example, bars 63-70 of Whiteley's notation, Figure 1.1, and my notation of drumming in such bars, Figure 1.2). Further, some drum-kit hardware has not been considered. For instance, the snare drum pattern is not included in her notation or her subsequent discussion of rhythmic characteristics even though the snare drum is clearly audible in the recording. These, along with the previously mentioned notational inaccuracies, contribute to some subsequent contentious musical observations. For example,

The interplay of the three musicians in the break ... exhibits both a sensitive awareness of the other's musical line, while emphasizing the individualistic potential of each instrument through a physical feeling for sound and musical gesture. Baker, for example, plays basically on the beat, but reverses the usual order of the hi-hat and ride cymbal beats and omits the tom-tom to effect a heavy-rock sound which complements the metallic vibrancy of Clapton's solo ... (ibid.: 196).

Whiteley's observation concerning the use of cymbal and hi-hat is erroneous given that such percussive events do not occur in the recording. Also, her conclusion that a "sensitive awareness of the other's musical line" is achieved in the guitar break is based upon consideration of incorrectly notated musical evidence. It is worth considering this technical point of notation in some detail because it illustrates basic problems in interpreting musical structures. Structures must be notated accurately if any point is to be made about them at all. It is unclear, for example, exactly what is meant by "sensitive awareness". Is Whiteley referring to musical ensemble? If this is the case, what constitutes a "sensitive awareness" in terms of ensemble playing? Does a

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<sup>9</sup>The incorrect bass drum notation may have resulted from Whiteley hearing (what could be) a quaver synthesizer part (or perhaps an overdubbed bass drum tom-tom?) as a bass drum pattern. See my notation of Cream's *Deserted Cities of the Heart*, Appendix 1.3.

“sensitive awareness” relate to the existence of particular musical gestures within the total fabric of the improvisation that derive from careful listening among the performers and subsequent appropriate intuitive musical responses? Or, conversely, does it infer a lack of musical response on behalf of the drummer and bass player that, consequently, allows Clapton complete improvisational flexibility during his guitar solo? It is unclear what is meant by “playing on the beat” because the drum-kit consists of many items of percussive hardware and, as a result, much rock and roll drumming is characterized by a composite rhythmic structure including rhythmic patterns that fall both on and off the underlying pulse of the music. In what context, then, can a drummer be considered to be playing “basically on the beat”? In such a phrase it is necessary to be clear about which drum-kit rhythmic events need to be present to constitute a perception of “playing on the beat”. Is Whiteley’s observation based on the pedantic crotchet rhythms executed on crash cymbal or do bass drum executions feature in her listening? Further, what is the “usual order of the hi-hat and ride cymbal beat” and by what stylistic criteria can it be considered to be “usual”? And how does the lack of tom-tom activity effect a heavy rock sound? Is the exclusion of tom-tom activity in rock and roll drumming prerequisite to the perception of a heavy rock sound? Such lack of clarity raises the issue of how musical events can create different perceptions of rhythm in rock and roll. In order to understand how problems of drum kit rhythmic perception might arise in discussions of rock and roll, let us review other accounts of rock rhythms.

Although some formalist analyses of harmonic, melodic and structural aspects of selected progressive rock recordings was undertaken by Whiteley, drum-kit patterns and other accompanimental rhythms were mostly neglected in terms of specific analytical inquiry and in reference to aspects of psychedelic coding. Hoffman (1983), on the other hand, includes some formalist discussion of drum-kit patterns and other accompanimental rhythms to support his concept of “propulsion” in rock and roll. His

discussion of rhythmic propulsion in rock and roll is framed by two precepts. Firstly, propulsion is basically rhythmic movement that is not goal-directed and, secondly, propulsion has as its root rock and roll's essentially dance-based function (ibid.: 165). Hoffman is not suggesting, however, that all rock and roll is meant to be danced to. As he notes in the conclusion to his study,

The idiom features several practices based on repetitions, such as the riff-based song ... or the repetition of material at the end of a song, with or without a fadeout. Whether or not any particular song is ever danced to, then, procedures of this nature, emphasizing the purely kinetic aspects of the music, point to dancing and physical movement as a foundation of rock and roll's aesthetic (Hoffman, 1983: 220).

Hoffman (1983: 166-168) suggests that propulsion manifests itself as a pure linear extension of repeated rhythmic cells (Hoffman's "continuously propulsive rhythms" that are inherent in its dance function) that operate within the rhythmic fabric of rock and roll provided by the rhythm section. The precise quality of the propulsion provided by the rhythm section involves three key concepts: beat, velocity, and groove (ibid.: 168).

Hoffman locates "beat" within the interplay of rhythm patterns that figure in a rock and roll accompaniment and notes that the accented backbeat<sup>10</sup> is the most ubiquitous of these rhythm patterns. The backbeat is usually delivered by the snare drum while accents on the first and third "beats" of a 4/4 bar are supplied by the bass drum. As Hoffman (ibid.: 168) notes, this "two-beat" rhythmic structure stands as "the basis of rock and roll rhythm". "Velocity" is described in terms of tempo and the degree of "rapid forward thrust" that is exerted on a continuous "beat" (ibid.:181-183). Apart from leaving the reader totally in the dark about the musical-structural constituents of "rapid forward thrust", Hoffman's subsequent discussion of velocity is brief and is mostly concerned with noting, through example, the general proclivity of rock and roll

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<sup>10</sup>The "accented backbeat" is described by Hoffman (1983: 168) as an "emphasis on the second and fourth beats of a nominal 4/4 measure".



towards fast tempi. Although the concept of velocity is not fully explicated by Hoffman, the degree of forward propulsion experienced by a listener can be considered to depend upon the “beat” (i.e. rhythm patterns).

Hoffman’s (1983: 183) explanation of “groove” implies a degree of subjectivity since it involves the

sensation of comfort (that) arises from the interaction of several different rhythmic properties, including the particular beat pattern employed, the specific manner in which it is articulated among the various elements of the rhythm section...and the speed at which it operates.

Hoffman subsequently discusses “groove” within the context of the recording process where, through a process of trial and error, an appropriate “groove” is created and deemed appropriate by the musicians and record producers involved in the recording process. Inherent in Hoffman’s descriptions of his three concepts - “beat”, “velocity” and “groove” - is the notion of a hierarchy proceeding from musical-structural concerns, that is, from the song’s “beat”, to more phenomenological parameters inherent in his concepts of “velocity” and “groove”. However, the model is not fully explicated, leaving the concepts of “groove” and “beat” to be typified by an amorphous differentiation. It is only in his conclusion that some structurally based evidence is suggested. This evidence appears to concern such musical aspects as rhythmic anticipation and retardation:

The propulsive character of rock and roll ... builds rhythm from continuously repeating rhythmic cells, which are considered in terms of properties such as “beat” or “groove”. And because the constancy and continuity of the beat is generally a given, points of rhythmic interest in rock and roll typically include moments where a musician stretches, strains against, or otherwise “plays with” the beat (Hoffman, 1983: 219).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>That a perception of “groove” has its basis in the degree of rhythmic precision and ensemble among musicians in a live or recorded context appears to have some consensus agreement among rock critics and scholars. With particular reference to drumming, for example, James Morton (n.d.: 6) states that the word “groove” suggests a certain rhythmic precision in group playing, not unlike the word “tight” or the phrase “in the pocket”. From a drummer’s perspective, groove can also indicate a particular rhythmic motif, which, when played repeatedly, with precision, takes on a certain musical flow and pulse of its own.

Van Dyck (1982: 80-81) also discusses groove within a context of rhythmic precision and ensemble:

As previously indicated, Hoffman suggests that propulsion primarily emanates from the accented backbeat, which is delivered by the snare drum. His subsequent discussion of propulsion in relation to the accented backbeat, however, lacks any intuitive or phenomenological dimension. Rather, the accented backbeat is discussed purely in terms of its structural characteristics and its relationship to the rhythms of its concomitant patterns provided by the drum-kit. In particular, the bass drum is considered by Hoffman to be fundamental, since it provides stresses on the “natural” accents of a 4/4 bar, enabling the backbeats to be perceived as

additional accents, supplemental points of emphasis that function as powerful preparations to the natural stresses of the four-beat rhythm, providing a kinetically charged cadence as a rhythmic foundation (ibid.: 169).

Additional to this rock and roll drum-kit rhythmic paradigm are quaver rhythms that are provided by either a hi-hat or cymbal. The following polyphonic rhythmic structure results:

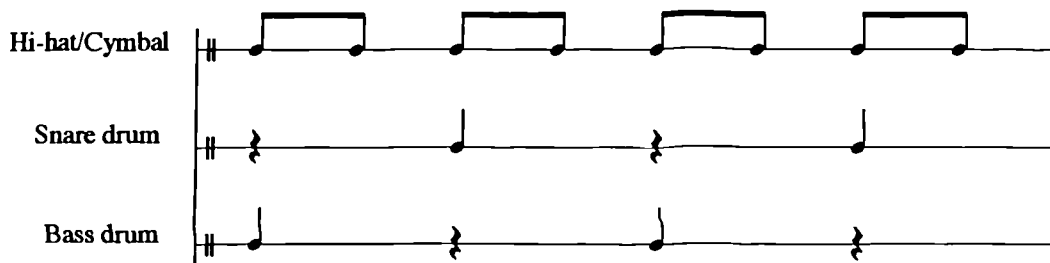


Figure 1.3 Archetypal rock beat (Hoffman, 1983: 170).

Hoffman considers that the quaver rhythms provided by either the cymbal or hi-hat

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... anyone who grew up playing rhythm and blues with horn bands is aware that the drummer can successfully occupy a fluctuating spot (as the “feel” player) within the confines of the rhythm section, and end up playing what is termed, “lead drums”. In this type of situation, once a groove is established, all of the instruments in the rhythm section, except the drummer, maintain their position in a constant manner. They fill the role of the *time* player. The drummer, on the other hand, creates and controls the excitement and tension throughout the song by jumping from the back of the beat, to the middle or the front, and back again, depending on the need of that particular section of music. When it is done in the right place at the right time, and the rest of the rhythm section cooperates by staying put, this technique sounds great.

mask the silences that result from alternate executions between the snare and bass drum. Further, cymbal or hi-hat quaver rhythms, according to Hoffman (ibid.: 170) provide “an insistent, mechanical drive, thus increasing the beat’s propulsive energy”. Precisely how and why these additional rhythms contribute to the mechanical drive and propulsion of an accented backbeat configuration is not detailed. The trouble is that while some listeners may associate additional quaver cymbal rhythms with propulsion, it could be argued that an increase in rhythmic density provided by additional quaver executions could equally be perceived in terms of “invigoration” or alternately “kinetic retardation” rather than propulsion. In other words, Hoffman’s intuition required some empirical evidence of intersubjective consistency to become a valid statement.

The particular combination of bass drum, snare drum and hi-hat or cymbal quaver executions described above represents, for Hoffman, an “archetypical rock beat” (ibid.: 174). Hoffman’s subsequent discussion of drum-kit rhythms focuses on some common permutations of this drum-kit based rhythmic paradigm. Subdivisions and combinations of rhythmic patterns that occur more or less regularly in the bass drum are detailed, such as quaver anacruses to beats one or three. Some typical examples of these rhythmic permutations are presented, including notations from the repertoire of such artists as Tom Petty, Joy Division, Bruce Springsteen and Cheap Trick. Aside from rhythmic transformations of particular drum-kit rhythmic events contained in the archetypical rock beat, Hoffman also identifies two other “beats” that are frequently used in rock and roll. Firstly, there is the “triple beat” (ibid.: 174-176), which can be construed as a triplet division of 4/4 meter or quaver motion in 12/8 meter (the triple beat is mostly discussed in reference to the rhythm of melodic and harmonic accompanimental patterns rather than specifically relating to drum-kit patterns). Secondly, the “Bo Diddley beat” (ibid.: 177-181), described by Hoffman (ibid.: 177) as

not so much a specific “beat” or rhythmic pattern as it is a principle of rhythmic

arrangement that stresses the first and last beat of a 4/4 measure, filling the space between with some sort of offbeat accentuation.

The rhythms notated in Figure 1.4 are considered by Hoffman as paradigmatic of a Bo Diddley beat, whether they occur as percussion or as other accompanimental patterns.<sup>12</sup>

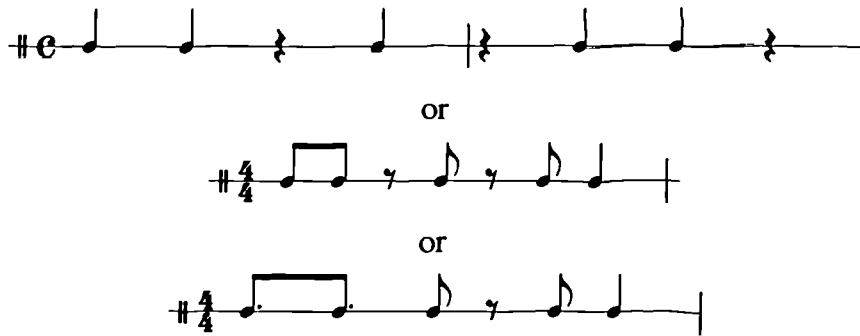
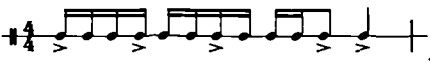


Figure 1.4 Bo Diddley beat (Hoffman, 1983: 177-8).

There is clearly no problem with Hoffman's notation of the Bo Diddley paradigm. However, there are difficulties with its nomenclature and interpretation. For example, similar rhythms are registered by Wilson (1974) and Charlton (1990) but are referred to as a "polymetrical composite rhythm" (Wilson, 1974: 12) and a "rumba clave rhythm" (Charlton, 1990: 92).<sup>13</sup> It is probable that the *problem of nomenclature and* interpretation derive from diverging views of its history. Hoffman notes that the Bo

<sup>12</sup>In reference to Bo Diddley's *Bo Diddley*, it is the rhythm guitar line rather than the drums that provides a Bo Diddley beat. In contrast to Hoffman's notation (see Figure 1.4), the drumming pattern is mostly based upon a continuous stream of semiquaver executions, some of which are accented. It is

the accented semiquavers that profile a Bo Diddley beat: . At times, the rhythm guitar strumming pattern also tends toward this rhythmic proclivity. This rhythmic tendency is also apparent in other recordings by Bo Diddley in which a Bo Diddley beat can be clearly discerned, such as *Hush Your Mouth*, *Pretty Thing* and, as Hoffman notes (ibid.), *Mona*. The drumming pattern in these recordings is based on a variation of the rhythm guitar based Bo Diddley beat and is mostly played on tom-toms.

<sup>13</sup>Peculiar to all the examples mentioned by Hoffman (ibid.: 177-181) - Bo Diddley's *Bo Diddley*, Buddy Holly's *Not Fade Away*, The Band's *Don't Do It* and Bruce Springsteen's *She's the One* - and Wilson - James Brown's *Superbad* - and Charlton (1990: 92) - Smokey Robinson and the Miracles' *Mickey's Monkey* - is the rhythmic proclivity that emphasizes the fourth beat of a 4/4 bar and the use of syncopated rhythmic structures that precede the sounding of the fourth beat.

Diddley beat “can be traced well back into the black folk tradition” (1983: 177) but no supporting historical evidence is presented to substantiate his claim. One historical insight provided by Wilson (1974: 12) is that this rhythmic pattern results from the “refinement of the Afro-American adaptation of West African polymetric rhythmic practice” that he details earlier in his study in reference to the polymetric rhythms that characterize much American ragtime.<sup>14</sup> Charlton (1990) locates a rhythmic pattern that is similar to the Bo Diddley beat as explicated by Hoffman in Smokey Robinson and the Miracles’ *Mickey’s Monkey*. However, she notates and subsequently describes this two-bar rhythmic pattern as a “rumba claves beat” (1990: 92) even though the rhythmic profile of this pattern is very similar to the Bo Diddley paradigm explicated by Hoffmann.<sup>15</sup> One implication resulting from such diverging views of a Bo Diddley rhythm is that we need to have not only correct notation but nomenclature based on historical interpretation and stylistic insight.

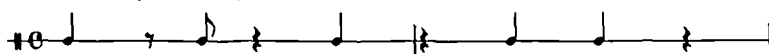
Perhaps the most common tendency in musical discussion of rock rhythms is the rather cursory manner in which they are treated. This is, as we shall see, quite surprising given that the most popular characterizations of rock and roll make reference to the music’s “beat” or “rhythm”. For example, Moore (1993), in comparison to Hoffman, has a far more restricted view of the function of drum-kit structures. Moore devotes around three pages of one hundred and eighty seven to the description and function of the drum-kit in rock and roll. He states that

it has always been the function of the (drum-)kit to provide a basic pattern of stresses that underpin, and sometimes counterpoint, that of the pitched instruments (Moore, 1993: 35).

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<sup>14</sup>See Keil and Feld (1994: 104-6) for further discussion of the history of the Bo Diddley beat.

<sup>15</sup>Charlton (1990: 92) notates the “rumba claves beat” as:



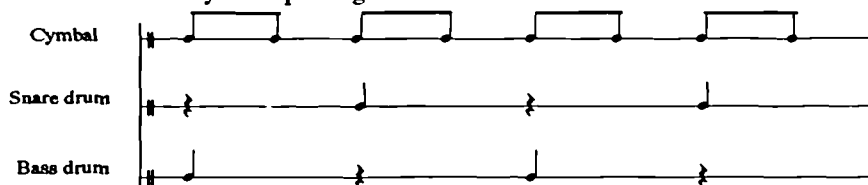
Moore (1993: 35) subsequently posits that snare executions on “beats two and four”, a cymbal sounding even quavers (“twice per beat”) and the bass drum playing on “beats one and three” is fundamental technique for a rock drummer, and subsequently refers to this drumming pattern as a “standard rock beat” (ibid.: 36).<sup>16</sup> Supporting evidence for this hypothesis is not forthcoming, neither is any consideration of secondary signification<sup>17</sup> associated with drum-kit rhythmic structures to be found in his discussion, this leading to the manifestly incomplete conclusion that tempo setting remains the drum-kit’s most important function (ibid.).

While not dealing exclusively with drum-kit rhythms, other authors have discussed the whole complex of accompanimental and vocal rhythmic patterns. Brackett (1991), for example, includes some limited discussion of formalist and phenomenological aspects of polymeric accompanimental rhythmic patterns in his analysis of James Brown’s *Superbad* (1991: 124-130). Secondary signification resulting from the rhythmic interplay among accompanimental instruments and the *vocal line is implied in* Brackett’s discussion, although it is not subject to any extensive analysis:

within this overall grouping of 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 2, the “gimme” on the second beat is ... displaced a sixteenth beat; this creates a further sense of disorientation, obscuring the relationship between the voice and the underlying

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<sup>16</sup>Like Hoffman, Moore is propounding the following composite rhythmic structure as a basic rock and roll drum-kit rhythmic paradigm:



Similarly, Savage (1989: 104) considers this beat as basic to rock and underlines the importance of the backbeat in his statement that “contemporary drum beats reflect a wide diversity of influences in Western popular music. But what ties all these different threads together is the overriding force of the ever-present backbeat” (ibid.: 100).

<sup>17</sup>Throughout this study, Middleton's term “secondary signification” will refer to those secondary meanings or connotations that arise from primary signifiers. See Middleton, 1990: 232-239.

pulse .... Many of the cross-accentual patterns are created by superimposing groups of three quarter, eighth and sixteenth notes over the nominally prevailing duple meter, a procedure which may be partially responsible for the incredible rhythmic propulsion of this music (ibid.: 129-130).

Why and how these cross rhythms create disorientation and rhythmic propulsion is not clear in Brackett's analysis. Similar observations can be made about Pethal's (1988) analysis of the works of Keith Emerson, which includes a consideration of rhythmic and affective aspects, although drum parts are not notated or singled out for particular discussion:

*Eruption* also contains the use of cross-rhythm, and measures 86-88, even though written in 4/4, strongly imply 3/8, impelling the music forward (Pethal, 1988: 39-40).

Her subsequent musical example, which details this metrical dichotomy, is restricted to a notation of the keyboard performance. And, in reference to Emerson, Lake and Palmer's *Abaddon's Bolero* Pethal (1988: 58-59) notes that

... the bass guitar begins doubling the drum in the bolero rhythm, giving a feeling of urgent forward motion not felt in the previous thematic statements.

Is Pethal implying that, within the context of this recording, a thickening of the timbral profile of the bolero rhythm is fundamental to an increased perception of forward motion? Or does the combination of bass and drum parts and the resultant change in contrapuntal texture represent a climax in the recording and is felt, by Pethal (and other listeners?), in terms of forward motion?

Admittedly, the focus of Pethal's study concerns the development of Keith Emerson's musical style with particular reference to his keyboard playing and compositional and improvisational thought. As such, perhaps it was not essential for bass and drum performance to be included in her study. Nonetheless, given the prominence of drum-kit rhythms in the musical style of Emerson's rock trio, Emerson, Lake and Palmer, the lack of attention given to drumming is disappointing. Emerson's re-arrangements of certain Western art music classics for Emerson, Lake and Palmer, such as

Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition,<sup>18</sup> feature drums on many tracks. On some tracks drums occupy a foreground position within the stereophonic mix and often coincide with rhythmic accents that occur in the keyboard part.<sup>19</sup> Other tracks from Pictures at an Exhibition include repetitive drum patterns that create rhythmic counterpoint with the main melody. In such musical arrangements, the drumming and rock rhythms in general are a significant departure from the rhythms of their original classical source. An analysis of selected drum patterns and accompanimental rhythmic structures in these particular re-arrangements, therefore, could have been appropriate in terms of detailing the nature of the rhythmic counterpoint that results from a combination of the original music material with new (improvised?) drum-kit based rock and roll rhythms. In other words, the obvious difference between "original" and rock versions - the use of drums - is not discussed at all.

Drum-kit based rhythms are also absent from Bradby and Torode's (1984: 183-205) analysis of Buddy Holly's *Peggy Sue*. Rather, consideration of rhythmic structures in *Peggy Sue* is mostly confined to the vocal melody and some instrumental rhythms that derive from the rhythms of the vocal melody. The relationship between vocal rhythms and the meaning of the text also forms a primary focus of the study. In particular, the principle of expectation/tension and release afforded by the syncopated and non-syncopated rhythmic transformations of particular words in *Peggy Sue* contributes

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<sup>18</sup>Emerson, Lake and Palmer Pictures at an Exhibition, Atlantic compact disc: 781 521-2, 1972.

<sup>19</sup>For example, *The Gnome* is characterized by snare executions that coincide with the rhythm of Emerson's introductory melody. Later in the piece, the bass drum accents points of harmonic change. The second *Promenade* is also characterized by drumming patterns. Here the drums accentuate the rhythmic movement of the melody.



to the analysis of meaning carried in the text and vocal melody.<sup>20</sup> Although the analysis of rhythms accompanying such verbal modifications is the major focus of the study, Bradby and Torode consider that the meaning conveyed through the lyrics and their peculiar rhythmic structures is also reflected in particular instrumental rhythms.<sup>21</sup>

Bradby and Torode's analysis provides a useful insight into the nature of the vocal rhythmic structures contained in *Peggy Sue* and their semiotic based segmentation of vocal rhythmic structures and subsequent syntagmatic interpretation of these structures is appropriate to the analysis of the repetitive motives that characterize the recording. The subsequent analysis of meaning in *Peggy Sue* based on textual and rhythmic evidence is also compelling but the methodology employed in the analysis of *Peggy Sue* may not be appropriate to the analysis of other types of rock and roll. It would be erroneous to assume, for example, that all accompanimental rhythmic structures in rock and roll originate from various vocal rhythms and, in turn, that these reinforce the meaning generated by the interaction between vocal rhythms and text. Indeed, this notion does not take into account the melodic/accompaniment dichotomy that characterizes much rock and roll or the fact that vocal rhythms may be generated from particular accompanimental rhythmic structures. Further, the possibility that traditional musical reflexes can contribute to the (albeit unconscious) adoption by performers of rhythmic structures located in earlier rock'n'roll compositions needs to be considered.

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<sup>20</sup>In this respect, Bradby and Torode diverge from the view that the rhythmic definition of the vocal melody merely reinforces the dance based rhythmic structures of rock and roll. In particular, the authors are opposed to Laing's view concerning the function of the vocal melody in rock and roll (see Bradby and Torode, 1984: 184).

<sup>21</sup>For instance, Bradby and Torode note that the solo guitar chorus copies the rhythms that exist in the vocal melodic material. In this way, the guitar solo is considered by the authors to consist of an imaginary verbal level which "connects the (guitar) rhythms to the words of the verses before and after it" (ibid.: 201). According to Bradby and Torode, therefore, verbal messages may be revealed in various instrumental rhythms comprising *Peggy Sue*.

During the course of trying to locate appropriate musicological material for discussion, I was struck by two points. In short, existing musicological literature about rock and roll is characterized by a dearth of reference to and systematic study of drum-kit rhythms and accompanimental rhythmic patterns. Moreover, the few references that were located remain essentially formalist in approach.<sup>22</sup> Secondary signification is only vaguely inferred, if at all. Although the lack of research concerning drum-kit rhythms is disappointing, it is perfectly understandable given the situation that the musicological study of rock and roll is only a fairly recent phenomenon. As such, analytical methodology appropriate to the musicological study of rock and roll is at a very early stage of development. However, this does not imply that there is a dearth of words relating to the genre, as a search of rock magazines and sociological studies will reveal.

### **1.3 Sociological Accounts Concerning Rhythmic Organization in Rock and Roll.**

Frith and Goodwin (1990: 1) note that

the sociology of pop and rock is rooted in two nonmusical concerns: the meaning of “mass culture” and the empirical study of youth (and delinquency).

This distinction between the more theoretical “meaning of mass culture” and empirical approaches affords a convenient perspective for a survey of that body of work with which we are concerned. We will first examine some texts of the cultural/theoretical type relating to our field of enquiry and thereafter discuss the dearth of empirical approaches.

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<sup>22</sup>Formalist analysis seeks to elucidate the structure of a musical work and the relationships between its constituent elements. Paramusical aspects, including affective dimensions and social or cultural background, are generally not considered.

Cultural/theoretical works on rock music abound. However, from a score of well-known scholarly books and articles on rock and roll, very few make specific reference to something as central to the rock experience as drum-kit patterns, drumming or the rhythmic structure of rock and roll. The following quotes are a representative collection and reflect the diversity of approaches within this field. Some of these share certain common traits which should become clear from the following quotations.

In reference to rock and roll drumming patterns, Laing (1985: 61) considers that the accented backbeat

draw(s) the listener into the music to supply the missing first and third beats either mentally or physically, through hand-clapping, nodding or dancing.<sup>23</sup>

Bradley (1992: 114-116) notes a relationship between rock and roll beat and physical movement when he states that the “key to understanding beat is *dancing*” and suggests that some modes of dancing may result in uninhibitedness or a shared sense of communality among its participants. Wicke (1991: 68) also explores the relationship between rock’n’roll rhythm and a type of secondary signification that results in dance:

In sensuous identification with the music through bodily movement in dance the structures of the songs were dissolved into patterns and images of movement. It was not their meaning, their content, that was “read” but their movement; they were not merely heard but rather physically deciphered. And it was exactly this which formed the basis for the construction of a second, symbolic, system of meaning which, without being obvious in the songs and without being fixed in meaning by the lyrics and music, is nevertheless not independent of them. Teenagers stripped rock’n’roll songs of their concrete determinacy of meaning by changing them into patterns of movement while they were dancing.

These three quotes all posit a relationship between rock and roll and physical movement. Laing’s suggestion that the accented backbeat is central to the listener’s

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<sup>23</sup>Similarly, Friedlander (1996: 283) relates physical movement of rock listeners to the backbeat:

With roots from gospel through R & B to classic rock, the backbeat (played most often on the snare drum), provided the counterpoint ROLL to the top-of-the-measure ROCK of the bass and other instruments. It was this beat that excited teenage bodies to move uncontrollably and threaten the moral sensibilities of parents.

physical response reflects a greater concern with rhythmic specificity in comparison to the other quotes. However, his statement is based upon two unsupported assumptions. Firstly, Laing considers that within the whole complex of rhythmic structures that may characterize a rock and roll song, it is specifically the accented backbeat to which the listeners respond. Secondly, his description of the particular response that is initiated by the accented backbeat is not supported by any empirical evidence. Laing's notion that listeners supply the "missing first and third beats" presumably derives from his own experience of rock and roll culture. The possibility that listeners may respond to the accented backbeat itself, and therefore, move to the second and fourth beats rather than to the first and third does not appear to have been considered.

Bradley's notion of "beat" is not explicated in his text. This is problematic given that "beat" is often a misused term. "Beat" may simply refer to pulse, or the term may imply the relationship and rhythmic interplay of instruments that comprise an accompaniment. Alternately, perhaps Bradley is referring to particular rhythms characteristic of certain rock and roll styles. If this is the case, those rhythms or the rock and roll style to which he is referring need to be discussed in greater detail. Clearly, some rock and roll rhythms and styles are more conducive to dancing than others.

Wicke's reference to "structure" and his subsequent discussion of movement implies that he is referring to the rhythmic organization of rock and roll. However, his concept of "structure" is not explicated nor is the manner in which "structure" may be physically deciphered by the rock and roll audience. Further, his theory is not supported by any empirical evidence.

The lack of empirical sociological evidence and the terminological vagueness that characterizes the above passages about rock and roll is not only peculiar to that type of

music but is also symptomatic of sociological accounts of popular music in general.

Lull (1992: 29-30), for example, states that

Music excites the body to automatic movement, an exhilaration that defeats boredom and inspires insight .... Music gives the body control over itself, granting personal freedom and revealing sexual potential. When Madonna says "You can dance", she *truly* empowers her fans - especially males who are more likely than females to need permission to free their bodies on the dance floor.

Of course, it is erroneous to assume that all musical styles excite the body to automatic movement. Clearly, some musical styles are more conducive to dancing and movement than others. The remaining portion of the quote is subjective speculation unsubstantiated by any empirical evidence concerning possible relationships between Madonna, gender and "empowerment" and clearly sexist in its orientation towards female/male response to the music of Madonna. Needless to say, the quote makes no reference to any musical structure that conveys any of the affects that Lull posits resulting from the music.

Within other sociological accounts of rock and roll, references to "rhythm" or "beat" are cursory:

To find out how rock functions, it is necessary to explore effects that are not necessarily signifying, that do not necessarily involve the transmission, production, structuration, or even deconstruction of meaning. Rock and roll is corporeal and "invasive". For example, without the mediation of meaning, the sheer volume and repetitive rhythms of rock and roll produce a real material pleasure for its fans (at many live concerts, the vibration actually might be compared to the use of a vibrator, often focused on the genital organs) and restructure familial relations (by producing immediate outrage and rejection from its nonfans, e.g., parents) (Grossberg, 1990: 113).

Grossberg's colourful comparison of rock's repetitive rhythms to the movements of a vibrator is problematic. Perhaps Grossberg is attempting an analogy between repetitive rock rhythms and those that may characterize certain phases of the sexual act.<sup>24</sup> If so,

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<sup>24</sup>Other accounts were located that also expound a relationship between rock and roll and sex. For example, Richard Dyer notes that

Rock's eroticism is thrusting, grinding - it is not the whole body, but phallic. Hence it takes from black music the insistent beat... (Dyer, 1990: 414).

Not only is Dyer's generalization subjective and unsubstantiated by any supporting evidence, his reference to black music may be considered to be a type of inverted racism. Also, writing in 1975,

similar “vibrator” associations ought to occur in connection with any other “sheer volume and repetitive rhythms”. Presuming that such volume and rhythm features loud, regularly articulated beats in the form of strong bass thuds, sharp crashes and other percussive sounds, the “vibrator” effect should logically arise when walking next to the bass drum and cymbals in a marching band or when standing at the assembly line in a packaging factory, or when listening to the final scene of Berlioz’ The Damnation of Faust. Since it is unlikely that Grossberg or other rockologists would associate marches, factories or Berlioz with sex, there is an obvious interpretative incongruity here that raises an important problem. Grossberg assumes that his readers and the rock and roll audience to which he refers have either experienced or can imagine what a vibrator feels like. More importantly, he tacitly assumes a high degree of intersubjective consistency among his readers as regards their response to the music.

A comparatively long one chapter (twelve page) discussion of “rock and its beat” is offered by Lawhead (1987: 49-60). Lawhead posits the notion that “rock has a strong, compelling beat” and therefore “it is very dangerous since it owes its beginnings to African demon worship and may itself be demon inspired” (ibid.: 50). He subsequently discusses the validity of this notion in reference to the nature of rock and roll’s “evil beat”:

The “evil” beat in question is the notorious *syncopated* beat, also called a backbeat.... Syncopation is merely the accenting of a beat between the regular beats of the rhythm. You might call it misplacing the beat. It works like this: if the regular beat goes 1-2-3-4, syncopating it might make it go 1 - and - 2 - and - 3 - and - 4. Say it to yourself emphasizing the “and”, and you will get some idea of what is happening (ibid.: 54).

Lawhead has misunderstood the concept of syncopation as it relates to the rock and roll backbeat. Rather than featuring accents on the “misplaced beats” of a 4/4 pulse

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Charles Hamm noted a relationship between *Rock Around the Clock* and sex:

There is no romantic, sentimentalized love in this music. It is about sex. The verb “to rock” had clear and widely understood sexual connotations in black music. If a white teenager didn’t know this, the music itself, with its pounding, pulsing, persistent rhythmic drive, made it clear (Hamm, 1975: 147).

(Lawhead's "and"), the term "backbeat", when used in reference to rock and roll, generally refers to an emphasis on pulses two or four of a 4/4 bar, the so-called "weak" beats of a 4/4 bar. Lawhead's terminological error is subsequently used as a basis for some misinformed and unsupported statements concerning the rhythm of rock and roll and rhythmic perception in general:

All musical rhythm is based on the idea of anticipation. As the music unfolds, the listener's mind reviews the patterns of beats that make up the rhythm, and projects or anticipates the beats to follow. When the anticipated beat follows as expected, the listener is satisfied. Syncopation breaks up this process. The accented beat is different from what is anticipated. This is what makes rock feel jerky or impulsive to those unaccustomed to its eccentricities (Lawhead, 1987: 55).

Lawhead's statement that "all musical rhythm is based on the idea of anticipation" is unsupported by any theoretical or analytical evidence. Clearly, its application to particular Western art music styles would be contentious. For example, his intuitive notion concerning the cognitive mapping by listeners of previously heard rhythmic structures disregards the role that voice leading, harmonic rhythm, textual and structural aspects of the music can play in the perception of rhythm. The application of "anticipation" to rock and roll rhythmic structure is also problematic. Precisely what is it within the composite rhythmic structure of rock and roll that is anticipated? Is Lawhead referring specifically to the accented backbeat? If so, then the repetitive nature of the accented backbeat in much rock and roll rhythm needs to be considered. If rock and roll rhythm contains syncopation, as Lawhead suggests, then how is it that the syncopated beat (the accented backbeat?) is different from that which is anticipated? Within the context of a rock and roll song dominated by repeated "syncopation", surely a syncopated rhythm is precisely what the listener will anticipate.

Other sociological accounts resemble literary criticism and present value judgements without any recourse to musical evidence or description. For example, in reference to the drumming style of Ginger Baker, drummer with Cream, Carlin (1988: 96) states that

Baker was an energetic drummer, who went beyond the four-square rhythms and predictable patterns of ordinary rock.

Implicit in Carlin's description are many assumptions which raise some important musicological questions. What exactly is meant by "ordinary rock"? What are "four-square rhythms" and why are some rhythmic patterns "predictable"? Is "ordinary rock" characterized by "four-square rhythms and predictable patterns"? Carlin's insight is purely subjective and not based upon any comparative analyses of other rock and roll drumming. His notion that Ginger Baker's drumming is innovative is a personal judgement and one that may not be generally accepted. Meltzer's (1970: 180) opinion of Ginger Baker's drumming technique, for example, is in clear contradiction to that of Carlin's:

Ginger the great at the Fillmore with a maximally extended minimum drum solo, devoid of even the exhibitionistic cliches of a Gene Krupa except the fact of exhibition itself, sorting out one fallible gimmick after another, emerging with the most minimal coverups for and changes in mere periodic repetition as grounds for rhythmicity, and once even doing two (!) things at once (high hat regularity with his foot or could it perhaps be one of his hands, wow gee that would mean so much slightly more wow !), and ending up so sweaty that it's a pity that that could have no sound implications, making even more an historical claim-to-fame than an at-the-moment personal experiential claim-to-fame.

Which account can be taken to be an accurate appraisal of Baker's drumming? Carlin presents us with a value judgement of Baker's drumming, but we are unaware of the criteria that form the basis of his judgement. The quote reads as a piece of literary criticism rather than a musical critique. Since Meltzer has some knowledge of drumming technique,<sup>25</sup> it may be that, from a musical perspective, his critique is the more valid. Or perhaps Meltzer has a grudge against Baker and, consequently, his judgement is distorted? Was Meltzer attempting to dispel the populist notion that Cream were, in fact, the "cream" of rock and roll talent? This may well be the case given that, at this stage of their career, the members of Cream exhibited a self-assuredness and

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<sup>25</sup>Richard Meltzer was a drummer. As evident in the following anecdote, Meltzer occasionally pondered the technical complexities (or otherwise) associated with drumming:

Having sat in as drummer with the Tuckets, I have come to discover that virtually all Dave Clarke Five songs use the same drum pattern of maintaining a beat with one stick while doubling its beat with the other (and a roll once in a while) (1970:82).



superiority in regard to their talent and virtuosic displays. As Clapton (as quoted in Marchbank, 1977: 44) noted, this attitude was encouraged by audience responses to their performances:

Everyone got into too much of a heavy ego-trip. Virtuosos and all that kind of rubbish. We really thought that we were the kings of our instruments. No-one else could come near to what we were doing. And it was all through the adulation we were being given. The audience was to blame as much as anyone else.

The quotations listed above all contain phenomenological statements about rhythmic aspects of rock and roll. It is obvious that such statements are disparate and, at times, contradictory. Each author approaches a discussion of rock and roll from a particular cultural or theoretical perspective and offers an opinion or subjective interpretation of the music from within that perspective. It is their prerogative to do so. However, it is unclear as to what, in terms of musical structures, their opinion or interpretation actually applies. We have observed in the above quotes that musical concepts such as “beat”, “rhythm”, “structure” and “syncopation” are either vague or musically incorrect. Are such terms used in relation to drum patterns, rhythm guitar patterns or the whole complex of rhythms that form a rock and roll accompaniment? Is the sound or mix of the recording taken into consideration? Are the rhythms of the vocal melody and patterns of phrasing and periodicity within the accompaniment featured in their listening?

The modality of sociological writing is such that the various perceptions concerning rock and roll rhythm are imbued with a sense of musical validity. The reader is presented with patterns of interpretation and ways of listening and perceiving rock and roll that are clothed within cultural and theoretical argument. However, such perceptions generally lack musical concretion. Most sociologists lack training in musicological methodology and cannot therefore be expected to identify and isolate rock and roll rhythmic structures for analysis. However, the particular items of musical

code that constitute the basis of a sociological investigation can be clarified and explicated by sociologists in relation to stylistic or generic context.

The statements and speculative accounts inherent in the quotes cited above lack an empirical basis. Indeed, it was surprising to note that within the realm of sociological writing, dogged empiricism *and* subjective speculation have not been applied to the phenomenological study of rock and roll drum-kit rhythms or accompanimental rhythmic patterns in general. While it may be musicologically problematic for sociologists to undertake musical analyses necessary to the study of rock and roll rhythmic structures, sociologists could establish a phenomenology of intersubjective responses among listeners to rock and roll songs. Empirical evidence concerning listener responses to selected rock and roll genres would provide a useful baseline for further research.

The discipline of sociology is not the only one that is at fault in this respect. Until recently, musicology has managed to ignore rock and roll, even though some sociologists have explicitly asked musicologists for analytical tools appropriate to the interdisciplinary study of the genre.<sup>26</sup> It is clear that musicologists need to undertake research concerning rock and roll rhythmic structure and drum-kit patterns in order to complement or clarify sociological insights. Further, such research would enable sociologists to have recourse to appropriate musical source material upon which to effectively explain relations between rhythm and the socio/cultural reality in which they occur.

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<sup>26</sup>See Dave Laing, The Sound of our Time (London: Sheed and Ward, 1969) and Simon Frith, "The Sociology of Rock: Notes from Britain" in Horn and Tagg (eds.) Popular Music Perspectives 1 (Goteborg and Exeter: IASPM, 1982), pp. 142-153.

#### 1.4 Rock and Roll Journalism and Criticism Concerning Rhythmic Organization in Rock and Roll.

The following accounts that focus on rock and roll drumming and rock and roll style can be taken as indicative of the perspective adopted by journalists and rock critics when discussing such features. Although sometimes erratic, accounts given by rock critics provide some valuable hermeneutic insights, as the following quotes illustrate.

Marsh (1980: 285) describes Keith Moon's drumming style and the musical style of The Who as follows:

The drummer tossed his sticks high above his head, ignoring every formality of the beat, then bashed his kit furiously, fitting his thunder into spots where previously only guitar solos were supposed to go .... Their sound was anarchy, chaos, pure noise - a definition of one kind of Sixties rock.

Gambaccini (1982: 53-54) adopts a similar style when he describes the drumming style of Jon Bonham in Led Zeppelin's *Whole Lotta Love*:

Perhaps *Whole Lotta Love* was the best work by Jon Bonham. He played longer and harder at other times, but here he set a machine-gun drum voice in the context of the most energetic of songs. It was a prime example of physical rock and roll. Led Zeppelin at the heavy best bypassed the brain and went straight to the body.

We can note from these examples that, firstly, a hermeneutic based approach is adopted, secondly, rock and roll is considered as connotatively meaningful and, thirdly, drum-kit rhythmic patterns are not singled out for discussion. In reference to the Marsh quote, descriptions of drumming were discussed within the context of the whole complex of rhythmic structures and structural traditions characteristic of rock and roll recordings ("ignoring every formality of the beat", "fitting his thunder into spots where previously only guitar solos were supposed to go"). Subsequent descriptions were derived from subjective interpretations of the accompanimental structure ("their sound was anarchy, chaos, pure noise"). However, his description raises some important musicological questions. We do not know what exactly constitutes the

“formality of the beat”. Has the formality of the beat always been the same in rock and roll? No? Then how has the beat’s formality changed over time? Why has it changed and in what respect? Why does Marsh refer to Moon’s drumming as “thunder”? Is he referring to the sound or Moon’s performance practice? Can those characteristics that constitute his sound or technique as “thunder” be described as “thunder” in other musical contexts? In what musical contexts does it cease to be thunder? Other, equally valid musicological points of investigation can be raised. How does Moon fit his thunder into “spots where guitar solos were supposed to go”? According to which norms does he fit it in? Is the fit rhythmically tight or loose? Do these norms signify anything? If they do, then we need to explain these structures. Also, what “spots” is Marsh referring to? What constitutes the spots and are spots always found in rock and roll? If so, then we need to know where they are and what their function is in order to facilitate a better understanding of the formal structure of rock music. Is the function of such spots diachronically consistent? Similar points can be raised in reference to Gambaccini’s description. What are the musical/rhythmic constituents of a “machine-gun drum voice”? If Bonham played “longer and harder at other times” how is it that his drumming in *Whole Lotta Love* is a prime example of physical rock and roll? Does this suggest that “hard” drumming is not prerequisite to the perception of heaviness in rock and roll?

Finally, some journalistic accounts were located that, while not dealing exclusively with drum-kit patterns or drumming, present subjective interpretations of rock and roll rhythm and “beat”. These rhythm related characteristics are generally extolled as indicators of particular rock and roll styles. For example, Belz (1969: 33) notes that:

In rock’s early phases, [the] rhythm had a primitive and “funky” sound which almost disappeared during the music’s later development. Through the early and middle fifties, however, these qualities persisted. They were generally emphasized by a pounding piano or saxophone and were reinforced ... by a vocal manner which, in effect, provided additional raw instrumentation.

Cohn (1970: 1) considers the “beat” fundamental to the perception of rock’n’roll as

aggressive or sexual:

What was new about [rock'n'roll] was its aggression, its sexuality, its sheer noise; and most of this came from its beat. This was beat, bigger and louder than any beat before it, simply because it was amplified.

Also referring to rock'n'roll, Pollack (1981: 1) states

call it rhythm and blues, country and western, or rockabilly, as a beat it was undeniably big, raw, rough, uncivilized, and unpredictable.

Further, Gillett (1983: viii) notes that:

In rock and roll, the strident, repetitive sounds of city life were, in effect, reproduced as melody and rhythm.

Similar questions as those raised in reference to Marsh's quote equally apply to the above examples. Where is the "strident" and where is the "rawness" in the rhythm? Is rock and roll beat unpredictable? If we consider Gillett's suggestion that rock and roll rhythm is repetitive, in what context can repetitive rhythm be unpredictable? Exactly what aspects of rock and roll beat are Pollack and Cohn referring to? And how does the beat connect with such descriptors as "big" and "raw"? How, if at all, can sexuality and aggression be proven as intrinsic to the rock'n'roll beat?

Specific references to drum-kit patterns were not found within the realm of journalistic writing and rock criticism. This is not surprising given that, within the scope of journalistic writing, the analysis of drum-kit rhythms is not a priority. The commercial and promotional aspects associated with rock and roll journalism require that journalistic writing be geared mainly to the dissemination of information appropriate to the interests of its readers. In fact, as Marsh (as quoted in Frith, 1978: 176) notes, "little rock criticism is concerned with music, because most rock critics are less concerned with sound than sociology". Consequently, journalistic accounts tend to focus on such matters as the history of band line-ups, descriptive analyses/critiques of rock and roll styles, recordings and performances, aspects of the production, dissemination and consumption of rock and roll and elements of the personality and style of rock and roll performers. Further, journalists are frequently in the employ of

trade magazines and their writing is often influenced by this position. It would be strange to expect otherwise. They have to make a living by making their copy as attractive as possible to their readership which probably features very few, if any, musicologists.

### **1.5 Conclusions.**

In reference to that body of writing discussed above - musicological, sociological and journalistic - the following general conclusions apply:

- drum-kit rhythms and rock and roll accompanimental rhythmic patterns have not been subject to extensive or exclusive musicological study; however,
- most musicological accounts located posit the “beat”, and particularly the accented backbeat, as a co-defining stylistic feature of rock and roll;
- there is a lack of intersubjective consistency among journalistic, sociological and musicological insights concerning the affective and structural aspects of rock and roll rhythms;
- journalistic and sociological insights imply that rock rhythms, and particularly its “beat”, carry connotative values but musicology has not developed the formal methodology to account for this.

### **1.6 Consequences of a Lack of Formal Methodology Concerning Rock and Roll Rhythmic Structures.**

Given the lack of systematic study of drum-kit patterns and other accompanimental rhythmic patterns in rock and roll, rock and roll commentators have necessarily focused upon other musical or paramusical aspects as a basis for stylistic classification. What

aspects of rock and roll, then, have constituted a basis for stylistic classification? Is such classification consistent, and if so, why? And if not, why not? The following discussion will focus on the classification of particular musics as rock and roll and will attempt to elucidate those musical or non-musical aspects that serve as criteria for stylistic classification.

Rock journalists and scholars often refer to the music of particular performers as “rock and roll” or simply just “rock”. Alternately, other descriptors are employed that suggest to the reader a greater degree of stylistic and historical specificity. For example, the current use of such terms as “rock’n’roll”, “progressive rock”, “heavy rock”, “glam rock” and “punk rock” intimate to the rock and roll audience a subset of rock and roll and also denote a particular period in which the style developed or flourished.<sup>27</sup> A survey of recent rock and roll writing indicates an increasing consensus among many commentators concerning the chronological differentiations among such terms. “Rock’n’roll”, for instance, mostly refers to a particular type of popular music that flourished from around the mid to late 1950s,<sup>28</sup> but some confusion

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<sup>27</sup>There are some exceptions to this general tendency. Martin and Segrave (1988: 217), for example, note that

Glitter rock came back with the likes of Michael Jackson, and androgyny resurfaced in the guise of Boy George and Prince.

The use of “glitter rock” and “androgyny” in reference to particular musics from both the 1970s and late 1980s is unusual. It can be assumed that Martin and Segrave are specifically referring to aspects of fashion rather than to the music itself. This assumption, however, is unclear in their text.

<sup>28</sup>See Moore (1993), Bradley (1992), Dawson and Propes (1992), Middleton (1990), Clarke (1989: 994), Hamm (1986b: 711) and Hardy and Laing (1977). The necessity of clarifying stylistic differentiations between the terms ‘rock’n’roll’, ‘rock and roll’ and ‘rock’ was, perhaps, first propounded by Charlie Gillett. Writing in 1970, Gillett’s opening paragraph in his seminal book, The Sound of the City, presented the following, albeit chronologically based, insight concerning a distinction among these terms:

In tracing the history of rock and roll, it is useful to distinguish *rock’n’roll* - the particular kind of music to which the term was first applied - both from *rock and roll* - the music that has been classified as such since rock’n’roll petered out around 1958 - and from *rock*, which describes post-1964 derivations of rock’n’roll (1983: 3).

Similarly, Byrnside (1975) preferred the term ‘rock’n’roll’ for early rock. Carl Belz (1969), however, adopted the term ‘rock’ in reference to the music genre that Gillett and Byrnside describe as rock’n’roll.

remains concerning the application of the term to post-1950s popular music forms<sup>29</sup> and, vice-versa, the application of the term “rock” to indicate “rock’n’roll”.

Although it could be possible to describe certain current rock and roll forms as “progressive” in the sense of “innovative”, the term “progressive rock” is generally reserved to denote particular musics from the late 1960s and early seventies.<sup>30</sup> “Glam rock” and “punk rock” are mostly used in reference to certain musics from the 1970s. As will become evident from the examples presented below, these and other descriptors are often associated with the musical output of particular performers.

Tucker (1986a: 487-496) includes such performers as David Bowie, Marc Bolan, Bryan Ferry, Rod Stewart, Gary Glitter and the Rolling Stones as a representative selection of glam rock. This classification of these performers appears to have been founded upon some perceived similarities in modes of fashion (clothing, makeup, theatricality etc.), particularly those outrageously flamboyant fashions that represented androgynous (David Bowie), urbane (Bryan Ferry), camp (Gary Glitter) or subversive (Rod Stewart and the Rolling Stones) attitudes through the 1970s. Such fashion traits as criteria for the classification of particular performers as glam rock is also implied by Frith (1989a: 135), Chambers (1985: 113-114) and Penman (1989: 105). All of these authors consider David Bowie as an exemplar of glam rock style. Aside from this commonality, however, a musically diverse complement of performers are associated with glam rock style. Frith (*ibid.*), for example, refers to the fashion of Slade and Sweet, and Penman (*ibid.*) adds Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin to his list of representative glam rock artists. That glam rock is peculiar to the period beginning

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<sup>29</sup>For example, Martin and Segrave’s (1988) investigation of post-1950’s rock and roll is published under the terminologically bemusing title The Opposition to Anti-Rock Rock’n’Roll.

<sup>30</sup>See Moore (1993), Whiteley (1992) and Middleton (1990: 27-32).



1970 to around the mid seventies is tacitly assumed by all of the previously mentioned rock and roll commentators.<sup>31</sup> This chronological differentiation serves as a limiting device for the classification of musics as glam rock. Recent efforts by Black Sabbath and the later repertoire of Led Zeppelin, for example, are described as “hard rock” or perhaps “heavy metal”, even though the theatricality of presentation still approaches that of early seventies glam rock style.<sup>32</sup>

It is evident from the above that the criteria for classification of particular performers as glam rock concerns more sartorial and theatrical elements of the music than musical elements of the music. It would therefore be erroneous to assume that the previously quoted rock and roll commentators have expressly classified particular performers as glam rock according to the existence of a perceived synonymy of musical traits among their recordings. As Moore (1993: 110) notes, “neither Frith nor any other writer seems to suggest that ‘glam rock’ may be descriptive of a musical style”. Rather, paramusical aspects clearly outweigh musical concerns in regard to classification. Musical congruences or differences across the repertoire of glam rock have mostly been neglected. In this respect, the descriptor “glam rock” is best considered as a broadly based term referring to a type of theatricality in presentation by particular rock and roll

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<sup>31</sup>Chambers, for example, includes a discussion of glam rock within his chapter titled “Among the Fragments, 1971-6” (1985: 113).

<sup>32</sup>The term ‘heavy metal’ is commonly used to describe the musical output of Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin. See Whitburn (1993: 78,411), Charlton (1990:180-182), Tucker (1986a: 484-486) and Bangs (1980: 332-333). Tucker (ibid.) infers that heavy metal is a development of 1970s hard rock but his concept lacks a precise explication. Moore (1993: 129-133) also prefers to make a distinction between hard rock and heavy metal. He subsequently classifies such bands as Deep Purple as hard rock and Black Sabbath as heavy metal. In contrast to Tucker, Moore disputes the view that hard rock is merely a progenitor to the development of heavy metal. This viewpoint is also held by Pidgeon (1991: 88) who notes that,

The familiar misconception that Led Zeppelin’s music was merely prototype heavy metal derives more from the lumpen pyrotechnics of their legion of imitators than from the idiosyncratic mix of power and subtlety, electric and acoustic instruments, and rock, blues and folk styles that the group had blueprinted on their debut album in 1968.

performers during the early seventies.

In comparison to glam rock, the application of the descriptor “punk” to particular British musics from the 1970s appears to be relatively consistent among many rock and roll commentators. This may be due to the following reasons. Firstly, the wide musical influence that the Sex Pistols exerted on bands that formed in their aftermath asserted a degree of uniformity concerning general musical characteristics. As Coon (1982: 11) notes:

since January 1976, when the Sex Pistols played their first gig, there has been a slow but steady increase in the number of musicians who feel the same way. Bands like the Clash, the Jam, Buzzcocks, and the Damned. The music they play is loud, raucous and beyond considerations of taste and finesse.

Secondly, the consistency of the punk attitude among British punk fashion designers (including Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood), entrepreneurs (such as Malcolm McLaren) and artists (such as Jamie Reid) created a complex of cultural activities within which paramusical aspects were well defined and consistent within the subculture. The relationship between this group of people, the Sex Pistols and other punk bands resulted in a subcultural movement where paramusical aspects and general musical features exhibited a degree of uniformity. Consequently, the classification of particular British musics as punk was relatively consistent regardless of whether rock and roll commentators based their classification on musical or paramusical aspects.

In contrast to the British situation, the application of the term “punk” to particular mid 1970s American performers is musically problematic. Tucker (1986b: 551-553), for example, classifies such American musicians as the New York Dolls, Alice Cooper, Ramones, Kiss and Blondie as punk even though few musical congruences exist. The different levels of musical ambition and types of production among his representative selection ranges from the synthesizer based, studio produced sounds of Blondie to the relatively “unproduced” raw guitar based music of the Ramones. Also, few similarities in harmonic or rhythmic language can be discerned. Tucker’s criteria for the

classification of such American performers as punk is unclear. Perhaps he has based his classification upon some perceived similarities in fashion or sound but no such classification is explicit in his discussion. Laing's (1985) discussion of the same American performers as those noted by Tucker is located within the context of identifying American precursors to punk rock.<sup>33</sup> In contrast to Tucker, Laing details some paramusical aspects as the dominant criteria for his classification scheme. This is appropriate to Laing's position because, aside from the Ramones, the musical styles of the previously mentioned American performers exhibit little in the way of shared musical characteristics to either the British punk movement or to each other. Rather, as Laing (1985: 23) notes,

the special importance of Alice Cooper and the other early influences on the musicians who became the first wave of punk rock performers lay in the sense of outrage which pervaded their stage appearance and behaviour, and in the consequent oppositional position they occupied in relation to the musical establishment.

Aside from the examples cited above, many other instances of classification within rock and roll reveal terminological inconsistency among commentators, as is evident in the following short selection.

Street describes ABC's album, The Lexicon of Love as "a brilliant catalogue of post-punk love songs" (Street, 1986: 177) whereas the Penguin Encyclopedia of Popular Music, which does not acknowledge the use of the term "post-punk" in rock and roll writing, refers to ABC as a "UK pop/rock group" (Clarke, 1990: 2). In contrast, Whitburn prefers the term "electro-pop group" (Whitburn, 1993: 19) to

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<sup>33</sup>Writing in the mid seventies, Hardy and Laing noted that punk rock "was a style that flourished during the years 1964-7, reflecting America's grassroots response to the British invasion, setting the stage for American rock as it evolved in the late Sixties" and that most classic punk records shared a number of common attributes, "from fuzztone on their guitars to an arrogant snarl in the vocals, and lyrics usually concerned with uncooperative girls or bothersome parents and social restrictions" (Hardy and Laing, 1977: 173). It would be reasonable to assume that Laing's (1985) position in respect to punk rock's American precursors results from this previous belief of punk rock as an American phenomenon.

describe the style of ABC. Wicke (1991: 154) considers the musical style of Public Image Limited as representative of post-punk, a view which is shared by Whitburn (1993: 599) and Laing (1985: 108). However, the Penguin Encyclopedia of Popular Music (Clarke, 1990: 944) cites Public Image Ltd as a “UK new wave act”. In contrast, Wicke (ibid.: 139) includes such performers as The Ramones, Blondie, Television and the early Talking Heads repertoire as representative of new wave style. Gammond (1991: 421) offers a contrasting list of new wave performers although his notion of new wave does seem to correlate to Wicke’s.<sup>34</sup>

These examples are characterized by a lack of supporting evidence and further explication of musical *or* paramusical attributes that can inform a discussion of style. Given the context in which these descriptions occur, perhaps it would be inappropriate to expect the authors to engage in a critical discussion of the criteria that inform their conclusions. In order to restrict their length, encyclopedic entries concerning rock and roll performers mostly include references to style for comparative purposes. The conciseness of such entries may preclude any detailed explication of criteria relating to stylistic classification. Similarly, sociological and cultural writing is mostly directed toward a study of musical context and, therefore, any critical discussion of musical “text” may not necessarily be crucial to the main argument. Given the lack of critical discussion in the above examples the importance of paramusical features against other criteria in the classification of musics is unclear and therefore open to speculation.

It is likely that a number of other reasons equally can account for the terminological confusion and inconsistency among the cited rock and roll commentators. For

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<sup>34</sup>Both Gammond and Wicke locate the roots of new wave within punk rock. Gammond (1991: 421) considers that the term “new wave” applies to those punk rock groups that strove for more professional standards of musical material and performance. Similarly, Wicke (1991: 138-139, 155) notes that new wave artists displayed a greater degree of sophistication and artistic freedom than British punk rock performers.

example, the authors may be hearing different things in the music and incorporating disparate items of musical code as style indicators. Perhaps author “X” is hearing a guitar riff as a foreground musical element while author “Y” is focusing on the studio production and the lyrics. Or, alternately, perhaps the authors are hearing the same things in the music but experiencing them differently. Author “X” could be formally trained while author “Y” approaches his listening from the position of an ardent but notationally illiterate musician. Therefore, while one author seems to be hearing modal harmonic progressions, backbeats and syncopated cymbal crashes the other might be experiencing thunder and lightning and subsequently classifying the music according to affective rather than musical structural criteria.

It can be noted in the examples thus covered that authors have used a wide range of descriptors in reference to the classification of rock and roll performers. I have observed that, generally, these descriptors relate to the style of *paramusical* features rather than to *musical* style and that this distinction is rarely made clear. Obviously this is not wrong but within the body of journalistic and socio-cultural writing on rock and roll the perspective adopted by authors relates to a number of different “levels” of style ranging from musical characteristics (mostly concerning the “sound”) to social and cultural concerns of a more general character. One consequence of this proclivity is that a reader remains uncertain as to the criteria informing a classification or discussion of rock and roll. This is particularly the case when the reference is cursory. In such instances a stylistic descriptor can connote to a reader a catalogue of traits relating to either tonal-structural characteristics or to more general socio-cultural aspects. For example, the descriptor “punk rock” might infer similarities in attitude among particular performers. Or does it infer a shared mode of fashion among a group of performers? Or similar music characteristics? Or performance practice? Or a type of music associated with a geographic location? Or all of these attributes?

Such confusion poses obvious problems to anyone wanting to explain any aspect of rock and roll and in a systematic fashion. Studying rock rhythms is no exception. Since a large part of this study involves the intramusical investigation of rock rhythm, it will therefore be necessary to clarify the various style criteria that underlie much rock and roll commentary. In particular, there is a need to differentiate between the musically specific meaning of style and the more general and broadly based conception of the term.

### 1.7 Genre or Style?

In reference to the discipline of musicology, Pascall (1980: 316) states that “style” is a term “denoting manner of discourse, mode of expression; more particularly the manner in which a work of art is executed” and that style, a style, or styles “may be seen as present in a chord, phrase, section, movement, work, group of works, genre, life’s work, period (of any size) and culture” (ibid.: 316). He further notes that a discussion of musical style might take place within a variety of conceptual frameworks:

In the discussion of music, which is orientated towards relationships rather than meanings, the term raises special difficulties; it may be used to denote music characteristics of an individual composer, or a period, of a geographical area or centre, or of a society or social function (ibid.)

Inherent in Pascall’s definition is the notion that within musicological discourse, “style” can operate on two levels. A discussion of musical “style” can concern itself with, firstly, the manner of discourse or mode of expression associated with music performance or, secondly, the intramusical characteristics that define a musical event. For instance, a discussion of the musical style of Beethoven’s late string quartets can be musically specific insofar as the tonal-structural relationships that operate within the last quartets can be elucidated via notational analysis. Alternately, a performance of these works is governed by the interpretative rules that are commensurate with “late

Beethoven musical style” and therefore, rest upon a consideration of such performance practice issues as the “manner of execution” and a “mode of expression” appropriate to the late quartets. These interpretative rules and their notational relationships would be peculiar to the late quartets whilst also belonging to the larger set of stylistic conventions associated with progressive early 19<sup>th</sup> century musical composition and romantic style in general.

The categorization of Western art music into various styles, such as classical style and romantic style, has primarily rested upon the identification of shared harmonic, melodic, rhythmic and structural practices among a collection of works. In contrast to the classification of musics as rock and roll, paramusical aspects and the cultural relativity of a musical event tend not to inform musicologically based classifications of style. Traditionally, musicology has mostly concerned itself with formalist music analyses as criteria for subsequent stylistic classification. Many authors have noted this proclivity in a wide range of musicological research. Kerman, for example, notes that

Along with the preoccupation with structure goes the neglect of other vital matters - not only the whole historical complex ... but also everything else that makes music affective, moving, emotional, expressive. By removing the bare score from its context in order to examine it as an autonomous organism, the analyst removes that organism from the ecology that sustains it (1985: 73).

Kerman is referring here to the formalist analytical tendency in musicological analysis which largely concerns, as inferred earlier, the notable elements of music. In reference to Pascall’s notion of style, I will extend this understanding of “the musical” to include the offshoots of musicology known as “interpretation” and “performance practice” - those aspects that concern the realization of a musical idea or notation by a performer. In respect to rock and roll, this subset of “the musical” also encompasses aspects of studio production such as stereophonic placement and the electronic manipulation of recorded sounds. By “musicological analysis”, therefore, I will mean the analysis of all musical (interpretative, performance and production based) and

structural (melodic, harmonic, rhythmic) practices associated with the transmitting side of a music nexus. However, I lack a term denoting the rules that underpin and inform these rock and roll musical practices.

Given the tendency of musicology to locate “style” within musical-structural characteristics, as previously discussed, it would be logical to retain this practice when analyzing and discussing the musical practices of rock and roll associated with its performance and studio production. For the purpose of this study, therefore, “musical style” will refer to the set of musical-structural practices that govern the intramusical relationships and manner of execution of a musical event. Further, “stylistic classification” will infer the classification of rock and roll according to musical style (as previously defined).

The limiting of musical style to musical-structural practices excludes paramusical aspects as a defining criteria. Throughout this chapter, however, it has been noted that much rock and roll commentary intimates a relationship between rock and roll musical style and paramusical features, including aspects of cultural relativity and “meaning”. Also, journalistic and sociological studies of rock and roll have tended toward an extreme where paramusical aspects have predominated as criteria for discussion of style and style classification. Consequently, there is a need for a term to cover the set of musical *and* paramusical features that are associated with a particular rock and roll form. In short, we require a term that denotes a holistic approach to the study of rock and roll. What term, then, are we to use when discussing the broader range of rock and roll characteristics encompassing both musical style and paramusical features?

Writing in the early eighties, Fabbri produced a series of articles that dealt with the



concept of genre.<sup>35</sup> The articles were motivated by Fabbri's perception that the terms "genre" and "style" are often confused or used interchangeably within the discipline of musicology and within Italian musicological practice in particular. In response to this situation, Fabbri proposed a concept of genre that includes paramusical aspects and the cultural relativity of a given musical event as part of its defining criteria. He defines musical genre as

... a set of musical events (real or possible) whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules (Fabbri, 1982a: 52)

and subsequently discusses the relationship between genre, paramusical aspects and the use of the term within musicological discourse noting that

In most musicological literature which has tackled the problem of genres ... the formal and technical rules seem to be the only ones taken into consideration, to the point where genre, style and form become synonymous. With all this scientific confusion one cannot expect common sense to be more precise and in fact these terms are easily interchanged in daily use (ibid.: 55).

Fabbri's concept of genre is broadly conceived but diametrically positioned in relation to musicologically derived notions of genre. The use of the term "genre" within much musicological discourse intimates some broad formal characteristics of a musical event, so it is possible to speak of a string quartet, opera or symphony as a genre.<sup>36</sup> Within this context, genre refers to musical characteristics that are determined by "technical and formal rules" such as formal structure, instrumentation and orchestration, vocal style and other such rules that shape the sonic characteristics of a musical event. The "technical and formal rules", as Fabbri (1982b: 137) notes, were previously

the only type to be considered by the old musicological theories of genre, which never took account of cultural relativity.

According to Fabbri (1982b: 136) a musical genre is not only determined by the

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<sup>35</sup>Fabbri (1981, 1982a and 1982b).

<sup>36</sup>See Moore (1993: 2-3) for an overview of some musicologically based definitions of genre.

technical and formal rules that govern intramusical relationships but also other socially accepted rules relating to the cultural relativity of the music:

it is not surprising that among the principles defining a genre we find many that have nothing to do with the *form* of the musical event. In other words, form or style is not sufficient to define a genre, even though forms and styles continue in their daily use to be confused with the idea of genre.

Aside from technical and formal rules, Fabbri (1982a) propounds that semiotic rules,<sup>37</sup> behaviour rules (including psychological and behavioural rules associated with both performers and audience), and economical and juridical rules (1982a: 56-59) might equally figure in the generic classification of musics. In respect to rock and roll, it is reasonable to assume that the potency of each of these rules to generic classification is dependent upon the position of the classifier. A musician may be tempted to classify “genre” according to predominantly technical and formal rules while a rock and roll journalist might designate a “style” according to semiotic rules, behavioural rules prominently figuring within sociological writing. Ideally, it would be best to avoid disciplinary bias in the stylistic and generic classification of rock and roll throughout its history.

Within journalistic and sociological writing on rock and roll, it would be reasonable to assume that much confusion results from considering “style” as encompassing both musical-structural and paramusical (“generic”) features, including those relating to behaviour, fashion, affect and ideology. “Style”, therefore, can intimate to the reader such disparate phenomena as a high degree of musical specificity (such as syntactic musical relationships) or a general recognition of cultural and social aspects. In this tradition of writing, the notion of “style” can often be blurred by “generic” considerations - short Fabbri-type genre definition aphorisms - and these take precedence over classification based on musical-structural aspects. In reference to the

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<sup>37</sup>Fabbri (1982a: 56) notes that “all the rules of genre are semiotic, since they are codes which create a relation between the expression of a musical event and its content.”

classification of musics within rock and roll, it is probable that many authors are classifying rock and roll according to criteria relating to musical “genre” as opposed to musical “style” (as discussed above). This observation is supported by the fact that recourse to evidence aside from musical-structural practices that govern the musical event, such as rhythmic and harmonic language, the studio “sound” or instrumentation and interpretation, have largely determined the classification of musics within rock and roll.

### **1.8 Why a Musicology of Rock and Roll Rhythms?**

In reference to the previous headings, it is evident that rock and roll musical style (as defined) has been treated according to broad paramusical criteria rather than exact intramusical analysis. What is missing in this context is a diachronic structural analysis of rock and roll musical style. Particularly important would be a thorough description of rock’s basic, general traits as musical style, preferably at a point in history when these traits can be regarded as relatively well established. In this way subsequent shifts in rock and roll musical styles could be more accurately documented. Once continuities and discontinuities in the musical style have been established, any rock style can be compared and contrasted with other cultural patterns that comprise rock and roll genres. This process is a prerequisite for a holistic understanding of rock and roll.

To conduct a thorough analysis of all aspects of rock and roll style is beyond the scope of this thesis. Consequently, I have mostly restricted myself to an investigation of one single set of stylistic elements: to the drum rhythms of rock’n’roll and, particularly, to the snare backbeat.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Chapter two will detail the specific drum rhythms with which we are concerned and also the set of recordings that will constitute our analytic sample.

The fact that drum-kit rhythms are contained within a large proportion of our everyday listening but are a neglected area of musicological study may provide sufficient reason in itself for their investigation. However, other factors contribute to the necessity of this study.

Firstly, accurate structural analyses of rock and roll rhythms must be undertaken if we wish to answer such questions as those raised by the journalists and sociologists cited earlier in this chapter. While the hermeneutic analyses that characterize much journalistic and sociological writing can provide valuable insights into rock and roll genres, it has been previously noted that such writing usually lacks any significant degree of musical-structural concretion. For example, what do such commonly used words as “beat” and “rhythm” actually denote at a structural level of concretion? This difficulty is compounded by the fact that many authors posit the “beat” or “rhythm” as one dominant characteristic of rock and roll musical style. Gammond (1991: 495), for example, considers that rock and roll’s “emphatic and driving beat was a fundamental attraction, often the overriding element which excited both the performers and its audience.” Similarly, Graham (1971: 34-35) notes that “rhythms have always been the foundation of rock” and Hamm, in his encyclopedic entries on “rock” notes that the style is characterized by a “fast driving rhythm punctuated by prominent and often dominant drums and bass” (1986: 710) whilst “rock’n’roll” comprises a “prominent rhythm section of drums, piano and bass giving powerful emphasis to the first beat of each 4/4 bar” (1986:711). Other similar such references have been discussed in 1.3 and 1.4 above. In short, while we might have sufficient paramusical information allowing the classification of rock music as a genre, we still lack accurate information enabling us to define it as a style.

Secondly, perhaps in keeping with the tradition and history of music analysis, early

musicological studies of rock and roll focused almost exclusively on harmonic structure and aspects of song form.<sup>39</sup> Many of these studies are furthermore limited to a discussion of the style of a particular group or performer. While more recent studies employ a wide range of analytical methods appropriate to the analytical perspective adopted by the author, harmonic and melodic analyses are still at the forefront of analytical investigation. This is exemplified in such investigations as those by Everett, Hawkins and Brackett.<sup>40</sup> Further, these and other such musicological investigations have tended to focus on specific tonal tendencies in selected rock and roll recordings at the expense of the more general attributes of rock and roll style. Some of the most general characteristics of rock and roll, such as drum-kit rhythms, tonal, timbric and formal structural practices, remain neglected in terms of extensive systematic investigation.<sup>41</sup> A study of the more general attributes of rock and roll - including drumming - is essential if we are to establish a stylistic foundation against which subsequent stylistic shifts can be measured. Indeed, writings and definitions of rock and roll, including those already addressed throughout this chapter, intimate that rock's rhythm was somehow different from that of contiguous popular music styles. Is this

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<sup>39</sup>See, for example, Wilfred Mellers, Twilight of the Gods: The music of The Beatles (N.Y.: Viking Press, 1973) and Terence O'Grady, The Music of the Beatles from 1962 to "Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band." 2 Vols. (Ph.D. diss.: Uni. of Wisconsin, 1975).

<sup>40</sup>See Walter Everett (1985) "Text Painting in the foreground and middleground of Paul McCartney's Beatle song *She's Leaving Home*: a musical study of psychological conflict", In Theory Only 9, pp.5-13, Everett (1986) "Fantastic Remembrance in John Lennon's *Strawberry Fields Forever* and *Julia*", The Musical Quarterly Vol.72 No.3, pp.360-391, Stan Hawkins (1992) "Prince: Harmonic Analysis of 'Anna Stesia'" Popular Music Vol.11 No.3, pp.325-335, and David Brackett (1992) "James Brown's 'Superbad' and the double-voiced utterance", Popular Music Vol.11 No.3, pp..309-324.

<sup>41</sup>Within the arena of published articles, some progress has been made towards the systematization of various items of musical code. See, for example, Gary Burns (1987) "A Typology of 'hooks' in popular records", Popular Music 6, pp.1-20, Allan Moore (1992) "Patterns of Harmony", Popular Music 11, pp.73-106 and Peter Winkler (1978) "Toward a Theory of Pop Harmony", In Theory Only 4, pp.3-26. Other studies, particularly those by Tagg, contribute towards an understanding of broadly based popular music characteristics by systematizing items of musical code as units of meaning shared by members of the society to which they belong (see, for example, Tagg, 1979 and 1991).

true and, if so, precisely how did rock's rhythm differ from precursory musical styles? Finally, although most musicological analysis of rock privileges its tonal constituents, including those commentators cited in 1.2 above, some scholars (Hamm, 1986: 710-11, Hoffman, 1983: 168-181) quite clearly state that rock'n'roll is largely characterized by the interplay among instruments that feature in the rhythm section of a rock'n'roll group, including drums, bass and rhythm guitar, and perhaps keyboards and a riffing instrument (such as saxophone or guitar). Now, although drums are in one sense pitched instruments, drumming is nevertheless perceived in our music culture as a primarily percussive activity (*percutere* = to beat) while bass, rhythm guitar and keyboards, for example, are perceived as primarily tonal instruments. Moreover, the drum-kit, particularly the snare and cymbals in rock music, is far more likely than other accompanying instruments to articulate direct aspects of pulse<sup>42</sup> without which other parts of the rhythm accompaniment would not function. It is logical, therefore, to begin an analysis of rock'n'roll rhythm with an investigation of the various drum-kit based rhythmic structures that provide a basis for other accompanimental activity.

As already noted, several authors have singled out the backbeat as particularly characteristic of rock'n'roll style. Unfortunately, journalistic and sociological references to rock'n'roll rhythm are without any structural concretion while musicological accounts noting the importance of the backbeat to rock rhythm do so on the basis of insufficient empirical evidence. Given the structural inaccuracy and empirical insufficiency in this area of study, we will need to determine whether or not the backbeat is in fact a common occurrence in fifties rock'n'roll and, if so, to what extent. Similarly, given the obvious importance ascribed to the backbeat in the literature discussed so far, it will also be necessary to trace its origins in order to make some historical sense of that perceived importance. These two tasks presuppose access

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<sup>42</sup>"Pulse" will be defined in Chapter Two.

to and familiarity with a large corpus of rock'n'roll music and of its precursors. To this end I have located and analyzed over eight hundred commercially available rock'n'roll recordings (see Chapter Two and Appendix Two). It has been necessary to consider certain generic aspects of the music, especially the sociological contexts of certain rock'n'roll drummers. However, intramusical analysis forms the main empirical basis for observations and conclusions presented in this thesis.

As is evident from our previous investigation of musicological, sociological and journalistic accounts of rock rhythms, studying rock'n'roll rhythm is not without its problems. Consequently, before proceeding to investigate the roots and development of the rock'n'roll backbeat and some other accompanimental rhythms, we must deal with various methodological issues, including the following: 1) developing working definitions of analytic terminology relating to a study of rock rhythms; 2) clarifying the musical-structural elements which will form the focus of our investigation; and 3) demarcating our rock'n'roll analytic sample. Such will be undertaken in Chapter 2. 1, 2.2 and 2.3 below.

# Chapter Two

## 2.1 Rock Rhythmics and Analytic Terminology.

We have observed in Chapter One that terms such as “beat” and “rhythm” are variously used, often interchangeably, relating to the description of rock performances.<sup>1</sup> We saw, for example, that in musicological descriptions of rock “beat” could denote either a complex of accompanimental rhythms (Hoffman, 1982: 170) or refer to a regularly recurring rhythm, such as a “Bo Diddley beat” (Keil and Feld, 1994: 104-6). “Beat” in other musicological accounts of rock, as previously cited, suggest the idea of temporal units such as those produced by the action of a metronome. Moore (1993: 198), for example, considers “beat” in terms of “regular stresses” and subsequently defines a “backbeat” as “beats 2 and 4 of every four-beat bar”.<sup>2</sup> We noted similar terminological unclarity in journalistic and sociological accounts of rock rhythm. In these accounts, the sound produced by the rhythm section of a rock group might be described in terms of its “beat”, but it is unclear as to whether such description relates to the accompaniment, or to “regular stresses”, or to some other temporal phenomenon within the music. It is obvious from the above that “beat” can take on several implications all of which relate in some way to the organisation of time in rock. Such terminological ambiguity, however, is counterproductive to any clear understanding of the nature of rock rhythms, including drumming. In short, we need to have precise terminology in order to make clear the musical-structural phenomena to which we are referring.

Amidst the apparent confusion as described above, some albeit small implicit consensus can be observed among rock commentators in the use of “beat” to intimate the more

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<sup>1</sup>Performance: not just live performance - more relevantly, music as executed during recording and subsequently perceived as performance by those listening to that recording.

<sup>2</sup>Keil (Keil and Feld, 1994 :62) employs the term “beat” in a similar sense.



general temporal organisation of notes.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, beat often infers a whole set of such temporal organisations of notes in a rock accompaniment. For example, Hoffman (1983: 170) notes that the Rolling Stone Record Guide defines “beat” simply as “rhythm” by which is meant “the actual *rhythmic components* of a particular song”. Brown (1992: 40) similarly states: “perhaps the most important defining quality of rock and roll is the beat, or the *rhythmic devices*” (i.e. the general temporal organisation of notes). Whilst “rhythm” is occasionally similarly employed by some commentators - as in the “rhythm [i.e. ‘beat’] of rock” - “rhythm” more commonly denotes sequences of notes produced by a single voice or instrument. In musicological analyses of rock, for example, temporal aspects of melodic material are more likely to be discussed in terms of “rhythm” rather than “beat”.<sup>4</sup>

The particular distinction between “beat” and “rhythm” affords a useful delineating device and one which I will adopt here in an attempt to clarify the use of such terms throughout this thesis. As a working definition, therefore, “rhythm” will refer to the temporal organisation of notes and rests.<sup>5</sup> A multi-part musical event consisting

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<sup>3</sup>“Note” in the performance or MIDI sense (used by millions of people every day in different sequencing packages), not a “note” on the page, i.e. a sound of determinable duration within a musical continuum. “Rests”, therefore, are discrete durations occurring before, after or between the notes of a musical continuum.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Bradby and Torode’s (1984) analysis of *Peggy Sue*, Everett’s (1985) analysis of *She’s Leaving Home*, and Tagg’s (1991) analysis of *Fernando*.

<sup>5</sup>Fast, successive repetitions of pitched or unpitched notes can easily be perceived as tremolo or drum rolls, for example, rather than as rhythms. It is useful, therefore, to determine an approximate maximum speed at which sequences of temporally equidistant notes can occur in order for such to be perceived as rhythm. In this context, we are also determining the minimum duration of a note. In order to do this, I will use the number of notes occurring per second in tremolo-type articulations as a reference point. Tagg (1979: 120) provides a table illustrating some “Musical Determinants of the Affective Meaning of Tremolo and Short, Quick Ostinato Figures”. Here, tremolo figures - arpeggio, ostinato, reiterated notes, sequence, tremolando - occurring in 41 predominantly Western Art music examples are detailed according to the number of notes per “beat” (i.e. pulse) and per minute. Utilizing such results, the average number of notes per second in tremolo figures ranges from around 9 to 10 executions. The minimum duration of a musical sound would therefore need to be around 0.1 of a



In his discussion of rhythm in African music, Arom (1994: 201) adopts the term “pulse” to denote “one element in a sequence of regularly spaced, i.e., temporally equidistant, reference points, which divide the musical continuum up into equal units”. In contrast to Arom’s chronometric conception of pulse, Epstein (1995: 29) states that pulse “enjoys a wide variety of onset qualities” which may “arise as we experience pulse in the vascular system”. Epstein (ibid.) subsequently qualifies his conception of pulse by noting that

Pulse in this embodiment exhibits a gradual and not always precise onset, its intensity growing with its temporal progress. That is pulse at times of rest. At peak moments of exercise, pulse (and heartbeat) are more forceful - harder, of quicker onset, not unlike *marcato* articulation. The spectrum is yet broader: the amorous pulse “throbs”; the passionate pulse “swells”; the fatigued pulse diminishes from onset as if in decrescendo; the pulse of depression, of severe illness, is feeble, its amplitude relatively steady. These examples find their complement in the characteristics of rhythmic pulse in music, augmented by infinite variations and by modes beyond this description.

In order to account for such temporal malleability associated with pulse, Epstein (1995: 23) states that there are two parallel systems of time apparent in musical performance and experience. Firstly, integral time, as exemplified by pulse, which denotes “the unique organizations of time intrinsic to an individual piece - time enriched and qualified by the particular experience within which it is framed”. Secondly, chronometric time, that results in “musical time divided into evenly spaced and in large part evenly articulated units”. Chronometric time is discussed by Epstein (ibid.: 23) in terms of its exemplification through “beat”, “measure”, “hypermeasure” and “larger segments”. Epstein’s conception of “beat”, therefore, is similar to Arom’s definition of “pulse” but “pulse”, according to Epstein, represents another level of rhythmic abstraction informed by interpretative aspects relating to musical performance.<sup>7</sup> Some

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<sup>7</sup>Epstein (1995: 29) does note that synchrony between beat and pulse can occur in Western art music and, in order to illustrate his notion, he subsequently cites the military march - and in particular, Sousa’s *Stars and Stripes Forever* - as an example of beat and pulse fully synchronized in time. Epstein’s (1995) text, however, largely involves an exploration of dissynchrony in various musical examples from the classical and romantic periods. Such discussion often revolves around rubato performance, where at the level of beat and pulse “modes of accent are in continually changing phases of coordination and dissynchrony” (Epstein, 1995: 29).

other definitions of “beat” and “pulse” were located in published musicological accounts. Van Der Merwe (1989: 110), for example, notes that “beat” is “not a regularly recurring accent, though such an accent may be used to mark it. The beat is, in essence, the musical reflection of a regular, physical, human motion”. There are, consequently, similarities between Van Der Merwe’s definition of “beat” and Epstein’s definition of “pulse”. Gammond (1991: 45), however, states that “beat” is a “regularly accented pulse in a bar of music, spoken of as so many beats to the bar - three =  $3/4$ , two =  $2/4$ , and so on”. Although no entry or definition of “pulse” (or indeed “rhythm”) is forthcoming, Gammond (1991: 45-6) subsequently clarifies his conception of “beat” in reference to jazz and other popular musics by noting that, in such contexts, “beat” has an added meaning:

Because the compelling character of jazz depends upon a regular and impelling disposition of the beats and, in the melodic line, phrasing which variously anticipates or moves away from the beat, to say that a group has a good beat is synonymous with saying, in jazz terms, that it “swings”.

Gammond’s conception of “beat”, therefore, is similar to Arom’s definition of “pulse” but its application to descriptions of jazz “beat” largely accord with Epstein’s conception of “pulse” in terms of such characteristics as rhythmic “anticipation” or “moving away from the beat”.

Despite some valuable insights provided by the authors just quoted, there is nevertheless blatant ambiguity about the terms “beat” and “pulse”. The following definitions are provided to avoid such ambiguity.

Given that we have previously defined beat in reference to the polyphonic workings of repetitive accompanimental rhythms - in accordance with many journalistic, sociological and musicological accounts of beat - it is logical, therefore, to adopt Arom’s conception of “pulse” as a temporal reference point for our working definitions of rhythm and beat. In slightly expanding Arom’s definition of “pulse”, in order to make clear that pulse can

either be sounded or unsounded, the word “pulse” will, throughout the rest of this thesis, denote recurring isochronous, temporally equidistant reference points, not necessarily sounded, that evenly divide a musical continuum. Pulse, therefore, serves as a temporal reference point for rhythm (as defined on page 50) and beat (as defined on page 51), pulse rates being expressible in terms of tempo, as evident from metronome markings. It should be underlined at this stage that “beat” will, in this thesis, not be understood as synonymous with “pulse” (as just defined). This departure from common parlance, as in “beats per minute”, is necessary in order to avoid conceptual ambiguity of the type already mentioned.

Having posited working definitions of rhythm, beat and pulse, we now need to structurally clarify the particular drumming rhythm which we are looking for in rock’n’roll: snare backbeat.

## 2.2 Snare Backbeat.

Some definitions of “snare backbeat” have been referred to in Chapter One. Hoffman (1983: 168), for instance, describes an “accented backbeat” as an “emphasis on the second and fourth beats of a nominal 4/4 measure” and subsequently refers to the snare rhythm notated in Figure 2.2 as a backbeat.

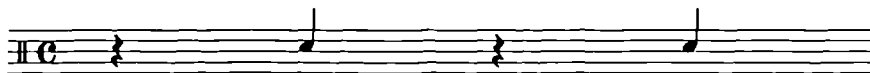


Figure 2.2 Snare backbeat.

Hoffman’s conception of snare backbeat accords with accounts provided by Friedlander (1996: 283), Moore (1993: 35), Savage (1989: 104), and Laing (1985: 61), as cited in Chapter One. Similar notions of snare backbeat were located in other

published accounts. For example, Charlton (1990: 261) defines backbeat as “beats two and four of a four-beat pattern, the accenting of which creates rock’s basic rhythm”. Similarly, Aquila (1989: 12), Byrnside (1975: 177), and Sykes (1992: 45) conceive snare backbeat as snare performances on “beats two and four” of a 4/4 bar.

Although there is general agreement among the aforementioned authors concerning what snare backbeat is - single snare executions on pulses 2 and 4 of a 4/4 bar -, it remains unclear in definitions and discussions of snare backbeat, such as those previously cited, whether the snare rhythms notated in Figure 2.3 and Figure 2.4, recurring in drum beats are qualifiable as backbeats.

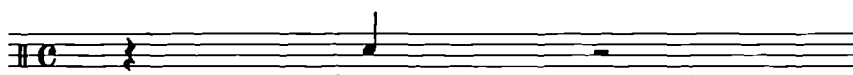


Figure 2.3 Snare execution on pulse 2.

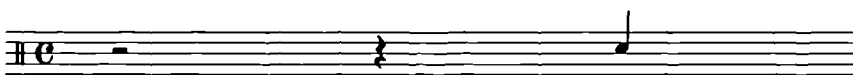


Figure 2.4 Snare execution on pulse 4.

I will slightly revise notions of snare backbeat as expounded by the aforementioned authors in order to account for occurrences of the snare rhythms notated above in rock’n’roll and pre-rock’n’roll musics. Indeed, the necessity to revise will become apparent from our forthcoming investigation of the stylistic origins of snare backbeat. The occurrence of rests prior to the sounding of a backbeat - a notion that is tacitly assumed in accounts of snare backbeat by the aforementioned authors - will also be taken into consideration in our working definition. Throughout this thesis “snare backbeat” will therefore infer snare drum performances on pulse 2 and/or 4, noncontiguous with snare drum performances on pulse 1 and/or 3, occurring in

quadruple meter drum beats.<sup>8</sup> References to “backbeat” in relation to other accompanimental rhythms, such as bass and rhythm guitar accompaniments, will infer similar performance practice. If accompanimental performances feature dynamically emphasised backbeats alongside performances on pulse 1 and/or 3, then such will be made clear. In relation to drumming, for example, snare on all four pulses, shuffle and swing rhythms on snare that include backbeat emphasis will be described as “snare on all four pulses with accented backbeat” (see Figure 2.5), “shuffle on snare with accented backbeat” (Figure 2.6) and “swing on snare with accented backbeat” (Figure 2.7).<sup>9</sup>

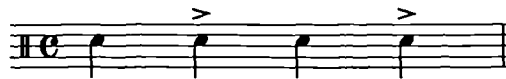


Figure 2.5 Snare on all four pulses with accented backbeat.

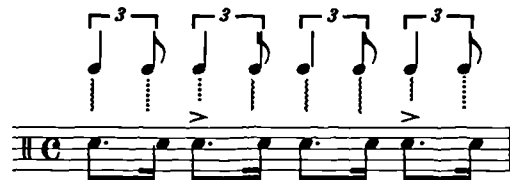


Figure 2.6 Shuffle on snare with accented backbeat.

<sup>8</sup>Meter: regular recurrence of highlighted and non-highlighted, emphasised and non-emphasised pulse. These occur through timbral differences, pitch differences, articulation, or hierachisation of pulse by some form of emphasis and accentuation. In reference to rock and most other popular musics, this patterning generally demarcates periodicities comprising either two or three pulses.

<sup>9</sup>As indicated in Figure 2.6 and Figure 2.7, long-short type rhythmic variations can occur in such rhythms.

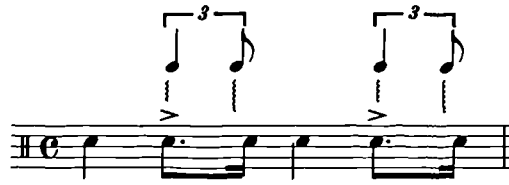


Figure 2.7 Swing on snare with accented backbeat.

Aside from the snare rhythms discussed above, there remains some other snare backbeat variations, discussed in published accounts of rock rhythm, that will be considered in the following account of rock'n'roll drumming.

As we have observed in Chapter One, Porter (1979: 52-53) posits the snare rhythm notated in Figure 2.8 as an “early rock figure” (here, Porter’s reference to “early rock” presumably refers to “rock’n’roll”).

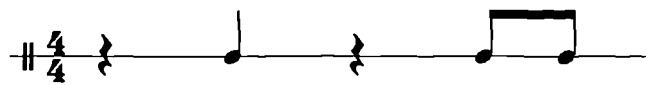


Figure 2.8 Early rock figure (Porter, 1979:53).

In contrast to Porter (1979: 52-53), Brown (1992: 43) in his chapter on “early rock” states that “accents on beats two and four .... began to emerge in the late 1940s” and this “beat pattern eventually became standard for rock drummers in the fast style, but with one change: beat two was further subdivided into two equal beats”. Brown (1992: 43) subsequently posits the rhythm notated in Figure 2.9 as a “characteristic drum beat of 1950s rock”.



Figure 2.9 1950s drum beat (Brown, 1992:43).

The two aforementioned snare backbeat variations will be considered in the following



investigation of rock'n'roll drumming. In order to avoid stylistic connotation, I will refer to Brown's (1992: 43) "characteristic drum beat of 1950s rock" as "snare backbeat variation 1" (see Figure 2.10) and Porter's (1979: 53) "early rock figure" as "snare backbeat variation 2" (see Figure 2.11). Sporadic occurrences of quaver subdivisions on pulse 2 and/or 4, will be described as "snare backbeat variation 3" (see Figure 2.12).



Figure 2.10 Snare backbeat variation 1.



Figure 2.11 Snare backbeat variation 2.



Figure 2.12 Snare backbeat variation 3.

Having defined snare backbeat and noted some rhythmic variations, the following section presents definitions of descriptors adopted in this study that relate to, firstly, the formal-structural habitat of snare backbeats and, secondly, the force of execution and audibility of snare backbeats in a recording.

The descriptors listed below will be used in reference to the formal-structural location of snare backbeat in a recording and, when necessary, within a 4/4 bar:

snare backbeats  
throughout a recording: regularly recurring snare rhythms as notated in Figure 2.2 (page 54) occurring in all formal-structural sections of a recording, such as instrumental solos, verses and

	choruses;
sporadic use of snare backbeats:	regularly recurring snare rhythms as notated in Figure 2.3 (page 55) and Figure 2.4 (page 55) intermittently occurring in a recording;
sectional use of snare backbeats:	occurrences of snare rhythms notated in Figure 2.2 in some formal-structural sections of a recording. “Sectional” use of “sporadic” backbeats will infer occurrences of snare rhythms notated in Figure 2.3 and Figure 2.4 in some formal-structural sections of a recording.

The force of execution and/or type of studio production that places snare backbeats in a foreground spatial location will be identified in discussions of drumming by the following descriptors:

weak snare backbeats:	audible within a recording but not prominent;
strong snare backbeats:	clearly audible due to the force of execution and/or studio production that places the backbeats in a foreground spatial location;
emphatic snare backbeats:	very prominent in a recording due to the force of execution and/or studio production that places the backbeats in a foreground spatial location.

Although the above distinctions regarding snare backbeat variations and performance may seem cumbersome, it will become evident from our subsequent investigation of drumming that without them it would soon prove difficult to communicate clearly about the use of snare backbeat in rock’n’roll and also various pre-rock’n’roll musics.

Further, detailed descriptions of snare backbeat will assist us in obtaining clear stylistic information regarding snare backbeat usage in rock’n’roll and pre-rock’n’roll musics.

Aside from snare usage, drum-kit performance in rock related musics typically includes rhythms executed on various other items of percussive hardware. Indeed, as we have noted in Chapter One, some commentators posit that particular bass drum and cymbal rhythms, along with snare backbeat, are necessary constituents of rock drumming (see, for example, Hoffman, 1983: 170 and Moore, 1993: 35). It is wise, therefore, to consider snare drum performances in rock'n'roll within the context of other drumming rhythms contained in a rock'n'roll drum beat. Unfortunately, bass drum performances are not clearly audible in rock'n'roll and most pre-rock'n'roll recordings, including reissued recordings available on compact disc. Therefore, discussions of drumming in this study must exclude reference to bass drum rhythms occurring in recorded performances. Contrariwise, cymbal performances are generally audible in rock'n'roll and many pre-rock'n'roll recordings. Subsequent discussions of drum beats will therefore include reference to particular cymbal rhythms.

### 2.3 Cymbal Rhythms.

Discussions of cymbal rhythms in this study will largely involve reference to the following four cymbal rhythm paradigms.

1. Shuffle rhythms, as noted in Figure 2.13

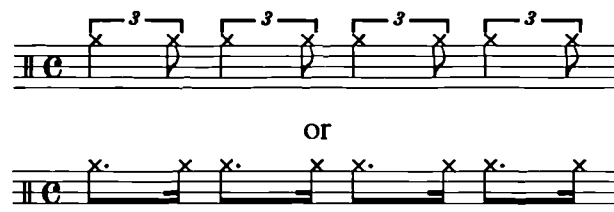
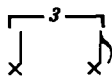
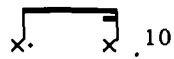


Figure 2.13 Shuffle rhythm on cymbals  
(including hi-hat).

and long-short type rhythmic variations ranging between  and



2. Swing rhythms, as notated in Figure 2.14

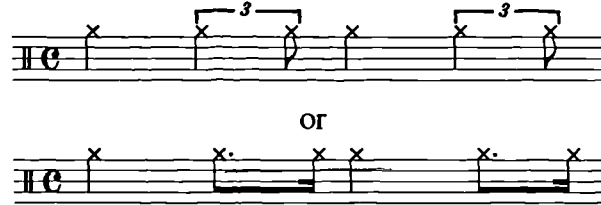


Figure 2.14 Swing rhythm on cymbals (including hi-hat).

and long-short type rhythmic variations ranging between  and .

3. Quaver triplet cymbal rhythms (described by Hoffman, 1983: 174 as a “triple beat”) as notated in Figure 2.15.



Figure 2.15 Quaver triplet rhythms on cymbals.

4. Even quaver rhythms on cymbals, as notated in Figure 2.16.



Figure 2.16 Even quaver rhythms on cymbals.

As we shall later see, the cymbal rhythms notated above often feature in rock’n’roll and pre-rock’n’roll drum beats. When cymbal rhythms are not included or not clearly audible in a recording, then such will be stated.

So far, we have clarified terminology relating to the description of, firstly, various

<sup>10</sup>See Porter (1979: 34-54), Hoffman (1983: 174-76) and Martin (1986: 38-41) for discussions of shuffle rhythm on cymbals occurring in rock.

cymbal rhythms and, secondly, snare backbeat, snare backbeat variations and performance. The sounding of snare backbeat with or without particular cymbal rhythms has been central to our discussion of terminology relating to drum beats. It is necessary, however, to add to our list of terms a descriptor relating to drum beats that do not contain snare backbeats but, rather, feature other rhythmic ostinati.

#### **2.4 Other Drum Beats.**

Discussion of drum beats that do not contain snare backbeats will, when appropriate, include reference to the cymbal rhythm paradigms as previously discussed or notations in order to detail particular drum and/or cymbal rhythms. For convenience, however, it was necessary to coin a descriptor covering a set of drum beats in a musical corpus that do not contain snare backbeats. Subsequent discussions of drumming in rock'n'roll and pre-rock'n'roll musics will therefore include reference to "other beats", inferring drum beats that contain recurring rhythms but do not contain snare backbeat or snare rhythms with backbeat accents. Statistical information detailing the frequency of occurrence of snare backbeats in a corpus of music will also include reference to "other beats" in order to reveal percentage differences between drum beats that contain snare backbeats and those that do not.

Some examples of "other beats" referred to in this study include the following.

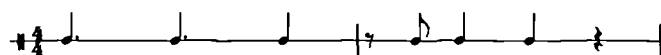
- Drum beats containing snare on all four pulses, shuffle on snare or swing on snare rhythms without any accentuation of the backbeat.
- Drum beats that feature cymbal rhythms, such as those previously mentioned, but do not include snare backbeats.
- Drum beats that include Bo Diddley rhythms. By "Bo Diddley" rhythms, I infer the drumming rhythms described and notated by Hoffman (1983: 177-8,

as discussed in Chapter 1.2) and other similar drum rhythms described by commentators as “Bo Diddley” beats in accounts of rock drumming.<sup>11</sup> We have noted in Chapter 1.2, that Hoffman (1983: 177-8) considers the “famous Bo Diddley beat” as a “frequently used beat pattern in rock and roll”. Similarly, Keil (Keil and Feld, 1994: 104) states that the Bo Diddley beat is “famous” as does Gillett (1983: 31) who posits that the Bo Diddley beat is “one of the most distinctive rhythms of rock and roll”. Consequently, in order to test the frequency of occurrence of Bo Diddley drumming rhythms in rock’n’roll and pre-rock’n’roll musics, recordings that contain Bo Diddley rhythms will be noted.

- Drum beats that contain even quaver and/or semiquaver and/or syncopated rhythms generally performed on tom-toms and cymbals. Drum beats featuring either some or all of the aforementioned rhythmic characteristics will be described as “Latin beats” throughout this study. “Latin”, in this context, infers a North American urban musical viewpoint, exemplified in literature on the subject of “Latin” rhythms in rock drumming,<sup>12</sup> rather than musical renditions from Central and South America. In order to make clear what I infer by “Latin beat”, two examples of rhythms that might occur in Latin drum beats are notated in Figure 2.17 and Figure 2.18.

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<sup>11</sup>For instance, Aronoff (1989: 46), in his discussion of drumming in the early recorded repertoire of Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry, refers to the following rhythm as a “Bo Diddley beat”:



Aronoff’s conception of a Bo Diddley beat is similar to that of Hoffman’s (1983: 177) and, consequently, a drum beat containing the aforementioned rhythm will be described as a Bo Diddley beat throughout this study.

<sup>12</sup>See, for example, Norbet Goldberg (1980) “New Directions in Latin Drumming” in Modern Drummer Vol.4 No.1, pp.42-4; Rick Latham(1982) “Latin Rock Patterns” in Modern Drummer Vol.6 No.3, pp.94-95; John Rae (1981) “Getting the Latin Flavour” in Modern Drummer Vol.5 No.2, pp.46-47; John Santos (1987) “Latin Rhythms on Drumset” in Modern Drummer Vol.11 No.11, pp.96-97; and Glen Weber (1987) “Latin Drumset Beats” in Modern Drummer Vol.11 No.2, p. 54.

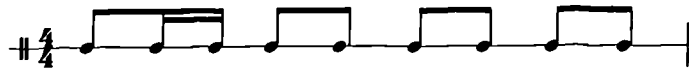


Figure 2.17 Latin drum beat rhythm, example 1.

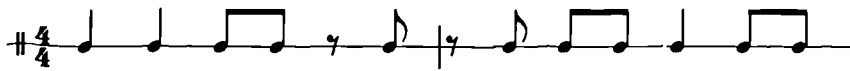


Figure 2.18 Latin drum beat rhythm, example 2.

Having defined what we are looking for in rock'n'roll drumming - snare backbeat, particular cymbal rhythms and various other beats -, we now need to demarcate the analytic sample that will serve as the basis for our subsequent investigation of rock'n'roll drumming.

## 2.5 Demarcating the Analytic Sample.

There are always obvious difficulties in determining what constitutes a particular body of music: which style characteristics, which period, which function, producers, users and so forth. It is obviously impossible at this stage to determine the body of recordings to be studied on the basis of musical style since, as we have already noted, there is considerable confusion as to what actually constitutes the musical style of rock'n'roll. In fact, in order to arrive at stylistic definitions of rock'n'roll drum beat, one aim of this thesis, we are obliged to select recordings based upon generic rather than stylistic terms (indeed, as we have observed in Chapter One, the classification of musics as "rock and roll" is largely based upon generic rather than stylistic criteria). Consequently, we will determine what the musical corpus of rock'n'roll is with reference to what musicians and recordings authors mention that are qualifiable as

rock'n'roll.

Gillett (1983: 23) asserts that from 1954 to 1956 rock'n'roll comprised five different styles of music. Each style of rock'n'roll is identifiable by its geographic location and the musical output of particular musicians (Gillett: 23-35). The styles and musicians identified are 1) northern band rock'n'roll (as exemplified by Bill Haley), 2) New Orleans dance blues (Fats Domino, Little Richard and later, Pat Boone), 3) Memphis country rock (Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Roy Orbison, Warren Smith, Conway Twitty, Charlie Rich and Jerry Lee Lewis), 4) Chicago rhythm and blues (Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley), and 5) vocal group rock'n'roll (The Platters). Gillett's explication of the five styles of rock'n'roll and his subsequent discussion of the development of rock'n'roll from 1957 to around 1961 include reference to particular recordings that are deemed representative of each stylistic phase. For example, Gillett (1983: 91) refers to *Dixie Fried* and *Blue Suede Shoes* in order to illustrate that an "aggressive sound" sometimes featured in the Memphis country rock style of Carl Perkins. Shaw (1975) also refers to geographic locations and recordings by particular musicians when discussing rock'n'roll's stylistic phases. For example, in discussing the beginning of rock'n'roll style, Shaw (1975: 156) states that:

If one had to pick the recording session at which rock'n'roll was born, it would be the date on April 12, 1954 at Pythian Temple ... at which Bill Haley and the Comets cut *Rock Around The Clock*. It would not be an easy choice because the '55 session in Chicago at which Chuck Berry recorded *Maybellene* could not be dismissed. Neither can one minimize the importance of *Ain't It A Shame*, cut in New Orleans by Fats Domino, or of *Only You*, recorded in Los Angeles by the Platters.

Leaving aside for the moment references to particular recordings, other accounts of rock'n'roll were located that name particular musicians as representative of the genre. For example, DeWitt (1985:45) notes that the first "golden age" of rock'n'roll, lasting from 1956 to 1957, was dominated by five musicians: Elvis Presley, Bill Haley, Little Richard, Fats Domino, and Chuck Berry. Other rock commentators - including Friedlander (1996: 26-59), Clarke (1995: 372-401), Peterson (1990: 97), George



(1988: 68), Hamm (1986: 711), Whitcomb (1983: 13), Elson (1982), Shaw (1975) and Belz (1969: 33-45, 61-72) among many others - all agree that the musical output of the following musicians, produced from around 1954 to 1960, typifies rock'n'roll:

- Chuck Berry;
- Fats Domino;
- Bill Haley;
- Buddy Holly;
- Jerry Lee Lewis;
- Carl Perkins;
- The Platters;
- Elvis Presley; and
- Little Richard.

Although the above list of musicians excludes artists such as Bo Diddley, Roy Orbison and others who recorded through the 1950s and are sometimes mentioned in accounts of rock'n'roll, the nine musicians listed above are regularly cited by rock commentators and will therefore be considered as representative of rock'n'roll genre. Consequently, the following investigation of snare backbeat in rock'n'roll drumming will limit itself to the recorded output of the aforementioned musicians.

In order to advance our investigation of snare backbeat in rock'n'roll drumming, we now need to determine which recordings by the aforementioned musicians will constitute our recordings sample. One possible methodology would be to look at rock'n'roll hit lists as a basis for our selection. Such a methodological criterion, however, is fraught with problems. Firstly, many recordings by the aforementioned musicians did not receive chart success. For example, Carl Perkins' *Dixie Fried*, cited by Gillett (1983: 91) in his discussion of Memphis country rock, did not enter any of the Billboard magazine pop charts (see Whitburn, 1991: 443). Secondly, how do we know that the recordings produced by our sample of rock'n'roll musicians which

achieved chart success are representative of those musicians' style rather than freak exceptions? If our sample of rock'n'roll musicians mostly produced music with different stylistic traits, then notions of rock'n'roll style based upon chart success would be informed by stylistic exceptions rather than rules. Thirdly, basing our sample on the number of recordings that achieved chart success would result in a relatively small corpus of recordings. Using Whitburn's (1991) Top Pop Singles, 1955-1990 as a guide, for example, our analytic sample would consist of only 203 recordings (see Table 2.1).

Chuck Berry	19 recordings (Whitburn, 1991: 47)
Fats Domino	43 recordings (Whitburn, 1991: 168-169)
Bill Haley	25 recordings (Whitburn, 1991: 251-2)
Buddy Holly	12 recordings (Whitburn, 1991: 271)
Jerry Lee Lewis	8 recordings (Whitburn, 1991: 343)
Carl Perkins	5 recordings (Whitburn, 1991: 443)
The Platters	31 recordings (Whitburn, 1991: 450-1)
Elvis Presley	44 recordings (Whitburn, 1991: 457-8)
Little Richard	16 recordings (Whitburn, 1991: 347-8)

Table 2.1 Number of recordings by representative rock'n'roll musicians that achieved chart success between 1955 and 1960 (Whitburn, 1991).

As evident in Table 2.1, using chart success as a criterion for selecting recordings would also result in comparatively small analytic samples for particular musicians.

Although another possible methodology would be to include recordings cited by rock commentators as a representative sample of rock'n'roll style, this criterion would also result in a small corpus of recordings. For example, Gillett (1983) refers to twenty-three recordings produced by Elvis Presley during the 1950s while Belz (1969: 38-45) refers to only sixteen recordings when discussing the "contribution of Elvis Presley" to

early rock'n'roll. Further, it is possible that rock'n'roll recordings cited by rock commentators might be stylistic exceptions rather than exemplars of a musician's output. One sure way of investigating drumming in the recorded output of our representative rock'n'roll musicians would be to use all extant recordings as an analytic sample. I have therefore attempted to locate all recordings available on reissue for subsequent analysis.

Our search for snare backbeats in rock'n'roll will begin from located recordings produced in 1954, that period generally marking the beginning of the rock'n'roll era (see Aquila, 1989: 12; Gillett, 1983: 24; Shaw, 1975: 156; and Belz, 1969: 16, for example). Consequently, Carl Perkins' first recordings and Bill Haley's earliest recordings undertaken in New York will be included in our sample.<sup>13</sup> In order to limit the analytic sample to recordings qualifiable as rock'n'roll, it was necessary to arrive at a date marking the "end" of the rock'n'roll era. Gillett (1983) intimates in Part 1 of his text - "They Got What They Wanted: Rock'n'Roll, 1954-61" - that 1961 marks the end of the rock'n'roll era. Shaw (1975) considers that rock'n'roll was peculiar to the 1950s, this notion largely evident in the title of his text: The Rockin' 50s, and DeWitt (1985:45) notes that the "golden age" of rock'n'roll ended around 1957. Whitcomb (1983: 16), however, posits 1960 as a "cut-off" date for rock'n'roll because of the following reasons:

Fresh from military service in Germany, neat and dapper and polite, Elvis and Company found that the old chugging, shuffling rock numbers weren't enough for a man who was now a film star and an all-around entertainer .... Buddy Holly and Eddie Cochran were both dead; Gene Vincent had gone "Over the Rainbow"; and Jerry Lee Lewis was licking his wounds after being hounded out of Britain by a puritan press campaign against his marriage to a thirteen-year-old second cousin. Little Richard had gone the other way by renouncing rock'n'roll as devil's music, throwing all his rings away, and becoming a lay preacher.

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<sup>13</sup>Although some commentators, such as Peterson (1990), consider 1955 as the beginning of the rock'n'roll era, adopting 1954 as an entry point permits early examples of rock'n'roll style - such as recordings by Haley and Perkins - to be included in this study. Pre-1954 recordings produced by some representative rock'n'roll musicians will be discussed later in this thesis.

Aquila (1989: 12-16), on the other hand, discusses rock'n'roll styles up to and including 1963.

As is evident from the above, opinions by rock commentators concerning the end of the rock'n'roll period vary. Although such musicians as Fats Domino, Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis Presley continued to record throughout the 1960s, some commentators mark the early 1960s as a cut-off date while others consider that rock'n'roll was peculiar to the 1950s. In order to limit the number of recordings included in the analytic sample, it was necessary to impose a notional date midway between the cut-off dates cited by such commentators as those previously mentioned. I have therefore restricted myself to investigating the recorded output of our representative rock'n'roll musicians produced up to and during 1960.

## **2.6 Rock'n'Roll Recordings Analytic Sample.**

To determine the frequency of occurrence of snare backbeats, other beats and cymbal rhythms in rock'n'roll, critical listening and mini-analysis<sup>14</sup> of over 800 rock'n'roll recordings has been completed. The recordings sample comprises the extant recorded repertoire of Fats Domino, Bill Haley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley and Little Richard, produced from 1954 to 1960, as contained on recently released compact disc sets (see Appendix Two for a listing of recordings sources). All recordings that were available on reissue during the period 1992-96 by Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly and The Platters are also included in the sample.

Many compact disc sets located included the extant recorded output of particular

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<sup>14</sup>By "mini-analysis" I infer descriptions of clearly audible musical-structural elements contained in a recording based on the stylistic terms and descriptors listed in Appendix 2.1.

rock'n'roll musicians and, consequently, additional takes of a particular song were included in such recordings sources. In order to cater for additional recorded material, the rock'n'roll recordings sample was apportioned as 1) Selected Sample and 2) Extant Recordings, which are discussed below.

#### Selected Sample.

The Selected Sample contains one example of each song title recorded by a rock'n'roll musician in a particular year. The following methodology informed the selection of particular song titles for the Selected Sample:

- If more than one recording of a song was available in the recordings source, such as a commercially released recording and any of its surviving alternate takes, only the commercially released recording was included in the Selected Sample.<sup>15</sup>
- If two or more takes of a song title were commercially released in a particular year, such as a film score version, LP version and a single release, only the single release is included in the Selected Sample.
- An alternate take is included in the Selected Sample if it is the only surviving recorded example of a particular song. For example, Fats Domino's previously unreleased *Every Night* (take 8) - surviving as an alternate take and included in the recordings source - is included in the Selected Sample.
- Occasionally, two or more alternate takes of a song recorded in a particular year were not commercially released.<sup>16</sup> In such rare instances, the earliest recording

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<sup>15</sup>By "commercially released" I infer the early release of a studio recording or recorded live performance in single, LP or film version format. "Commercially released", therefore, does not apply to recordings contained in the recordings sources listed in Appendix Two.

<sup>16</sup>I am referring here to such songs as Jerry Lee Lewis' *My Blue Heaven*, Memphis, 1959 (two takes are included in the recordings source) and Little Richard's *Long Tall Sally*, L.A., 1955 (three takes included in the recordings source). None of these recordings were "commercially released" (as previously defined).

is included in the Selected Sample.

- Some musicians re-recorded a song title over a period of years. For example, Little Richard recorded *Miss Ann* in Los Angeles during 1955 and again, in New Orleans, during 1956. Both recordings are included in the Selected Sample.

The above methodology was formulated in order to achieve a sufficient spread of material from recordings sources that included all extant recordings of a particular musician and recordings sources that included only commercially released recordings.

#### Extant Recordings.

The Extant Recordings sample consists of all extant recordings - including those contained in the Selected Sample - that are contained in the recordings source. This sample allows us to observe any deviation in drumming style between recordings included in the Selected Sample and alternate takes or additional versions of songs included in the Extant Recordings sample.

Statistical information displaying the percentage of accented backbeats and other beats evident in the Selected Sample and Extant Recordings sample is detailed in graph form. Grey bars included in graphs indicate the percentage of snare backbeats located in the sample and white bars indicate the percentage of other beats (see Table 2.2).

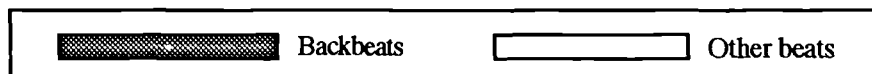


Table 2.2 Backbeat and other beats legend.

The number of rock'n'roll recordings that contain snare backbeat variation rhythms - as notated in Figure 2.5, Figure 2.6, Figure 2.7, Figure 2.10, Figure 2.11, and Figure

2.12 above - is included in statistical information detailing the frequency of occurrence of snare backbeats in a musical corpus.

The frequency of occurrence of cymbal (including hi-hat) rhythms, as previously discussed, is indicated in graph form. Various visual patterns representing particular cymbal rhythms are included in graph bars (see Table 2.3).

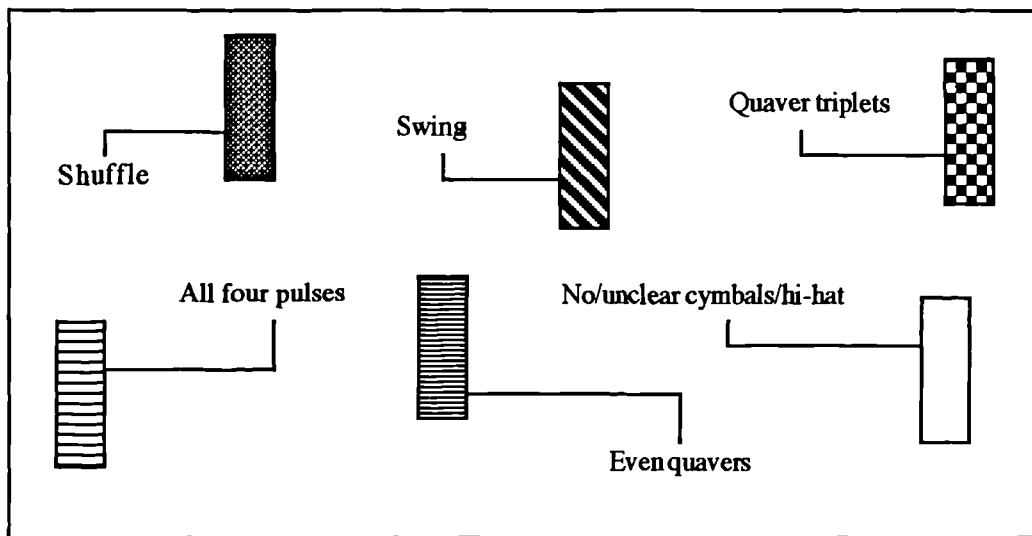


Table 2.3 Rock'n'roll cymbal/hi-hat rhythms: legend.

I will present the same sets of tables - backbeat/other beats table and cymbal rhythms table - for each representative rock'n'roll musician in the interest of consistency. Discussions of drumming will follow the tables. Where appropriate, brief reference will be made to the development of various musicians' musical style, as generally detailed in many small citations in books written about rock'n'roll. In instances where little or no substantial research has been undertaken regarding the musical style of a particular rock'n'roll musician, reference will be made to information contained in booklets accompanying the recordings source. In many instances, such booklets contain recent interviews with rock'n'roll musicians contained in our representative

sample and/or personnel involved in recording sessions. Many booklets accompanying the recordings source also include recent discographical research and, therefore, are useful in identifying drummers employed for particular recording sessions. Discussion of other accompanimental rhythms will be included when appropriate and when such rhythms are clearly audible in the recording. Having described all of the recorded material listed and mini-analysed in Appendix Two, conclusions will be presented at the end of this chapter.



**2.7 Snare Backbeat in Rock 'n' Roll.**

**2.7.1 Chuck Berry.**

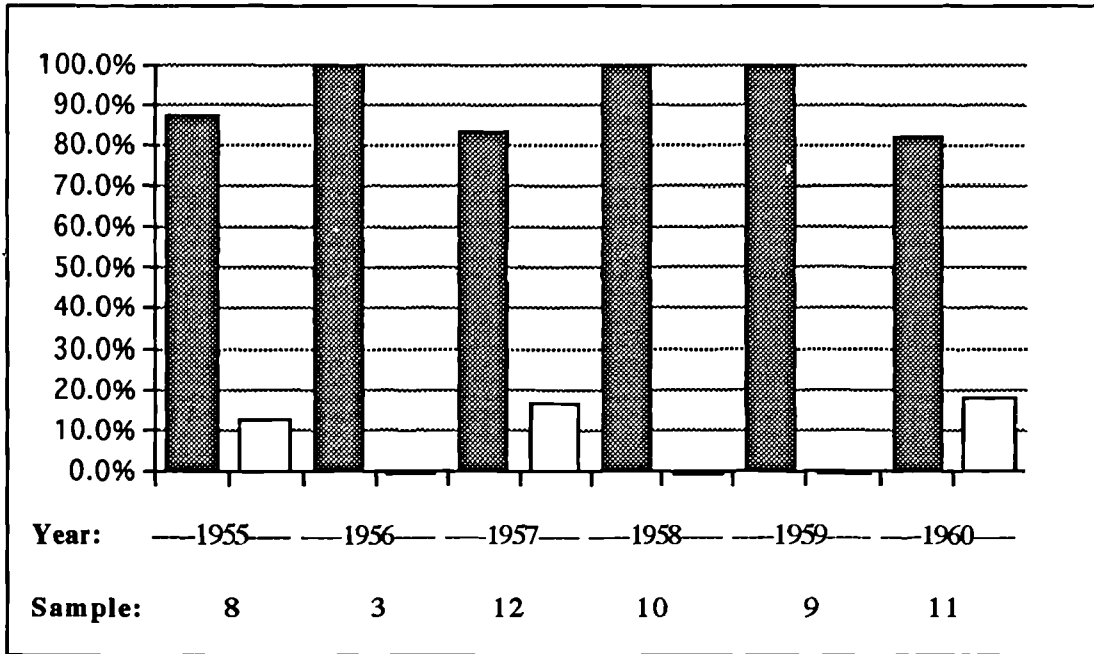


Table 2.4 Chuck Berry recordings (Selected Sample), 1955-60: backbeats.

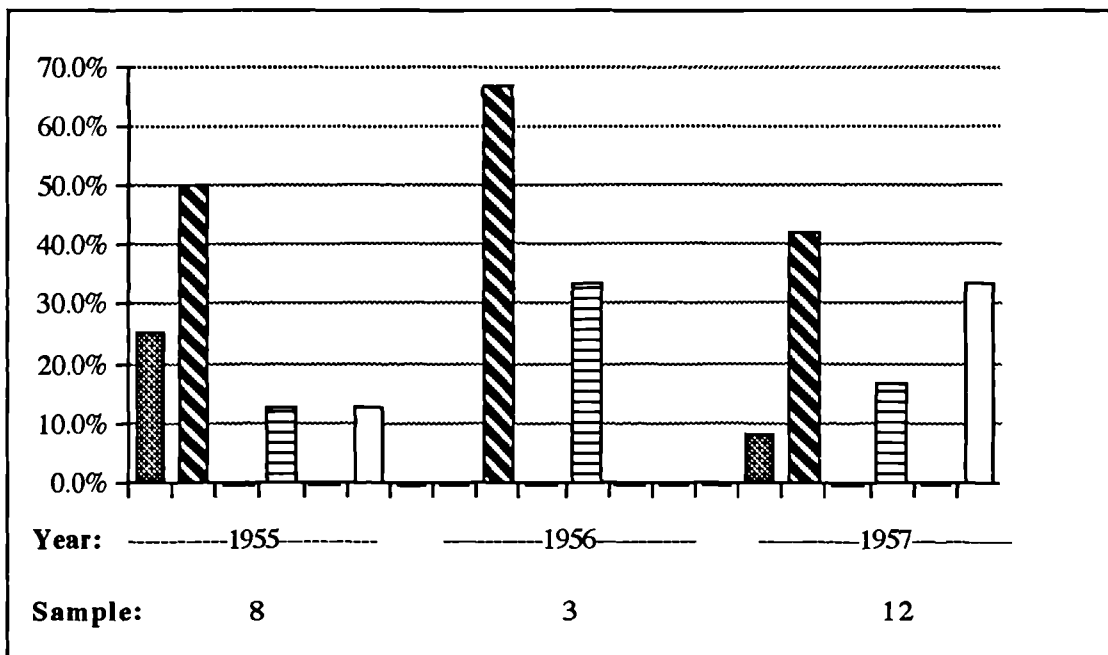
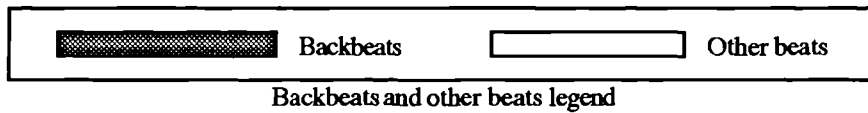


Table 2.5 Chuck Berry recordings (Selected Sample), 1955-57: cymbal rhythms.

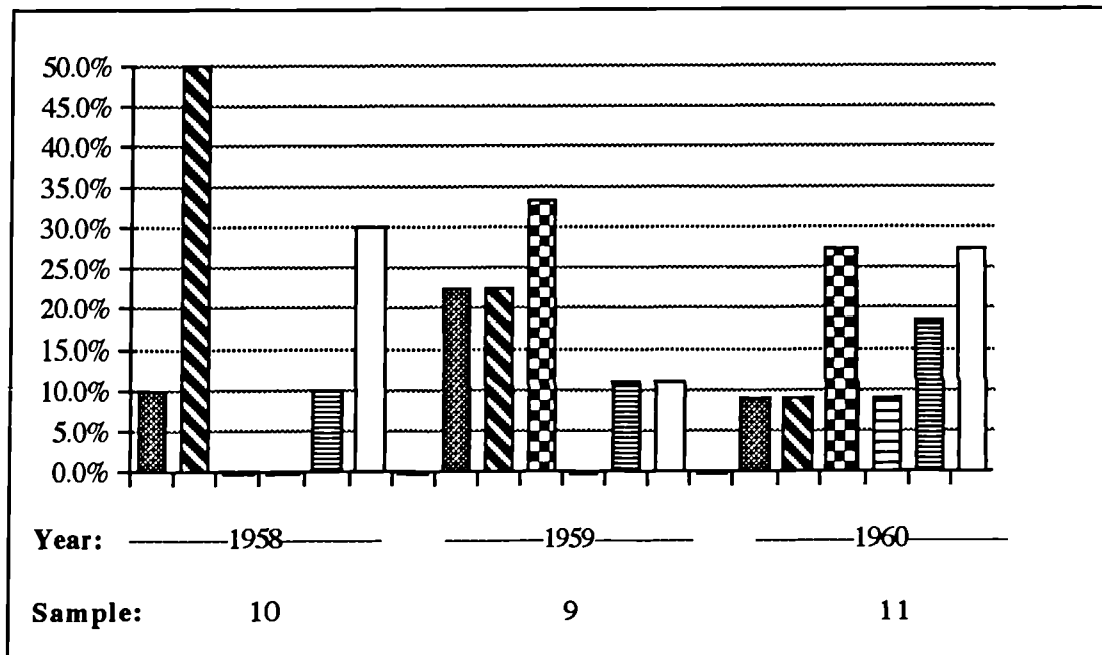
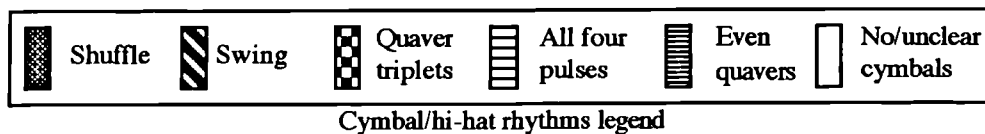


Table 2.6 Chuck Berry recordings (Selected Sample), 1958-60: cymbal rhythms.



Although Leadbitter and Slaven (1987: 85-88) list eighty-four songs recorded by Berry between 1955-1960, only fifty-three recordings were commercially available at the time of writing this thesis.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, our discussion of drum beats in Berry's recordings will mostly relate to the limited selection of recordings, contained in the Selected Sample (Appendix Two).

<sup>17</sup>The following thirty-one titles could not be located: *I've Changed* (1955), *Together (We Will Always Be)* (1955), *Drifting Heart* (1956), *Rock And Roll Music* (1956), *13 Question Method* (1957), *Night Beat* (1957), *Time Was* (1957), *21* (1958), *22 Blues* (1958), *Beautiful Delilah* (1958), *Blues For Hawaiians* (1958), *Hey Pedro (Pedro, Hey)* (1958), *House of Blue Lights* (1958), *It Don't Take But A Few Minutes* (1958), *Run Rudolf Run* (1958), *That's My Desire* (1958), *Time Was* (1958), *Vacation Time* (1958), *Broken Arrow* (1959), *County Line* (1959), *I Just Want To Make Love To You* (1959), *One O'Clock Jump* (1959), *Diploma For Two* (1960), *I Still Got The Blues* (1960), *Little Star* (1960), *MadLad* (1960), *Our Little Rendezvous* (1960), *Stop and Listen* (1960), *Surfing Steel* (1960), *The Way It Was Before* (1960), *Thirteen Question Method* (1960).

During the early fifties, Berry's home recordings included covers of Nat "King" Cole's songs (around half of Berry's repertoire at this time included such covers), Muddy Waters' songs, and "hillbilly songs", the latter term of which was commonly used in St. Louis as a reference to country and western music (Berry, 1987: 89).<sup>18</sup> One such "hillbilly" song was *Ida May*, later to be revised and recorded in 1955 by Berry as *Maybellene*.<sup>19</sup> Aside from *Maybellene*, Berry's first commercial recording session for Chess records produced three further songs: *Thirty Days*, *Wee Wee Hours* and *You Can't Catch Me*. According to Leadbitter and Slaven (1987: 85), the aforementioned recordings included Jasper Thomas drumming. Additional percussion on *Maybellene* and *Thirty Days* was provided by Leonard Chess performing on maracas.<sup>20</sup>

*Maybellene* includes an emphatic snare backbeat with probably a hi-hat playing on all four pulses, although the latter rhythm can not be clearly heard throughout the

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<sup>18</sup>As Malone notes (1974: 43-4), from 1925 the term "hillbilly" was generally used in association with country music from the rural South of the U.S.A.. "Hillbilly" was subsequently commonly used as a generic term for the commercial country music of Southern U.S.A..

<sup>19</sup>*Ida May*, initially recorded by Berry as a home demo tape on his reel-to-reel tape recorder, was forwarded to Leonard Chess of Chess Records (Chicago). Upon hearing this tape, and being astonished that a "hillbilly song could be written and sung by a black guy" (Berry, 1987: 100), Chess subsequently organized a recording session for Berry in Chicago, scheduled for May, 1955. During this session *Ida May* was renamed *Maybellene* and, according to Kamin (1976: 111), the recording exemplified a "simplified R & B style, rather than the country style he had originally planned to use". If Kamin is referring to the percussion beat of *Maybellene*, then it is perhaps the maracas shuffle rhythm which informs his opinion (we will later note in Chapter Four that shuffle rhythms characterized rhythm and blues accompanimental beat). To this listener, however, Berry's vocal declamations and inflections recorded in *Maybellene*, such as his declamation of "vehicle" as "vee-hi-cle", and rhythm guitar percussive emphases on pulses 2 and 4 are reminiscent of early fifties country and western style. In reference to Berry's rhythm guitar performance, I'm particularly referring here to Bill Haley's performances dating from the early 1950s (Haley's country and western style characteristics will be discussed in Chapter Five). Other recordings by Berry also suggest a country and western influence in their vocal delivery, lyric content and accompanimental style (listen to, for example, *Down Bound Train*, Chicago, 1955).

<sup>20</sup>Fish (1982a: 89) incorrectly states that Jerome Green (Bo Diddley's percussionist) played maracas on *Maybellene*.

recording.<sup>21</sup> In contraposition to Thomas' backbeat rhythm, Chess performs a shuffle rhythm on maracas with emphasis placed on pulses one and three. A similar drum and maracas beat exemplifies *Thirty Days*.

Excluding the aforementioned recordings produced in 1955, drumming in Berry's subsequent recordings was provided by either Fred Belows or Eddie Hardy, although Leadbitter and Slaven (1987: 85-86) state that there is a strong possibility that Berry plays all instruments, including drums, on the following recordings produced in Chicago during 1958: *Around & Around ('Round And 'Round)*, *Blues For Hawaiians*, *In-Go*, and *It Don't Take But A Few Minutes*. In considering such discographical information and referring to the mini-analyses of Berry's located recorded output included in Appendix Two, the following conclusions regarding snare drum usage apply. Firstly, Berry's recorded output from 1955 to 1960 mostly includes either strong or emphatic snare backbeats and such are executed throughout all sections of one and the same recording.<sup>22</sup> Only two recordings - *Berry Pickin'* (Chicago, 1955) and *Sweet Sixteen* (Chicago, 1960) - include sectional use of snare backbeats. Those few recordings that do not contain snare backbeats will be discussed below. Secondly, three recordings, dating from 1959, include snare backbeat variation 1 rhythms.<sup>23</sup> Thirdly, six recordings include backbeats alongside drum rhythms executed on all four

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<sup>21</sup>In discussing his first recording session, Berry (1987: 103) recalls that the drums were recorded by three microphones. Regardless, the final mix of the recording features drum usage rather than cymbal rhythms.

<sup>22</sup>Exceptions here include *School Day* (Chicago, 1957) and *Memphis Tennessee* (Chicago, 1958) both of which include weakly accented backbeats.

<sup>23</sup>The song titles of these and subsequent recordings that exhibit snare backbeat variations (as previously notated) will be listed in the conclusion to this chapter.

pulses.<sup>24</sup> Finally, alternate use of drummers in Berry's recorded performances did not significantly affect the balance between recordings that contain snare backbeats and those employing other beats.

As illustrated in Table 2.4 (page 74), some recordings in Berry's output contain other beats.<sup>25</sup> The following five recordings conform to this category. *La Juanda* (Chicago, 1960) contains a Latin drum beat, mostly performed on tom-toms and with emphasis placed on pulses 1 and 3.<sup>26</sup> *Down Bound Train* (Chicago, 1955) mostly includes swing rhythms on snare with brushes and *Deep Feelin'* (Chicago, 1957) includes cymbal rhythms (or perhaps snare drum with brushes) performed on all four pulses. Triplet quaver rhythms executed on an unidentified percussion instrument are evident in the latter recording. *Lucky So And So* (Chicago, 1960) features snare with brushes on all four pulses with some use of swing and shuffle snare rhythms, and *Bye, Bye Johnny* (Chicago, 1960) includes snare executions on pulses 1 and 3 alongside even quaver rhythms on cymbals.

Results from a mini-analysis of cymbal rhythms in Berry's output, as illustrated in Table 2.5 (page 74) and Table 2.6 (page 75), reveal that, firstly, swing and shuffle cymbal rhythms largely figured in recordings from 1955 to 1957; secondly, even

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<sup>24</sup>*Sweet Sixteen* (Chicago, 1960) includes triplet rhythms on snare with brushes with strong backbeat emphasis in the introduction. *Merry Christmas Baby* (Chicago, 1958) and *Worried Life Blues* (Chicago, 1960) include quaver triplet rhythms on snare with strong and emphatic snare backbeats. *I've Changed* (Chicago, 1957) includes a shuffle rhythm on snare with a strong backbeat and *Memphis Tennessee* (Chicago, 1958) contains a shuffle rhythm executed on tom-toms with a weak accent on pulse 2. *In'Go* (Chicago, 1958) contains a snare rhythm on all 4 pulses with a strong backbeat.

<sup>25</sup>Unless otherwise stated, by "output" I am referring to the total number of recordings I have been able to locate. These are listed in Appendix Two.

<sup>26</sup>*Berry Pickin'* (Chicago, 1955) includes a Latin beat alongside a consistent use of an emphatic snare backbeat in the guitar solo. Because this recording contains sectional use of snare backbeat it is included in statistical information detailing backbeat usage in Berry's output.

quaver cymbal rhythms were employed in drum beats dating from 1958; and, thirdly, from 1959 triplet cymbal rhythms were included in most drum beats. Within the context of Berry's output, the inclusion of even quaver and triplet cymbal rhythms represents an innovative development in rock'n'roll drumming. As we shall see, a similar conversion to such cymbal rhythms is evident in the recorded output of other musicians included in our selected rock'n'roll sample.

2.7.2 Antoine 'Fats' Domino.

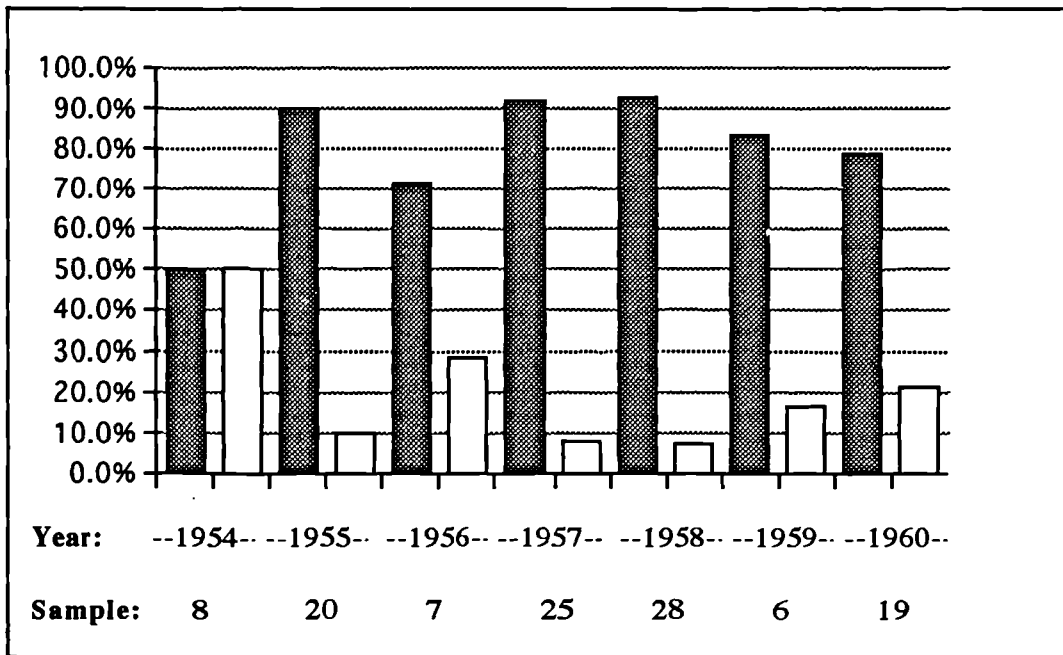


Table 2.7 Fats Domino recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-60: backbeats.

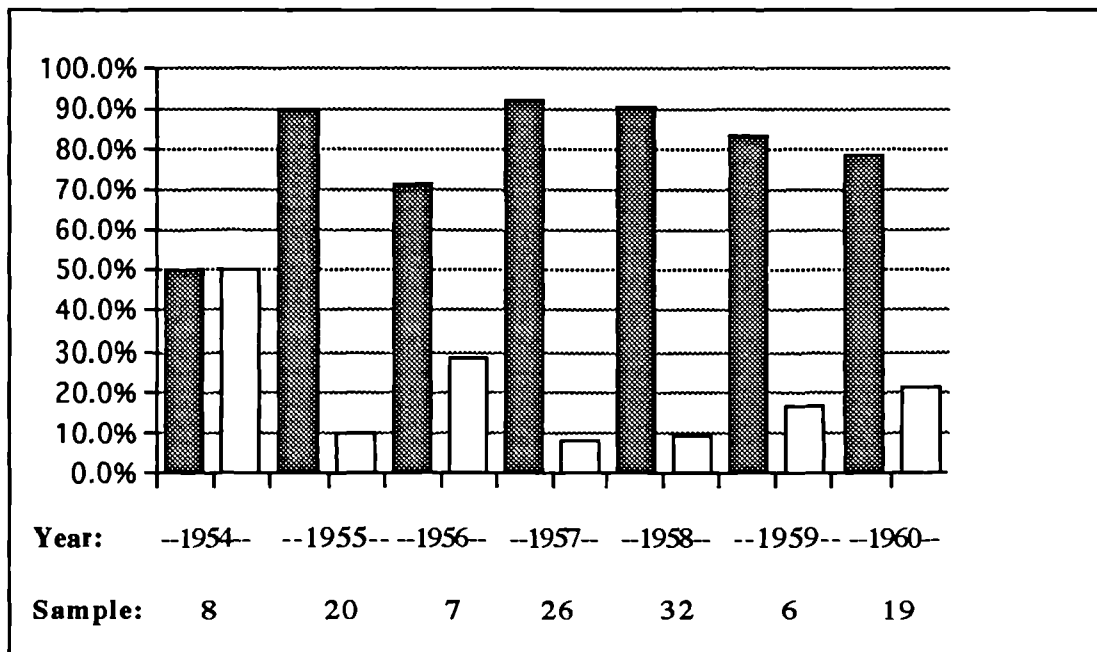
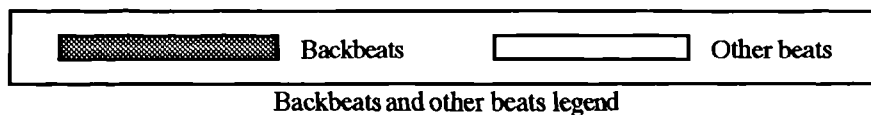


Table 2.8 Fats Domino recordings (Extant Recordings), 1954-60: backbeats.



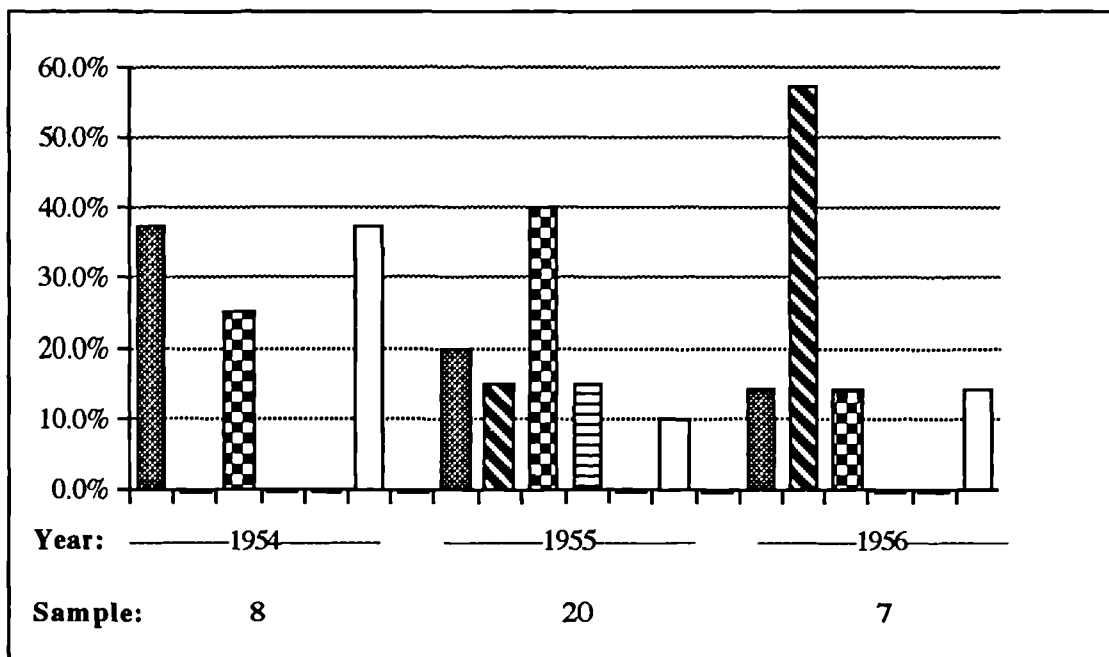


Table 2.9 Fats Domino recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-56: cymbal rhythms.

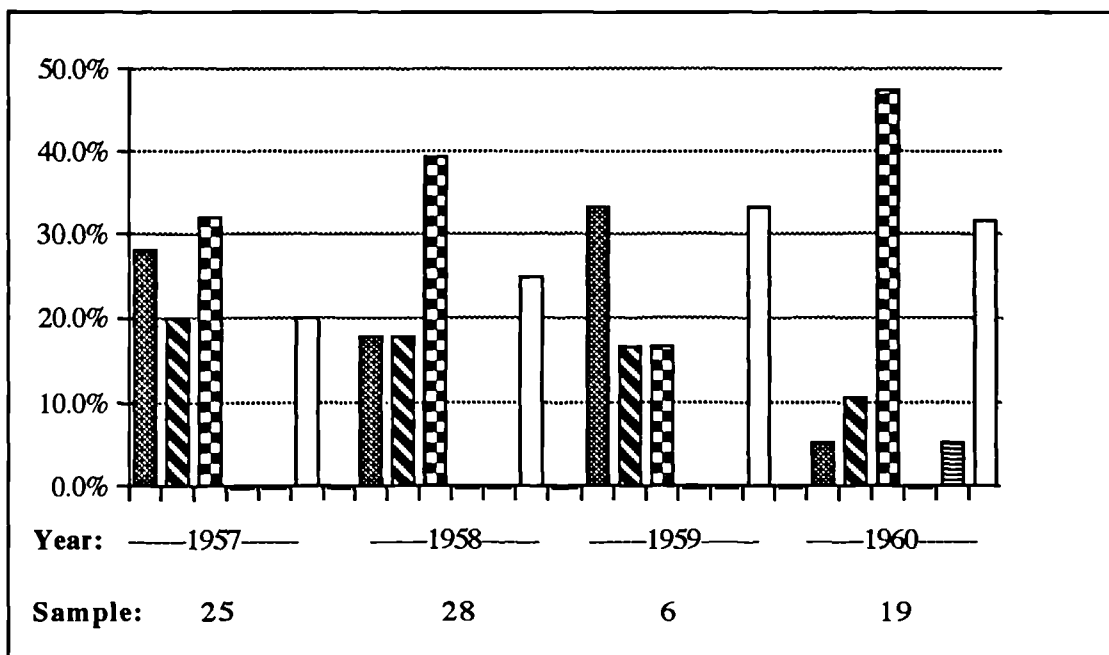
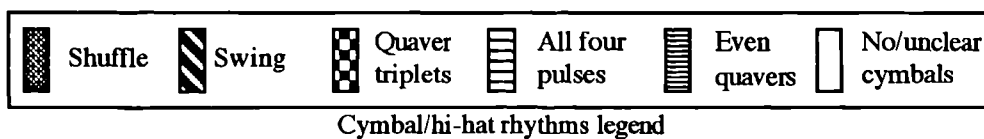


Table 2.10 Fats Domino recordings (Selected Sample), 1957-60: cymbal rhythms.





The complete extant recorded output of Fats Domino, dating from 1954 to 1960, was located and mini-analyzed.<sup>27</sup> Five recordings located were additional takes of commercially released recordings. Consequently, Domino's recorded output was apportioned according to firstly, a Selected Sample and, secondly, Extant Recordings.

As illustrated in Table 2.7 and Table 2.8 (page 80), there is no significant deviation regarding the occurrence of snare backbeats in the Selected Sample and Extant Recordings samplings. Indeed, the additional takes of *Valley of Tears* (New Orleans, 1957, one take), *Lil' Liza Jane* (New Orleans, 1958, one take) and *Margie* (New Orleans, 1958, two takes), as listed and mini-analyzed in Appendix Two, contain identical drumming beats to their commercially released recordings. However, the additional take of *The Sheik of Araby* (New Orleans, 1958) contains a Latin beat and a Bo Diddley clave rhythm whereas the commercially released recording of this track features an emphatic snare backbeat with shuffle rhythms on cymbals. Having noted this one deviation of drum beat in Domino's extant recorded output, the following discussion will relate to drumming in Domino's recorded output contained in the Selected Sample.

According to Wouter, Wieze and Zwisohn (1993: 51-56), drumming in the majority of Domino's recordings was provided by three New Orleans musicians: Cornelius "Tenoo" Coleman, Earl Palmer and Charles Williams. Such discographical information is summarized in Table 2.11. Similarly, Leadbitter and Slaven (1987: 351-355) allocate the aforementioned drummers to particular recording sessions, although some minor variations do occur in their discography.<sup>28</sup> The inclusion of Coleman in such

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<sup>27</sup>A discussion of Fats Domino's pre-rock'n'roll recordings will be undertaken in Chapter Four.

<sup>28</sup>For example, Leadbitter and Slaven (1987: 353) record Cornelius Coleman as the drummer on most of Domino's 1957 extant recorded output.

discographical information, however, is refuted by Earl Palmer (as quoted in Fish, 1982b: 63), who states that

Ninety percent of Fats' recordings were done in New Orleans before I left there, and he never recorded anything other than with Dave [Bartholomew] and me playing on it .... Cornelius never really recorded with Fats. He played in Fats' band and travelled with him until he died.<sup>29</sup>

1954-1955	Cornelius Coleman: all recordings.
1956	Charles Williams: <i>Don't Know What's Wrong, Ida Jane, When My Dreamboat Comes Homes.</i>  Cornelius Coleman: <i>What's The Reason I'm Not Pleasing You, The Twist Set Me Free, Blueberry Hill, Honey Chile.</i>
1957	Earl Palmer: all recordings except the following.  Cornelius Coleman: <i>As Time Goes By, Town Talk, Twistin' The Spots, Sailor Boy, It Must Be Love, The Big Beat, I Want You To Know.</i>
1958	Cornelius Coleman: all recordings except for the following.  Unknown drummer: <i>Lazy Woman.</i>  Charles Williams: <i>Whole Lotta Lovin', I Miss You So, Margie, I'll always Be In Love With You.</i>  Earl Palmer: <i>If You Need Me, Hands Across The Table, So Glad, Darktown Strutters Ball, Margie, The Sheik of Araby, My Heart is Bleeding, I Hear You Knocking, Lil' Liza Jane, Every Night, When The Saints Go Marching In, Country Boy.</i>
1959-60	All Cornelius Coleman.

Table 2.11 Fats Domino recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-1960: drummers (Keesing, Wieze and Zwisohn, 1993: 51-56).

Palmer's testimony regarding Coleman's performances with Domino finds support in the recollections of New Orleans drummer Charles Williams. In recounting his early stylistic influences, Williams (as quoted in Jones, 1983: 22) states that Coleman, a drummer who Williams "idolized", was performing with Domino's touring band. Williams (ibid.: 23) subsequently notes that

Fats would drive to my house to get me to cut his [recording] sessions. He

<sup>29</sup>When interviewed in 1983, Palmer (as quoted in Flans, 1983: 12) similarly recounts that he was drumming on all of Domino's recordings and states that Coleman was playing in Domino's touring band only.

wouldn't use Tenoo [Coleman] because Tenoo'd run away with a tempo, run completely away with it.

It is necessary to clarify drumming personnel in order to discuss drum beats in Domino's rock'n'roll recorded output. Consequently, we will accept Williams' and Palmer's testimony that Coleman performed only in Domino's touring band and was not employed for Domino's recording sessions. Our discussion of drum beats in Domino's recordings will therefore mostly relate to the drumming of Earl Palmer. Williams' drumming will be referenced in accordance with the discographical information provided by Keesing, Wieze and Zwisohn (as summarized in Table 2.11 above).

As illustrated in Table 2.7, most of Domino's extant recorded output includes snare backbeats. Mini-analyses of Domino's recordings, included in Appendix Two, reveal that backbeats are either strongly or emphatically executed. However, some recordings containing snare backbeats included additional snare rhythms. The type of snare rhythm and its frequency of occurrence in Domino's extant recorded output is detailed below:

- eleven recordings were located that include shuffle rhythms on snare with accented backbeats;
- three recordings include swing rhythms on snare with accented backbeats;
- one recording, *My Girl Josephine* (New Orleans, 1960), includes even quaver rhythms executed on the snare drum and with backbeat emphasis; and
- seven recordings dating from 1957 include snare backbeat variations 1, 2 or 3.

Table 2.9 and Table 2.10 (page 81) indicate that snare backbeats are usually accompanied by shuffle, quaver triplet or swing rhythms executed on cymbals. Only one recording, *It Keeps Rainin'* (New Orleans, 1960), contains even quaver executions on cymbals. As we shall see, the usage of the aforementioned cymbal rhythms by

Palmer and Williams generally corresponds with particular accompanimental piano rhythms performed by Domino.

Domino's recordings produced from 1954 to 1960 are characterized by four piano accompanimental paradigms that generally consistently recur throughout a recording. These paradigms, explained below, will be referred to as 1) chordal quaver triplet piano accompaniment; 2) piano jump-based accompaniment (see Figure 2.19); 3) piano shuffle based accompaniment (see Figure 2.20); and 4) boogie piano based accompaniment (see Figure 2.21). Correspondences between the aforementioned piano accompaniment paradigms and drum beats will be noted in the following discussion.

The nomenclature "chordal quaver triplet" infers a consistent use of chordal piano executions in quaver triplet rhythms.<sup>30</sup> Recordings that contain this piano accompaniment mostly include either triplet (see Table 2.12 below) or shuffle (Table 2.13) rhythms on cymbals, the latter rhythm of which is mostly articulated by long-short quaver triplet based rhythms rather than semiquaver rhythms. If we accept Keesing, Wieze and Zwisohn's (1993: 51-56) discographical information regarding Williams' involvement in Domino's recordings, then Williams' only performance that contains triplet cymbal based beats is *I Miss You So* (New Orleans, 1958). All other recordings listed in Table 2.12 include Earl Palmer drumming.<sup>31</sup> Earl Palmer,

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<sup>30</sup>The listing of triplet piano rhythms in Table 2.12 and Table 2.13 cite recordings that employ chordal triplet piano rhythms, rather than occasional and usually non-chordal triplet piano rhythms comprising piano improvisations. Chordal piano triplet and non-chordal improvised-type piano executions are not delineated in Appendix Two. Rather, any inclusion of such stylistic characteristics in a recording is noted by the descriptor "triplet piano rhythms". Therefore, the recordings listed in these tables represent another level of analytic abstraction of the mini analyses presented in Appendix Two.

<sup>31</sup>However, it is most likely that Williams was influenced by Palmer's adoption of triplet cymbal rhythms, as revealed by recorded evidence dating from the late 1950s. For example, Williams was drumming with Roy Brown during 1956-1958 and incorporated quaver triplets on ride or hi-hat and a snare backbeat in the following recordings: *Everybody* (New Orleans, 1956), *Crying Over You* (New Orleans, 1957), *I'm Convicted of Love* (New Orleans, 1957), *I'm In Love* (New Orleans, 1957), *Ivy League* (New Orleans, 1957), and *Sail On Little Girl* (New Orleans, 1957). These recordings are included in Roy Brown: The Complete Imperial Sessions, Capitol Records compact disc: 7243 8

therefore, established the use of triplet cymbal rhythms in Domino's recorded repertoire.

<b>Chordal quaver triplet piano accompaniment, snare backbeat and quaver triplets on cymbals.</b>		
<i>I Lived My Life</i> , 1954. <i>Love Me</i> , 1954. <i>Blue Monday</i> , 1955. <i>Don't Blame It On Me</i> , 1955. <i>Helping Hand</i> , 1955. <i>I Can't Go On</i> , 1955. <i>Poor Me</i> , 1955. <i>So-Long</i> , 1955. <i>Troubles Of My Own</i> , 1955. <i>Blueberry Hill</i> , 1956. <i>I Want You To Know</i> , 1957. <i>My Happiness</i> , 1957. <i>My Love For Her</i> , 1957. <i>Telling Lies</i> , 1957.	<i>True Confession</i> , 1957. <i>Valley Of Tears</i> , 1957. <i>What Will I Tell My Heart</i> , 1957. <i>Would You?</i> , 1957. <i>Coquette</i> , 1958. <i>Hands Across The Table</i> , 1958. <i>I Hear You Knocking</i> , 1958. <i>I Miss You So</i> , 1958. <i>If You Need Me</i> , 1958. <i>My Heart Is Bleeding</i> , 1958. <i>One Of These Days</i> , 1958. <i>Once In A While</i> , 1958.	<i>Young School Girl</i> , 1958. <i>Easter Parade</i> , 1959. <i>Before I Grow Too Old</i> , 1960. <i>Fell In Love On Monday</i> , 1960. <i>Magic Isles</i> , 1960. <i>Natural Born Lover</i> , 1960 <i>Rising Sun</i> , 1960. <i>Tell Me That You Love Me</i> , 1960 <i>Three Nights A Week</i> , 1960. <i>What A Price</i> , 1960.

Table 2.12 Fats Domino recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-60: triplet piano/cymbal-based beats.

<b>Chordal quaver triplet piano accompaniment plus:</b>			
<b>Snare backbeat; swing, shuffle or no cymbal rhythms.</b>	<b>No snare backbeat; quaver triplet rhythms on cymbal.</b>	<b>No snare backbeat; other or no cymbal rhythms.</b>	<b>Snare and/or cymbal rhythms unclear.</b>
<u>Shuffle on cymbal</u> <i>Ain't It A Shame</i> , 1955. <i>Don't You Know</i> , 1955. <i>It Must Be Love</i> , 1957. <i>How Can I Be Happy</i> , 1958. <i>I Want To Walk You Home</i> , 1959. <u>No cymbal rhythms</u> <i>I'm In The Mood For Love</i> , 1957.	None.	<u>Other cymbal rhythms</u> <i>Baby Please</i> , 1954 [hi-hat on backbeat]. <i>Help Me</i> , 1955 [cymbal on all 4 pulses]. <u>No cymbal rhythms</u> <i>Oh Ba-a-by</i> , 1955. <i>I've Been Around</i> , 1959. <i>Walking To New Orleans</i> , 1960.	None.

Table 2.13 Fats Domino recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-60: chordal piano triplet-based beats.

By “jump” and “shuffle” piano accompaniments, I infer Domino’s accompaniments that mostly include consistent use of long-short types of rhythms executed on all four pulses. Figure 2.19 details a Domino jump piano accompaniment regularly used by Domino in his post-1955 recordings. The descriptor “Domino jump” relates to the pitch contour of the piano accompaniment which “jumps” from bass to treble registers.



Figure 2.19 Domino jump piano accompaniment.

The rhythm of Domino jump accompaniments varies from quaver triplet rhythms, as notated in Figure 2.19, to dotted quaver, semiquaver executions or executions located between these two long-short type rhythms. A listing of drum beats that accompany Domino jump piano accompaniments is included in Table 2.14 below.

Domino jump piano accompaniment plus:		
Snare backbeat and cymbal rhythms.	Snare backbeat and unclear or no cymbal rhythms.	No snare backbeat and cymbal or no cymbal rhythms.
<u>Swing on cymbal</u> <i>My Blue Heaven</i> , 1955. <i>Ida Jane</i> , 1956. <i>When My Dreamboat Comes Home</i> , 1956. <i>Don't Deceive Me</i> , 1957. <i>Oh Whee</i> , 1957. <i>The Rooster Song</i> , 1957. <i>Town Talk</i> , 1957. <i>Country Boy</i> , 1958. <i>Lil' Liza Jane</i> , 1958. <i>Whole Lotta Loving</i> , 1958. <i>Don't Come Knockin'</i> , 1960. <u>Shuffle on cymbal</u> <i>When I Was Young</i> , 1959. <i>So Glad</i> , 1958. <u>Quaver triplets on cymbal</u> <i>My Love For Her</i> , 1957. <i>One Of These Days</i> , 1958. <u>Even quavers on cymbal</u> <i>It Keeps Rainin'</i> , 1960. <i>Stack And Billy</i> , 1957 [even quavers on unidentified percussion].	<u>Unclear cymbal rhythms</u> <i>All By Myself</i> , 1955. <i>Put Your Arms Around Me Honey</i> , 1960. <u>No cymbal rhythms</u> <i>Howdy Podner</i> , 1955. <i>I Still Love You</i> , 1957. <i>I'm Walkin'</i> , 1957. <i>Stack And Billy</i> , 1957. <i>Darktown Strutters' Ball</i> , 1958. <i>I'm Gonna Be A Wheel Someday</i> , 1958. <i>Isle Of Capri</i> , 1958. <i>Margie</i> , 1958. <i>When The Saints Go Marching In</i> , 1958. <i>Yes, My Darling</i> , 1958. <i>My Girl Josephine</i> , 1960. <i>Shu Rah</i> , 1960.	<u>Swing on cymbal</u> <i>What's The Reason I'm Not Pleasing You</i> , 1956. <u>Unclear cymbal rhythms</u> <i>La-La</i> , 1960.

Table 2.14 Fats Domino recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-60: Domino jump-based beats.

Domino shuffle piano accompaniments consist of regularly recurring long-short type homophonic rhythmic executions on a single chord, as notated in Figure 2.20. Off-pulse piano accentuations generally figure in such accompaniments. Recordings that include shuffle piano accompaniments and various drum beats are listed in Table 2.15.

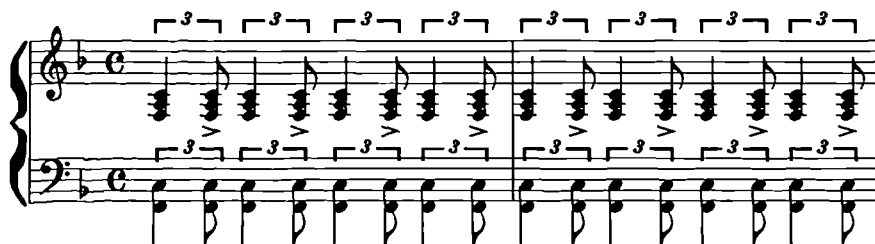


Figure 2.20 Domino shuffle piano accompaniment.

<b>Domino shuffle piano accompaniment and</b>	
<b>Snare backbeat and cymbal rhythms or no cymbal rhythms.</b>	<b>No snare backbeat and cymbal or no cymbal rhythms.</b>
<u>Swing on cymbal</u> <i>Little Mama</i> , Hollywood, 1954. <i>I'm In Love Again</i> , 1955. <i>What's Wrong?</i> , 1955. <i>Honey Chile</i> , 1956. <u>Shuffle on cymbal</u> <i>La-La</i> , 1955. <i>Don't Know What's Wrong</i> , 1956 [triplets on ride in solo]. <i>Don't You Know I Love You</i> , 1958. <i>I'll Always Be In Love With You</i> , 1958. <u>No cymbal rhythms</u> <i>Sick and Tired</i> , 1958 [even quavers in piano right hand].	<u>Swing on cymbal</u> <i>I'll Be Glad When You're Dad You Rascal You</i> , 1958. <u>Shuffle on cymbal</u> <i>I Know</i> , 1954. <u>No cymbal rhythms</u> <i>You Can Pack Your Suitcase</i> , 1954. <i>The Twist Set Me Free</i> , 1956.

Table 2.15 Fats Domino recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-60: piano shuffle-based beats.

Domino boogie piano accompaniments include off-pulse chordal executions in the treble register and executions on all four pulses in the bass register (see Figure 2.21). The rhythm of Domino's boogie piano accompaniments can vary from such dotted rhythms notated in Figure 2.21 to quaver triplet variations or rhythmic executions located between these two long-short type rhythms. Table 2.16 details Domino's boogie piano based beat typology.



Figure 2.21 Domino boogie piano accompaniment.



<b>Boogie piano accompaniment plus:</b>	
<b>Snare backbeat and cymbal rhythms.</b>	<b>No snare backbeat and cymbal rhythms.</b>
<u>Shuffle on cymbal</u> <i>The Sheik Of Araby</i> , 1958. <u>Swing on cymbal</u> <i>Be My Guest</i> , 1959.	<u>Shuffle on cymbal</u> <i>You Always Hurt The One You Love</i> , 1960.

Table 2.16 Fats Domino recordings (Selected Sample), 1955-60: boogie piano-based beats.

Other drum beats employed by Palmer and Williams in Domino's extant recorded output mostly include snare drum rhythms - without backbeat emphasis - that are sounded on all four pulses. For example, snare on all four pulses is used in *Help Me* (New Orleans, 1955), *Oh Ba-aby* (New Orleans, 1955) and *Walking To New Orleans* (New Orleans, 1960). Swing rhythms executed on snare, and consequently sounded on all four pulses, are used in *What's The Reason I'm Not Pleasing You* (New Orleans, 1956), *It's You I Love* (New Orleans, 1957), and *Lazy Woman* (New Orleans, 1958). Six recordings employ shuffle rhythms on snare: *The Twist Set Me Free* (New Orleans, 1956, version 2), *Little Mary* (New Orleans, 1957), *I'll Be Glad When You're Dead You Rascal You* (New Orleans, 1958), *I've Been Around* (New Orleans, 1959), *Ain't That Just Like A Women* (New Orleans, 1960) and *La-La* (New Orleans, 1960, version 2). Only one recording, *The Sheik of Araby* (New Orleans, 1958), includes a Bo Diddley rhythm.<sup>32</sup> This rhythm is executed on a clave and accompanies a Latin drum beat.

As we have seen, the most common drum beat in Domino's output includes quaver triplet cymbal rhythms alongside a snare backbeat. The frequency of occurrence of this beat will be determined through our subsequent investigation of rock'n'roll recordings.

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<sup>32</sup>*La-La* (New Orleans, 1960, version 2) includes a horn riff in Bo Diddley rhythm but its drum beat, as previously noted, contains a shuffle rhythm on snare.

2.7.3 Bill Haley.

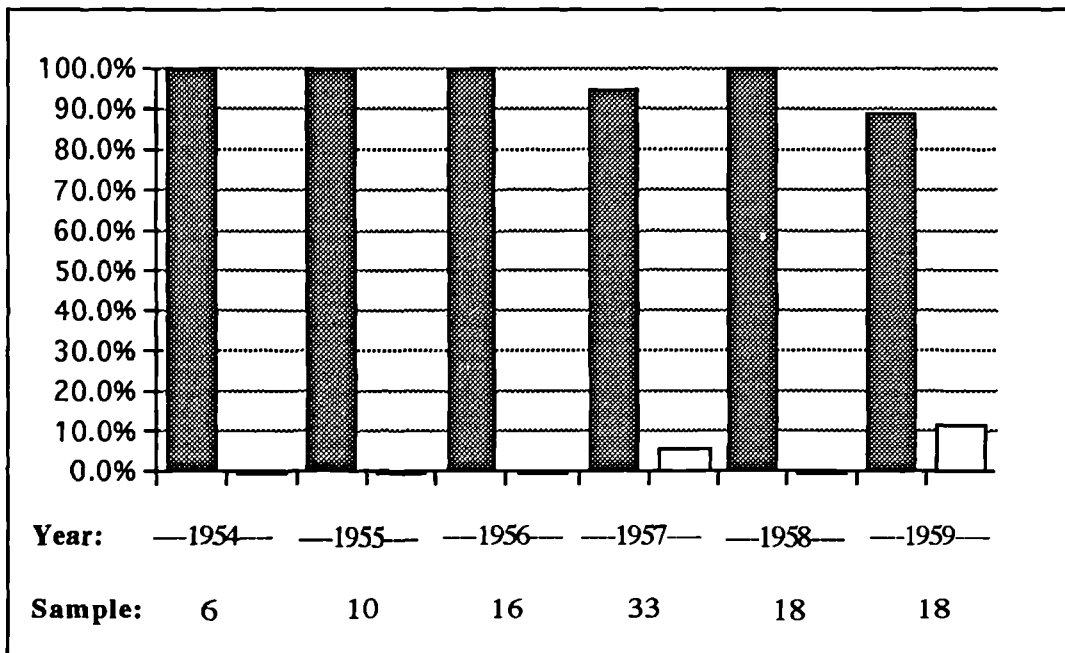


Table 2.17 Bill Haley recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-59: backbeats.

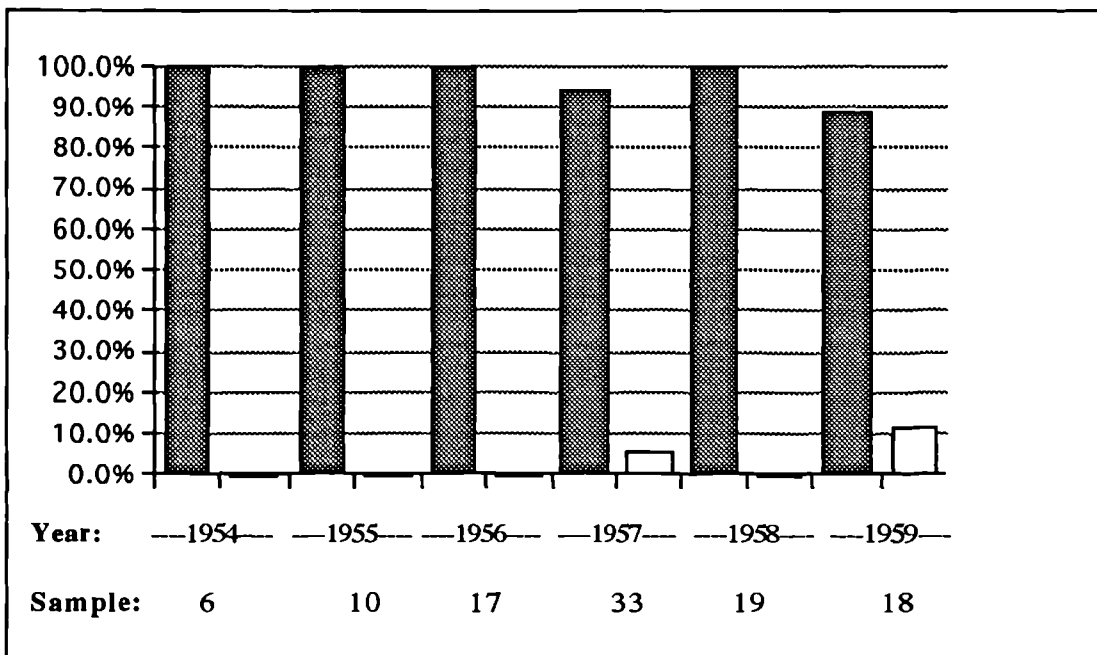
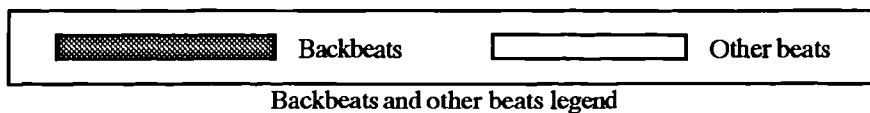


Table 2.18 Bill Haley recordings (Extant Recordings), 1954-59: backbeats.



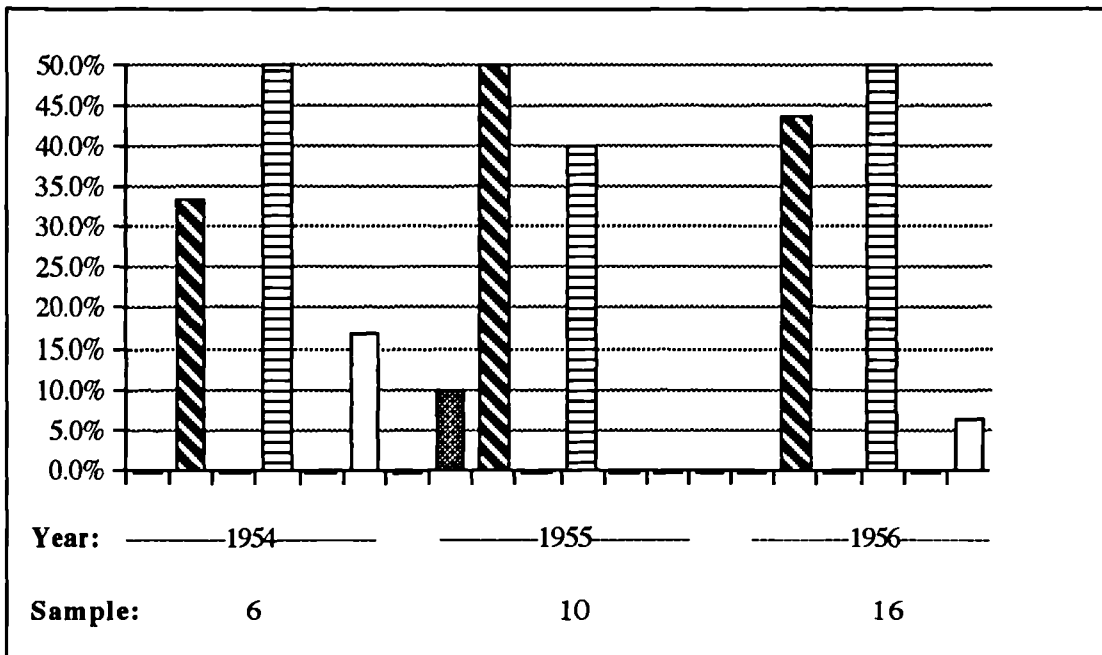


Table 2.19 Bill Haley recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-56: cymbal rhythms.

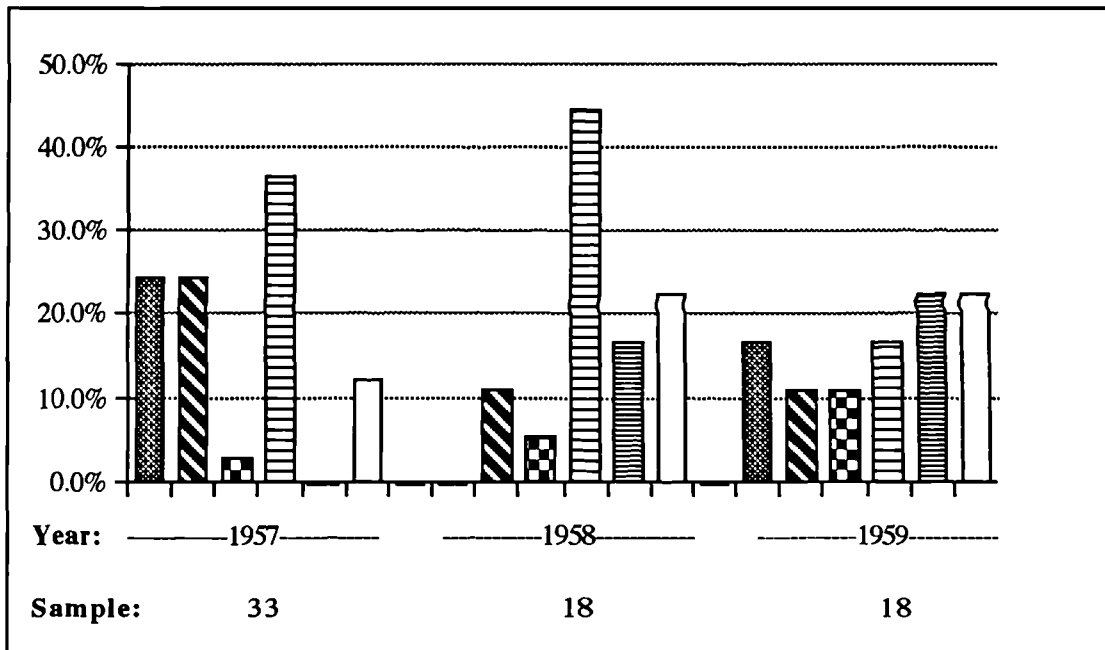
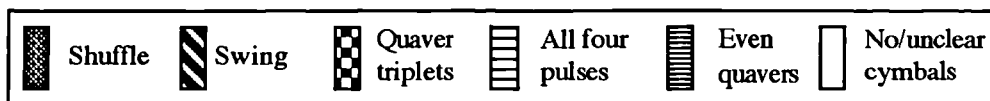


Table 2.20 Bill Haley recordings (Selected Sample), 1957-59: cymbal rhythms.



Cymbal/hi-hat rhythms legend

Bill Haley's extant recorded output - including two additional takes of commercially released recordings - *Rip It Up* (N.Y., 1956) and *Corrine, Corrina* (N.Y., 1958) - was located and mini-analyzed. As illustrated in Table 2.18 above, the inclusion of the aforementioned additional recordings in the Extant Recordings backbeat graph did not effect the balance between those recordings that contain backbeats and those employing other beats; both *Rip It Up* and *Corrine, Corrina* (additional takes) employ the same drum beat as their commercially released recordings but exclude handclaps on the backbeat (see the mini-analyses of such in Appendix Two). Of Haley's 103 extant recordings mini-analyzed in Appendix Two, only four recordings - *El Rocko* (N.Y., 1957), *Rockin' Rita* (N.Y., 1957), *Puerto Rican Peddler* (N.Y., 1959) and *Skokiaan* (N.Y., 1959) - do not include snare backbeats (as illustrated in Table 2.17 and Table 2.18, Haley's remaining recordings include snare backbeat emphasis). The aforementioned recordings consistently employ a Latin drum beat mostly executed on tom-toms.<sup>33</sup> Reference to the mini-analyses of Haley's recorded output, included in Appendix Two, reveals that some recordings include other snare rhythms with emphasis placed on the backbeat: six recordings contain shuffle rhythms on snare with accented backbeats and one recording includes snare executions on all four pulses with strong backbeat emphasis. Drum beats in the remaining recordings will be discussed below and in conjunction with Haley's recording career dating from 1954.

After recording for the Essex label,<sup>34</sup> Haley moved to Decca records and, from 1954 to

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<sup>33</sup>*Chiquita Linda* (N.Y., 1958) also includes a Latin beat on tom-toms alongside a strong snare backbeat executed throughout the recording.

<sup>34</sup>Haley's pre-1954 recorded output will be discussed in Chapter Five.

1959, recorded at the Pythian Temple studio in New York.<sup>35</sup> Between 1954 and September, 1955, Haley employed three drummers, David Francis, Cliff Leeman and Billy Gussack, the latter of which Haley's record producer, Milt Gabler,<sup>36</sup> insisted on using. Such drummers incorporated snare backbeats in their performances and, as Gabler (as quoted in Swenson, 1982: 55) notes, this rhythm was further supported by Haley's rhythm guitar performances:

I always liked the rhythm guitar in with the rhythm section, to blend in with the afterbeat of the drums. All [Haley] did was play afterbeat guitar.

Haley's rhythm guitar accompaniment in subsequent recordings produced throughout the 1950s continued to strongly emphasize the backbeat. Additional accompanimental rhythmic activity was provided by double bass performances that mostly featured shuffle rhythms with percussive emphasis placed on the off-pulse by slap bass technique. Such double bass rhythms are clearly heard in Haley's recorded output, leading one commentator to note that "the acoustic bass drives the band harder than the drummer" (Fish, 1982b: 17).

It is evident from the mini-analyses included in Appendix Two that some recordings produced by Haley in 1954 exemplify drum beats that are unlike those subsequently employed in later recordings. For example, Gussack, drumming on *Rock Around The Clock* (N.Y., 1954) includes snare backbeats mostly executed on pulse 4 every two bars. A consistent snare backbeat is used only throughout the final choruses of this recording. *Thirteen Woman* (N.Y., 1954) contains snare drum rhythms executed on all four pulses with the backbeat accented throughout the recording. Some commentators

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<sup>35</sup>This and subsequent discographical information derives from Chris Gardner (1990), "Bill Haley - The Decca Discography, 1954-1964" included in the accompanying booklet to Bill Haley & His Comets: The Decca Years And More (Bear Family Records compact discs: BCD 15506 EH, 1990).

<sup>36</sup>Milt Gabler recorded the rhythm and blues musician Louis Jordan prior to Haley's recordings. As noted in Swenson (1982: 53), Gabler was responsible for Haley's musical arrangements and, particularly, the saxophone riffs. It is possible, therefore, that Haley's saxophone riffs were informed by rhythm and blues musical style.

consider that the aforementioned drum beats and other similar beats evident in Haley's early recordings for the Decca record label were informed by a jazz drumming influence. For example, Fish (1982b: 17) describes Gussack's drumming style in *Rock Around The Clock* as "heavily rooted in a swing style, and the accents are even played on a tiny splash cymbal like some of the swing-band drummers". It is likely that jazz drum beats were initially adopted by Gussack in his early attempts at coming to terms with Haley's rock'n'roll musical style. A jazz drumming influence might have also informed the drumming of Ralph Jones, who joined the Comets in December, 1955, and subsequently recorded with Haley throughout the 1950s. Prior to 1955, Jones was asked by Haley to join the Comets but initially declined, noting that "I didn't like the music, I was playing jazz and I didn't dig it at all" (Jones as quoted in Swenson, 1982: 62).<sup>37</sup> We will investigate jazz drumming style in Chapter Three in order to determine its influence on the formation of a rock'n'roll drum beat. In the meantime, we will briefly explore the range of cymbal rhythms and snare backbeat variations that were employed in Haley's rock'n'roll recordings.

Table 2.19 (page 92) indicates that cymbal usage in Haley's recorded output from 1955 to 1956 mostly included swing rhythms or executions on all four pulses. These rhythms were consistently used throughout the recording. From 1957, however, drummer Ralph Jones gradually adopted quaver triplet and, later, even quaver cymbal rhythms in his drumming (see Table 2.20, page 92). Some recordings contained alternate use of cymbal rhythms in particular formal structural sections. For example, *Corinne, Corrina* (N Y., 1958) includes a ride cymbal performed on all four pulses but a swing rhythm features in the final choruses. *Dinah* (1958) features a hi-hat played on

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<sup>37</sup>Other band members came from a jazz heritage. For example, in late 1954 guitarist Frank Beecher replaced Danny Cedrone. Beecher was a jazz guitarist and had played with Buddy Greco's jazz band during the '40s and then joined the Benny Goodman band in 1948. Saxophonist Rudy Pompilli was voted best new baritone saxophonist in *Downbeat's* 1953 jazz poll. He was, however, familiar with Haley's style having recorded a version of Haley's *Crazy Man, Crazy* with the Ralph Martieri orchestra.

all four pulses but a swing rhythm on ride cymbal is included in the tenor sax solo.<sup>38</sup>

In order to understand why such variations occurred in cymbal rhythms, it is worth briefly recounting Haley's career from 1955 to around 1957.

Following the release of *Rock Around the Clock* as a theme song for the movie Blackboard Jungle (1955), the 1956 release of the film Rock Around The Clock further enhanced the reputation of Bill Haley and his Comets in its inclusion of *R-O-C-K*, *Mambo Rock*, *Razzle Dazzle*, *See You Later Alligator*, *ABC Boogie*, *Happy Baby*, *Rudy's Rock*, and *Rock-a-Beatin'-Boogie* in the film's soundtrack. Haley's second film, Don't Knock The Rock (1956) included *Calling All Comets* and *Rip It Up* as featured performances.<sup>39</sup> Subsequent to the release of Don't Knock the Rock, Haley embarked on a "world tour", performing in Australia and Europe. Upon returning to the United States in March, 1957, Haley was in need of much new musical material for both live performance and commercial release as records (Swenson, 1982: 104). A period of intensive composition and recording resulted at the Pythian Temple studios in March and April of that year. As Swenson (1982: 104) notes, the recordings resulting from such sessions proved to be "disappointing" and

Haley and the Comets abandoned the hard driving sound that had powered them to the top for slick, empty adaptations of standards and trite novelty tunes.

Such "trite novelty tunes" as *(You Hit The Wrong Note) Billy Goat* (N.Y., 1957) were considered "ridiculous" by Haley's guitarist Frank Beecher, who insisted that professional song writers should have been employed (Swenson, 1982: 104). Haley subsequently decided to record some "standard" country and western material, including Hank Williams' *Move It On Over* (N.Y., 1957) and *How Many?* (N.Y.,

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<sup>38</sup>Such variations are not detailed in Table 2.19 and Table 2.20. Rather, only cymbal rhythms that are employed throughout most of the recording are included in these graphs.

<sup>39</sup>Little Richard performed *Tutti Frutti* and *Long Tall Sally* in the same film.

1957) but, in November, 1957, he composed a collection of songs with themes taken from different countries (for example, *Rockin' Rita* and *Oriental Rock*). During 1958, Haley composed and recorded such songs as *B.B. Betty*, *Charmaine*, *Lean Jean*, and *Skinny Minnie*.<sup>40</sup> The aforementioned and other recordings with similar such titles were collected for an album whose organizing principle was based upon songs about different women. Leaving aside any discussion of the aforementioned recordings as “trite” and “empty adaptations”, we will turn our attention to innovations in drumming style evident in these tracks.

From 1957 to 1958, drummer Ralph Jones (as quoted in Swenson, 1982: 125-6) notes that Haley and his band were trying to “come up with something new”. He continues by noting that

We tried to switch around musically to keep up with the times. We decided instead of playing the same rhythm all the time we tried a few things with that eight-to-the-bar beat like in *Lean Jean*, if you listen to it it's an entirely different rhythm from Bill's standard beat. We were trying to get with what was happening and it didn't happen for us.

Indeed, Haley's “same rhythm” was absent from many recordings produced during this period. For example, *How Many?* (N.Y., 1957) includes quaver triplet rhythms on hi-hat and *It's a Sin* (N.Y., 1957) includes quaver triplet snare rhythms performed with brushes.<sup>41</sup> We have previously observed that Earl Palmer, drumming for Fats Domino, regularly employed quaver triplet based drum beats in his recorded performances. It would be reasonable to assume, therefore, that by “keeping up with the times” Jones is inferring the drumming style evident in Domino's mid-1950s

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<sup>40</sup>Haley also recorded a series of instrumental tracks, such as *Joey's Song* (N.Y., 1958), and later, *(Thanks For The) Summer Souvenir* (N.Y., 1959) and *Two Shadows* (N.Y., 1959). Although snare backbeats are employed in these recordings, they are sometimes weakly executed and performed with brushes.

<sup>41</sup>Other recordings that contain quaver triplet based drum beats include *Charmaine* (N.Y., 1958), *Sway With Me* (N.Y., 1958), *(Now And Then) There's A Fool Such As I* (N.Y., 1959) and *Two Shadows* (N.Y., 1958).



recorded repertoire.

From 1958, a further stylistic shift was effected in Jones' drum beat. Nine recordings include either a constant or occasional use of snare backbeat variation 2 and one recording occasionally employed snare backbeat variation 1. These recordings generally include even quaver executions on cymbals. As Jones intimates in the above quote, such "eight-to-the-bar" beats exemplified a stylistic shift in rock'n'roll drum beat during the late 1950s. The subsequent discussion of rock'n'roll drumming evident in the recorded output of selected musicians will help identify those musicians that initiated and established even quaver based drum beats.

**2.7.4 Buddy Holly.**

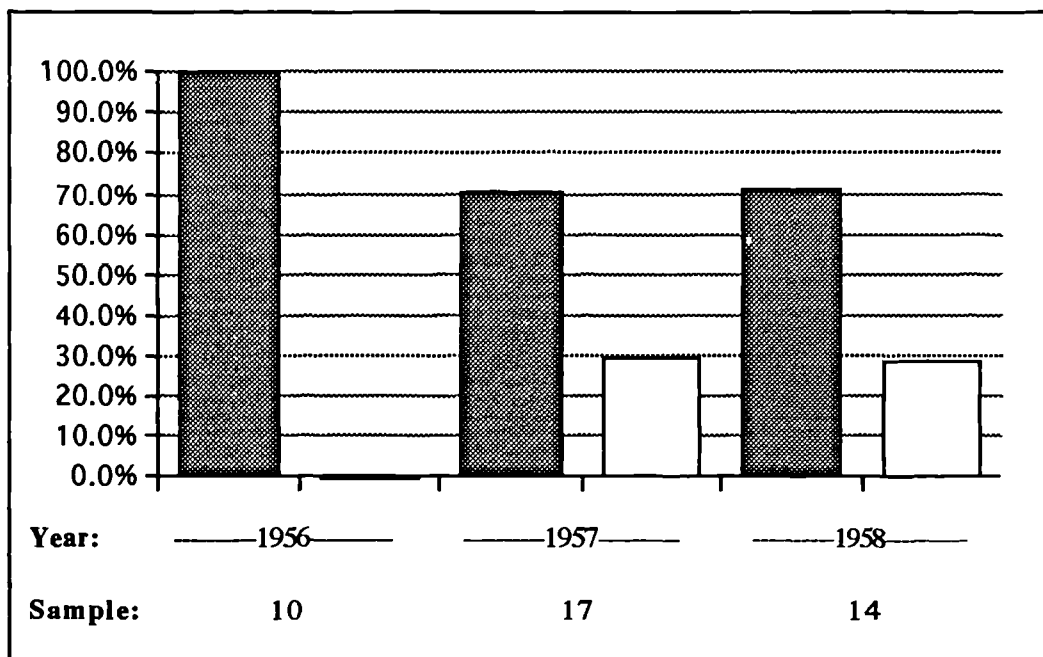


Table 2.21 Buddy Holly recordings (Selected Sample), 1956-58: backbeats.

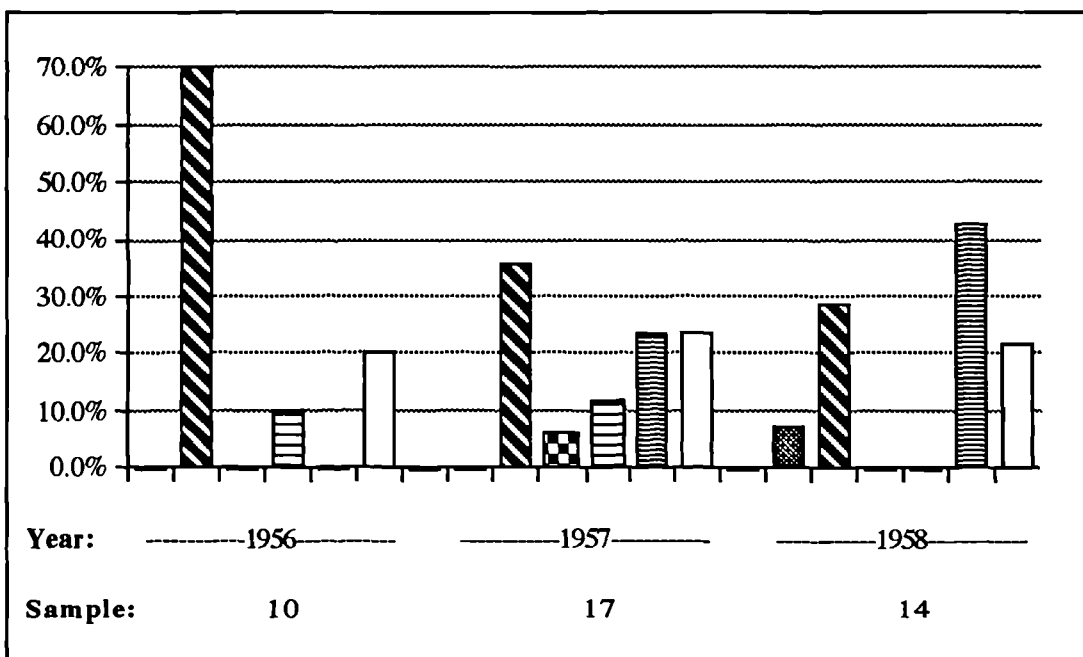
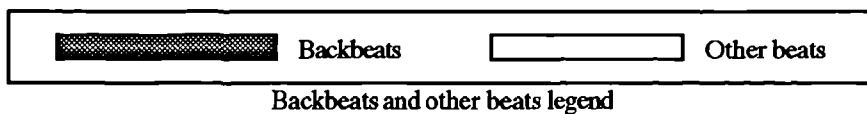
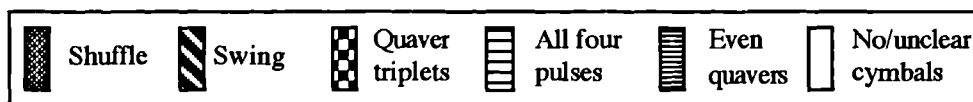


Table 2.22 Buddy Holly recordings (Selected Sample), 1956-58: cymbal rhythms.



Cymbal/hi-hat rhythms legend

Forty-one recordings by Buddy Holly were located and mini-analyzed. According to discographical information,<sup>42</sup> Jerry Allison was drumming on all located recordings except for the following seven tracks: *Modern Don Juan* (Nashville, 1956, with Faris Coursey drumming), *Early In The Morning* (N.Y., 1958, with Panama Francis drumming), *Wishing, Love's Made A Fool Of You* (Clovis, 1958, with Bo Clarke drumming), *True Love Ways*, *It Doesn't Matter Any More*, and *Raining In My Heart* (N.Y., 1958, unknown drummer). Where appropriate, reference to the aforementioned alternate drummers will be made in our following discussion of drum beats in Holly's output.

Drummer Jerry Allison began performing with Holly in 1955 and was subsequently employed for Holly's recordings produced in 1956 (as listed in Appendix Two). Allison, then in senior school, had some years experience playing in various jazz and country music bands and performing "rockabilly" (Goldrosen, 1975: 54), but his subsequent musical taste and drumming technique was mostly informed by other contemporaneous musical styles. As Allison (as quoted in Fish, 1982b: 62) notes,

The kind of music I liked was Little Richard and Fats Domino. You couldn't get much rock and roll around Lubbock, Texas, but when it started happening, I really enjoyed it and tried to play like Little Richard's drummer. Earl Palmer played a lot of that stuff.

Palmer's recorded performances with Little Richard will be discussed later in this

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<sup>42</sup>Discographical information accompanies *The Buddy Holly Collection: 50 Classic Recordings* (MCA compact discs: MCAD2-10883, 1993). Aside from Holly's recordings mini-analyzed in Appendix Two, six other recordings are included in the aforementioned recordings source: *Down The Line* (Wichita, 1954/?), *Soft Place In My Heart* (Whichita, 1954/5?), *Crying, Waiting, Hoping* (N.Y., 1959), *Learning The Game* (N.Y., 1959), *Peggy Sue Got Married* (N.Y., 1959) and *What To Do* (N.Y., 1959). Drumming in these recordings was overdubbed in either 1963 or 1964 and, consequently, such drumming will not be discussed here.

chapter. We can note, however, that Allison's drumming in *Rock Around With Ollie Vee, That'll Be The Day* and *Ting-A-Ling* (all recorded in 1956) includes emphatic snare backbeat executed throughout the recording and, in this respect, such drumming is similar to that employed by Palmer, as previously noted in our discussion of Domino's recorded output. Indeed, Gillett (1983: 97) confirms that the occurrence of what he calls "assertive cracks" (emphatic backbeats) in Allison's early recorded performances with Holly were inspired by "the style of the drummers Earl Palmer and Cornelius Coleman on Fats Domino's records". However, it is evident from the mini-analyses of Holly's recordings listed in Appendix Two that "assertive cracks" were not consistently used by Allison in Holly's early recorded output. For instance, Allison's drumming on *Girl On My Mind* (Nashville, 1956) includes snare executions with brushes on all four pulses and contains some weak executions on the backbeat. Weak snare backbeats also feature in Allison's drumming on *Baby Won't You Come Out Tonight, Changing All Those Changes*, and *I'm Gonna Set My Foot Down* (all recorded in 1956).<sup>43</sup> Consequently, there is some incongruity between Gillett's observation regarding "assertive cracks" (as noted above), Allison's desire to emulate the rock'n'roll drumming style of Earl Palmer and Allison's subsequent performance of weakly accented backbeats in Holly's early recordings. As we shall see, Allison's inclusion of weak snare backbeats might have been informed by stylistic practices and concomitant recording procedures undertaken in Nashville during the mid-1950s.

Nashville musician Buddy Knox (as quoted in Laing, 1971: 23), in discussing his early musical experiences during the 1950s, notes that "at that time country groups didn't use a drummer at all, they used a rhythm guitar and a [double] bass as the beat". Indeed, Holly's first sessions for Decca records, recorded in Nashville, omitted drums at the request of Decca records officials who considered that drumming was an unnecessary

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<sup>43</sup>Similarly, Coursey's drumming in *Modern Don Juan* (Nashville, 1956) includes a weak snare backbeat with brushes throughout the recording.

accompaniment (Goldrosen, 1975: 55). Consequently, Holly's recordings of *Blue Days* (Nashville, 1956), *Love Me* (Nashville, 1956) and *Midnight Shift* (Nashville, 1956), all of which omit drums, are largely characterized by a prominent double bass shuffle rhythm with off-pulse slap bass executions. The rhythm guitar accompaniment in the aforementioned recordings strongly executes pulses 2 and 4 and is similar in sound to a snare drum played with brushes. The resultant beat is very similar to that provided by the rhythm guitar and double bass accompaniments in Bill Haley's mid-1950s recordings (as previously described), but, as Goldrosen (1975: 59) observes, the beat is "not emphatic enough for rock'n'roll" mostly due to the absence of drum rhythms.

Holly's subsequent recordings produced in 1956 include drums but drumming is usually mixed back in the recording providing a rhythmically and dynamically subdued accompaniment. Rather, the accompanimental beat provided by slap bass shuffle rhythms and rhythm guitar strumming remains prominent in terms of its dynamic positioning in the recording (Allison's drumming in *Changing All Those Changes*, Clovis, 1956, includes some use of snare backbeat variation 3, perhaps emulating the prominent shuffle-type rhythms provided by the slap bass accompaniment). As we shall see, drumming in Holly's subsequent output is clearly audible in the recording and is often featured above other accompanimental activity.

As evident from the mini-analyses of Holly's output produced from 1957 to 1959 (see Appendix 2.2), drum beats mostly include snare backbeats that are either strongly or emphatically executed and four recordings include some use of snare backbeat variation 2 or 3. Only three recordings, all of which include string orchestra accompaniment, exclude prominent snare backbeat emphasis. For example, *It Doesn't Matter Any More* (N.Y., 1958) includes snare with brushes performing a quaver, semiquaver-semiquaver rhythm with some weak emphasis of the backbeat. As illustrated in Table

2.21 (page 99), some recordings in Holly's output dating from 1957 include other beats. The following nine recordings conform to this category. *Everyday* (Clovis, 1957) includes even quaver rhythms on an unidentified instrument, *Peggy Sue* (Clovis, 1957) includes semiquaver rhythms on tom-toms that accompany Holly's even quaver rhythms on guitar, and *Heartbeat* (Clovis, 1958) includes snare executions in dotted crotchet, dotted crotchet and crotchet rhythms. *True Love Ways* (N.Y., 1958) and *Well...All Right* (N.Y., 1958) only contain cymbal rhythms. Other drum beats evident in our Selected Sample include Bo Diddley rhythms (*Not Fade Away* Clovis, 1957, and *Love's Made A Fool Of You*, Clovis, 1958)<sup>44</sup> and Latin beats (*Listen To Me*, Clovis, 1957 and *Words Of Love*, Clovis, 1957).

As illustrated in Table 2.22 (page 99), most recordings produced in 1957 include swing rhythms on cymbals; however, during 1958 even quaver cymbal rhythms characterize the drum beats of recordings listed in our Selected Sample. Only one recording containing even quaver cymbal rhythms, *Heartbeat* (Clovis, 1958), excludes snare backbeats. Rather, *Heartbeat* features dotted crotchet, dotted crotchet, crotchet snare rhythms, these supporting a "Latin calypso flavour" (Goldrosen, 1975: 156) evident in the guitar accompaniment. According to Goldrosen (ibid.), "Latin flavoured rhythms" were evident in much rock'n'roll through the late 1950s, a period that was marked by a decline in the use of a "rock'n'roll beat". As we shall see, however, Latin beats do not feature in the output of Jerry Lee Lewis.

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<sup>44</sup>Fish (1982b: 62) correctly notes that *Love's Made A Fool Of You* incorporates a Bo Diddley rhythm. His subsequent notation of such, however, is incorrect.

2.7.5 Jerry Lee Lewis.

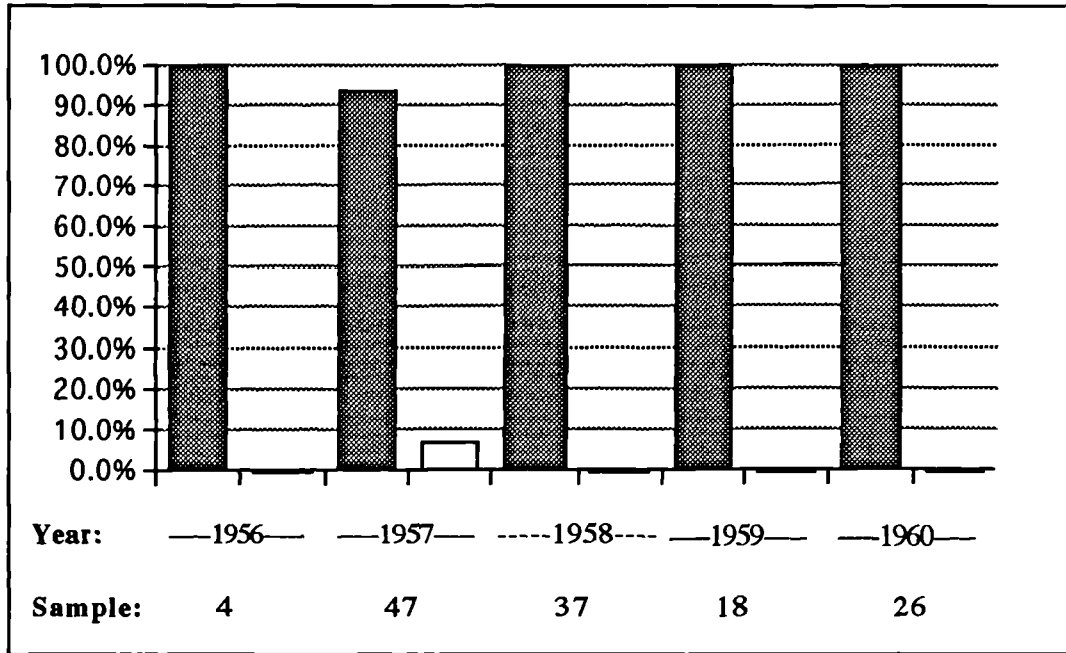


Table 2.23 Jerry Lee Lewis recordings (Selected Sample), 1956-60: backbeats.

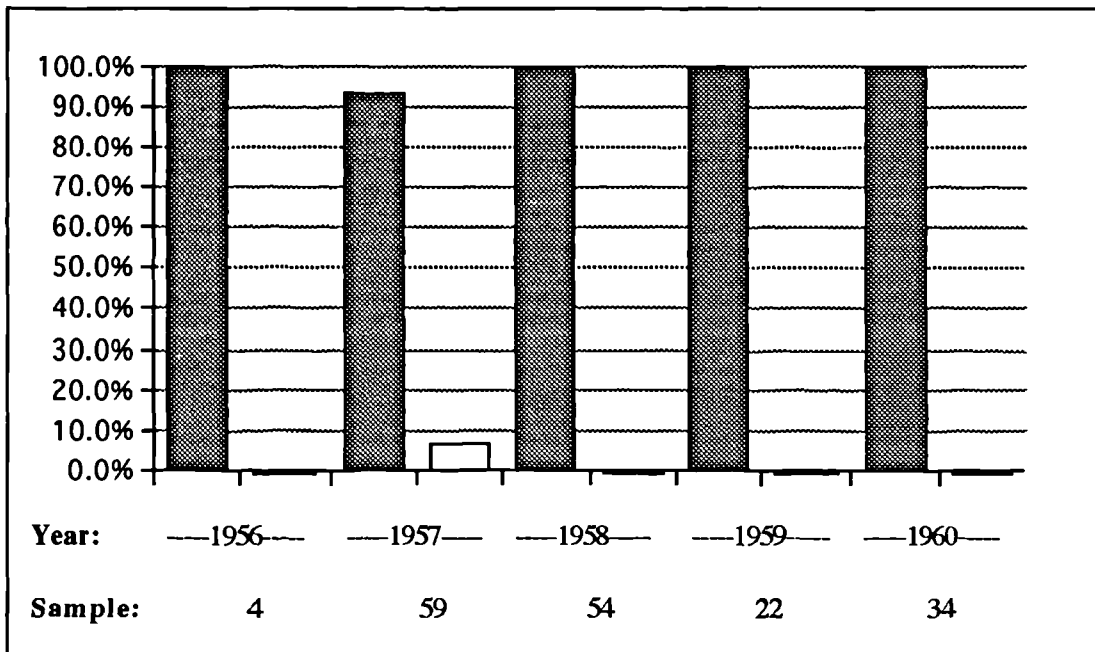
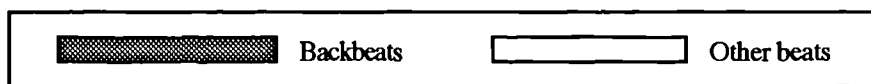


Table 2.24 Jerry Lee Lewis recordings (Extant Recordings), 1956-60: backbeats.



Backbeats and other beats legend

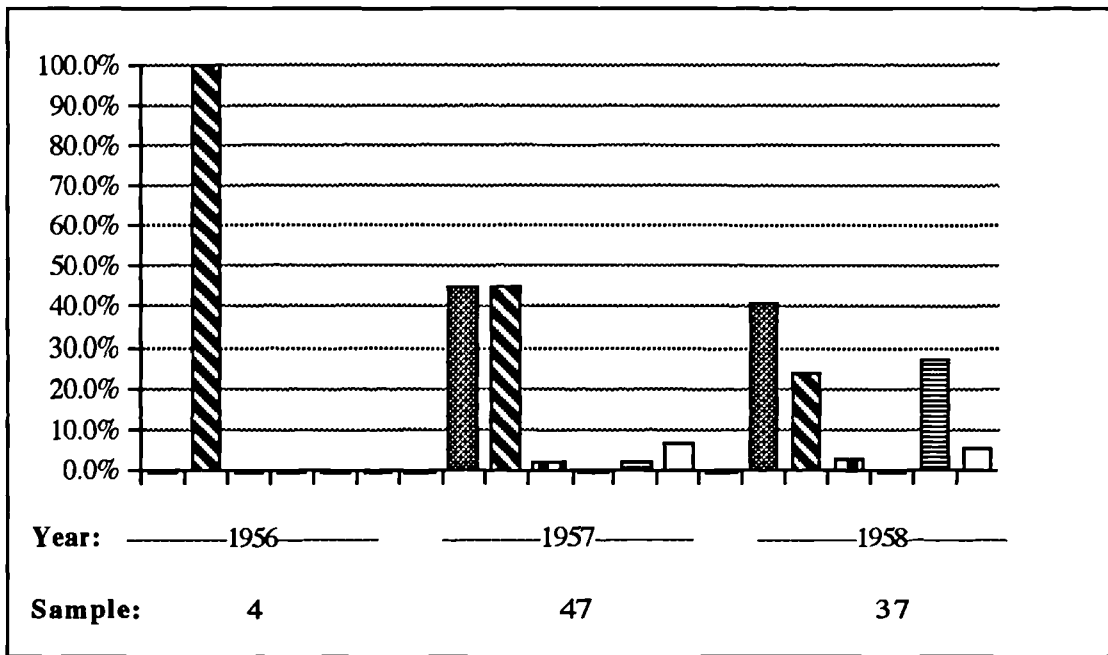


Table 2.25 Jerry Lee Lewis recordings (Selected Sample), 1956-58: cymbal rhythms.

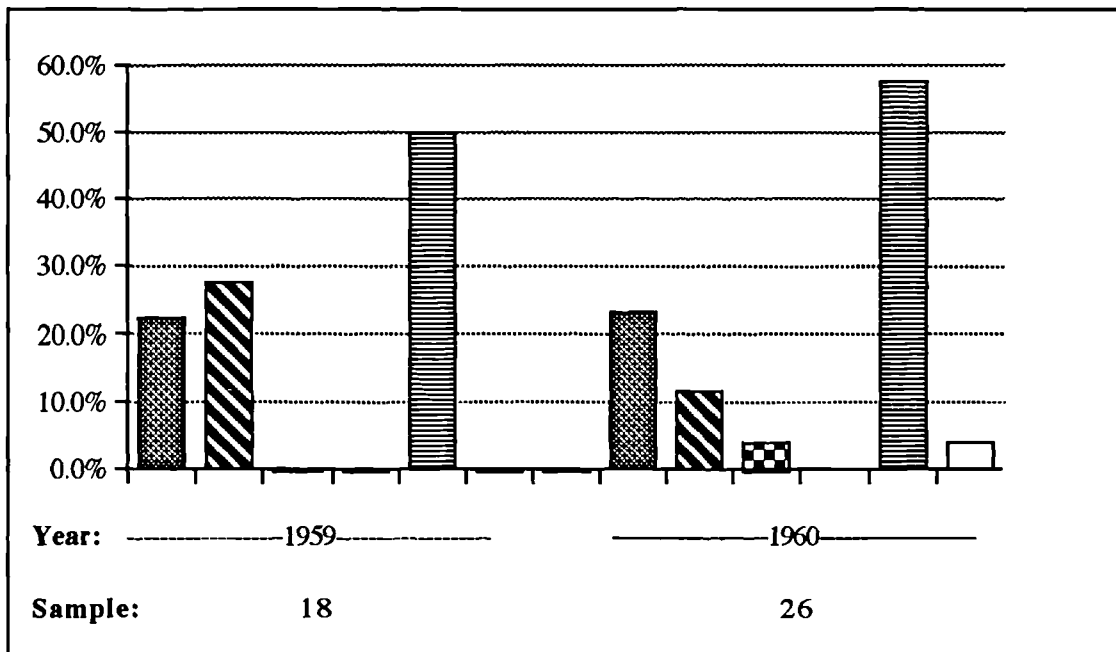
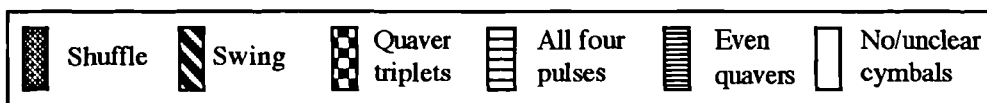


Table 2.26 Jerry Lee Lewis recordings (Selected Sample), 1959-60: cymbal rhythms.



Cymbal/hi-hat rhythms legend



One hundred and seventy-three extant recordings by Jerry Lee Lewis, including forty-one additional takes of commercially released recordings, were located and subsequently mini-analyzed. In reference to the mini-analyses of Lewis' extant recorded output included in Appendix Two and subsequent analytic results summarized in Table 2.23 and Table 2.24 above,<sup>45</sup> the following conclusions regarding drum beats apply:

- a majority of Lewis' recordings feature snare backbeats and these are either strongly or emphatically executed;
- as illustrated in Table 2.24, the inclusion of additional recordings in the Extant Recordings backbeat graph did not effect the balance between those recordings that contain backbeats and those featuring other beats;
- some recordings that exemplify accented snare backbeats also include additional snare rhythms executed on all four pulses: three recordings contain shuffle rhythms on snare, two recordings feature snare on all 4 pulses, and one recording contains swing rhythms on snare; and
- only four of 173 recordings located do not include snare backbeats: *Honey Hush* (Memphis, 1956/7?) and *Singin' The Blues* (Memphis, 1957) include a shuffle rhythm on cymbal, and *I'm Feelin' Sorry* (take?b, Memphis, 1957) and *Turn Around* (Memphis, 1957) include a shuffle rhythm on snare drum executed throughout the recording.

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<sup>45</sup>Discographical information that accompanies the recordings source (Classic Jerry Lee Lewis: The Definitive Edition of His Sun Recordings, Bear Family compact discs: 15420, 1989) lists the date of some recordings as 1956, possibly 1957 and also 1958, possibly 1959. It is evident, therefore, that recording dates for Lewis' 1956 and 1958 sessions remain unclear. In order to maintain consistency of methodology in our current survey, recordings that are listed as 1956/57? in Appendix Two are included in the 1957 recordings sample as graphically notated. Those listed as 1958/59? are included in the 1959 recordings sample.

According to discographical information,<sup>46</sup> Jimmy Van Eaton was drumming on most of Lewis' recordings included in our Extant Recordings sample, but the identity of the drummer on some recordings, produced in 1957 and 1958, is unknown.<sup>47</sup>

Regardless, similar drum beats are evident in Lewis' recorded output dating from 1957. For example, *Matchbox* (1957), *Mean Woman Blues* (1957), and *Ubangi Stomp* (1957) all include some occasional use of snare backbeat variation 1, and *Pink Peddle Pushers* (1958), *Jailhouse Rock* (1958), and *Don't Be Cruel* (1958) all include snare backbeat variation 3. Such snare variations, performed by an unknown drummer, are similar in their force of execution and long-short rhythmic positionings. As we shall see, similar drumming exemplifies Van Eaton's recorded performances with Lewis during the late 1950s. Further, the pitch of the snare drum in Lewis' 1957 and 1958 recordings is identical to the snare drum tuning adopted by Van Eaton in his recorded performances with Lewis. Given such similarity in snare drumming and tuning, it would be reasonable to assume that Van Eaton was recording with Lewis throughout 1957 and 1958. Consequently, the following discussion of drum beats in Lewis' output will relate to the drumming of Van Eaton.

Fish (1982b: 19) notes that Van Eaton was drumming with Lewis at Sun records studios, Memphis, from when he was "roughly seventeen years old". It is clear from Table 2.23 (page 104) and Table 2.25 (page 105) that, at this early age, Van Eaton adopted snare backbeats and swing rhythms on cymbals in his early recordings with

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<sup>46</sup>Such information accompanies Classic Jerry Lee Lewis: The Definitive Edition of His Sun Recordings, Bear Family compact discs: 15420, 1989.

<sup>47</sup>The identity of the drummer on the following recordings, all produced in Memphis, is unknown: *I Forgot To Remember To Forget* (1957), *I'm Feeling Sorry* (1957), *Matchbox* (1957), *Mean Woman Blues* (1957), *Ooby Dooby* (1957), *Rock'n'Roll Ruby* (1957), *So Long* (1957), *I'm Gone* (1957), *Turn Around* (1957), *Ubangi Stomp* (1957), *You Win Again* (1957), *Don't Be Cruel* (1958), *Good Rockin' Tonight* (1958), *Hound Dog* (1958), *Jailhouse Rock* (1958), *Pink Peddle Pushers* (1958), *Release Me* (1958), *Shanty Town* (1958), *Sick And Tired* (1958) and *Someday* (1958).

Lewis. As we have previously observed, such drum beats characterized the early rock'n'roll recordings of Chuck Berry, Bill Haley and Fats Domino. It is likely, therefore, that Van Eaton was influenced by contemporaneous rock'n'roll drum beats in his early musical development. It is worth noting, however, that quaver triplet cymbal rhythms were rarely incorporated in Lewis' recorded output (see Table 2.25 and Table 2.26, page 105). Only two recordings - *It Hurt Me So* (Memphis, 1958) and *Love Made A Fool Of Me* (Memphis, 1960) - include consistent use of quaver triplet cymbal rhythms throughout the recording.<sup>48</sup> The dearth of such cymbal rhythms in Van Eaton's drum beats clearly delineates his drumming style from that of Earl Palmer, drumming with Fats Domino.

Van Eaton's recorded performances in Lewis' later recordings display some varied drum beats. For example, *Great Balls of Fire* (take?, Memphis, 1957) includes weak snare backbeats and even quaver rhythms on ride cymbal. The film soundtrack recording of *Great Balls of Fire* (Memphis, 1957), however, incorporates snare backbeat variation 1 rhythms alongside both shuffle and even quaver rhythms on cymbals and the commercially released recording incorporates snare backbeat variation 1 with even quaver rhythms on cymbals employed throughout the recording. Varied drum beats are also evident in *I'm Feeling Sorry*, 1957, and its additional takes. It is clear from Van Eaton's drumming in additional takes of recordings that he was experimenting with the rock'n'roll drum beat during his recorded performances with Lewis. In order to determine why such experimentation was effected by Van Eaton, we will briefly overview Lewis' piano accompaniment rhythms. As we shall see, a relationship exists between Lewis' accompaniment and Van Eaton's drumming style.

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<sup>48</sup>*Hello, Hello Baby* (Memphis, 1958) and *I Can't Help It* (Memphis, 1956/57?) include some sectional use of quaver triplet cymbal rhythms. *I Love You Because* (Memphis, 1956/57?), *Tomorrow Night* (Memphis, 1956/57?), *Why Should I Cry Over You* (Memphis, 1957) and *I'll Make It Up To You* (Memphis, 1958) include some sporadic use of quaver triplet cymbal rhythms.

A scan of the mini-analyses of Lewis' extant recorded output, included in Appendix 2.2, reveals that Lewis adopted boogie piano accompaniments in his four recordings produced in 1956. Similarly, Lewis' 1957 extant recorded output mostly includes boogie piano-type accompaniments closely adhering to the boogie piano accompaniment paradigm as notated in Figure 2.22 (for example, *You're The Only Star' In My Blue Heaven*, Memphis, 1958). However, rhythmic variations between the dotted rhythms (as notated) and even quaver executions were commonly employed and, at times, Lewis' boogie piano accompaniments were "roughly" executed and rhythmically varied. For example, *When The Saints Go Marching In* (Memphis, 1957) sometimes incorporates bass notes on pulses 1 and 3 only.



Figure 2.22 Lewis boogie piano accompaniment.

From 1958, the use of boogie piano accompaniments by Lewis sharply declined (see Table 2.27 below) and triplet piano rhythms were occasionally incorporated (for example, *Big Legged Woman*, Memphis, 1958 and *Hello, Hello Baby*, Memphis, 1958). Piano accompaniments that employ bass riffs supporting improvisations in the treble register, including descending glissandi, were commonly adopted by Lewis during this period.<sup>49</sup> Mostly, however, even quaver chordal rhythms largely characterized Lewis' piano accompaniments in his late 1950s recorded repertoire. For example, *Night Train To Memphis* (Memphis, 1959) contains even quaver chordal piano accompaniments throughout the recording. Concomitant with the sharp decline in Lewis' boogie piano accompaniments (see Table 2.27) was a sharp increase in Van

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<sup>49</sup>In reference to the rock'n'roll recordings sample as listed in Appendix Two, the earliest occurrence of descending glissandi in a piano accompaniment was located in Domino's *Domino Stomp (Twistin' The Stomp)* (New Orleans, 1953). However, Domino did not subsequently employ this technique in his later recordings.

Eaton's use of even quaver cymbal rhythms (see Table 2.26, page 105).

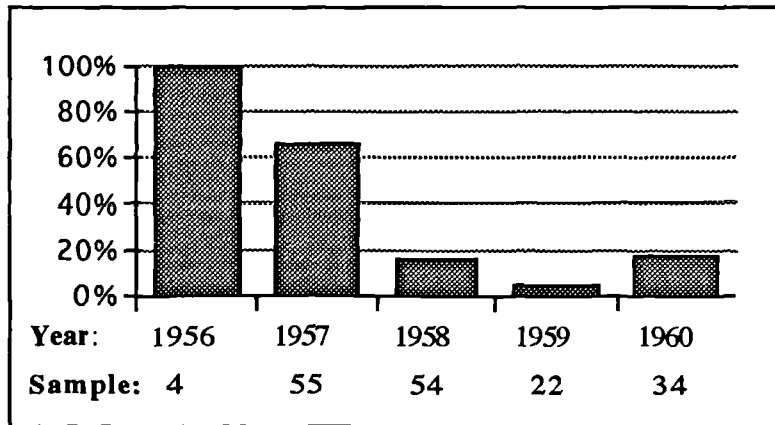


Table 2.27 Jerry Lee Lewis recordings (extant), 1956-60:  
boogie piano accompaniment and snare backbeats.

In reference to the above discussion, it is possible that Lewis' adoption of even quaver based piano accompaniments might have influenced Van Eaton's drumming.

However, it is equally likely that Van Eaton's drum beats figured in the development of Lewis' piano accompaniment rhythms. For example, we have noted that *Great Balls of Fire* (Memphis, 1957) includes even quaver cymbal rhythms. Indeed, Fish (1982b: 62) considers that Van Eaton came up with the "unusual" cymbal rhythm "for the first time - on *Great Balls of Fire*" and includes a notation of the drum beat in order to highlight for his reader the innovative quality of Van Eaton's drumming (see Figure 2.23).<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup>Fish (1982b: 19) correctly notates the paradigmatic cymbal rhythm employed on *Great Ball of Fire*, however, little emphasis is placed on the off-pulse of pulse 2. Also, the snare rhythm as indicated in Fish's drum beat notation is executed on an unidentified percussion instrument. Rather, the snare drum executes a strong snare backbeat that generally includes quaver-quaver rhythms on pulses two and-or four (snare backbeat variation 3).

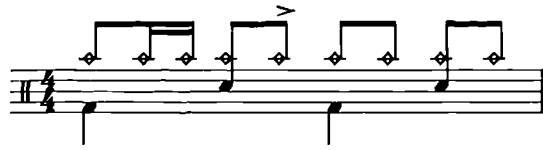


Figure 2.23 Lewis: *Great Balls of Fire* (Fish, 1982b: 19).

Earlier examples of even quaver rhythms, however, did occur in Lewis' recorded output. For example, *Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On* (Memphis, 1956/7?) includes a mixture of shuffle, swing and even quaver rhythms on cymbals. Similarly, *Mean Woman Blues* (Memphis, 1957) exemplifies some experimentation with cymbal rhythms in its employment of both shuffle and even quaver cymbal rhythms throughout the recording. Both of these recordings include boogie piano accompaniments. It is clear, therefore, that Van Eaton was experimenting with even quaver cymbal rhythms prior to Lewis' adoption of even quaver rhythms in his piano accompaniments.

From 1957 (or perhaps earlier, beginning with *Cold, Cold Heart*, Memphis, 1956/7?), many of Lewis' recordings incorporated either snare backbeat variations 1 or 3. Van Eaton's adoption of such divisive snare backbeat executions - a point that Fish (1982b) misses in his discussion of the development of rock'n'roll drumming - was an innovative development in Van Eaton's drumming style. So far, our discussion of rock'n'roll drum beats contained in recordings by Berry, Domino, Haley and Holly has not revealed earlier occurrences of such consistent use of snare backbeat variations. Van Eaton's inclusion of snare backbeat variations, and his use of even quaver cymbal rhythms, reflect an innovative approach to rock'n'roll drumming within the context of those rock'n'roll recordings thus covered.

2.7.6 Carl Perkins.

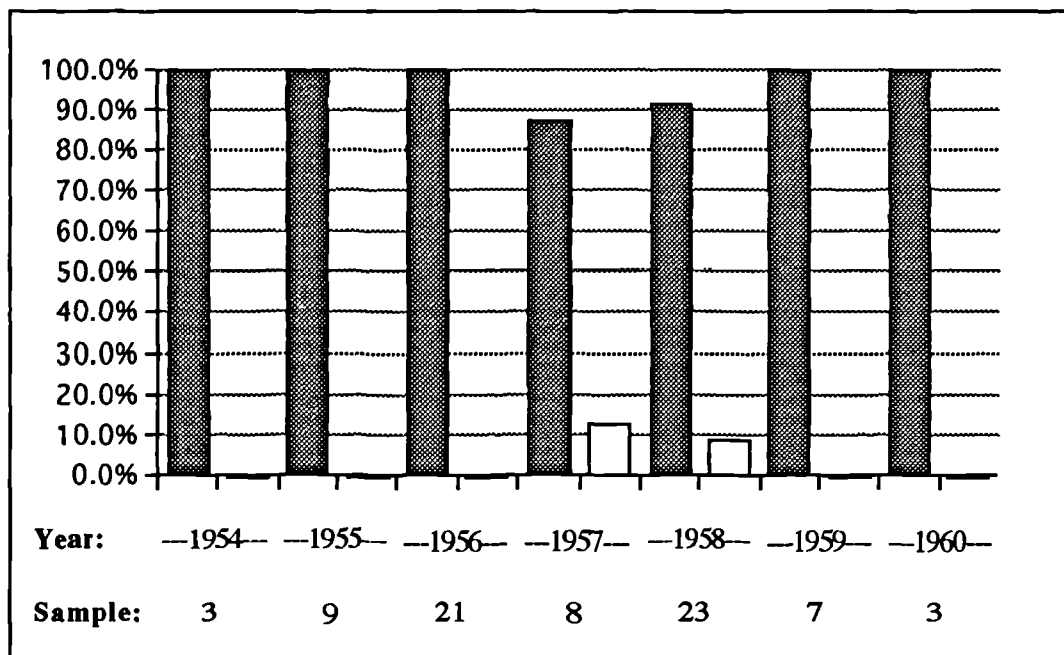


Table 2.28 Carl Perkins recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-60: backbeats.

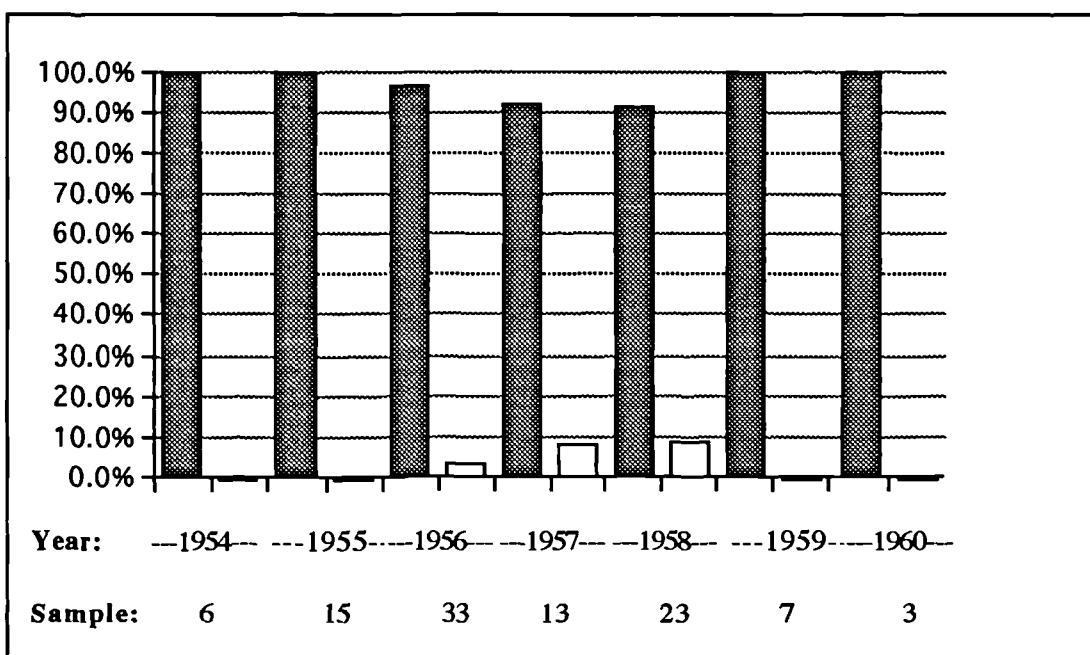
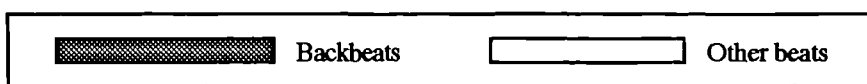


Table 2.29 Carl Perkins recordings (Extant Recordings), 1954-60: backbeats.



Backbeats and other beats legend



Table 2.30 Carl Perkins recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-56: cymbal rhythms.

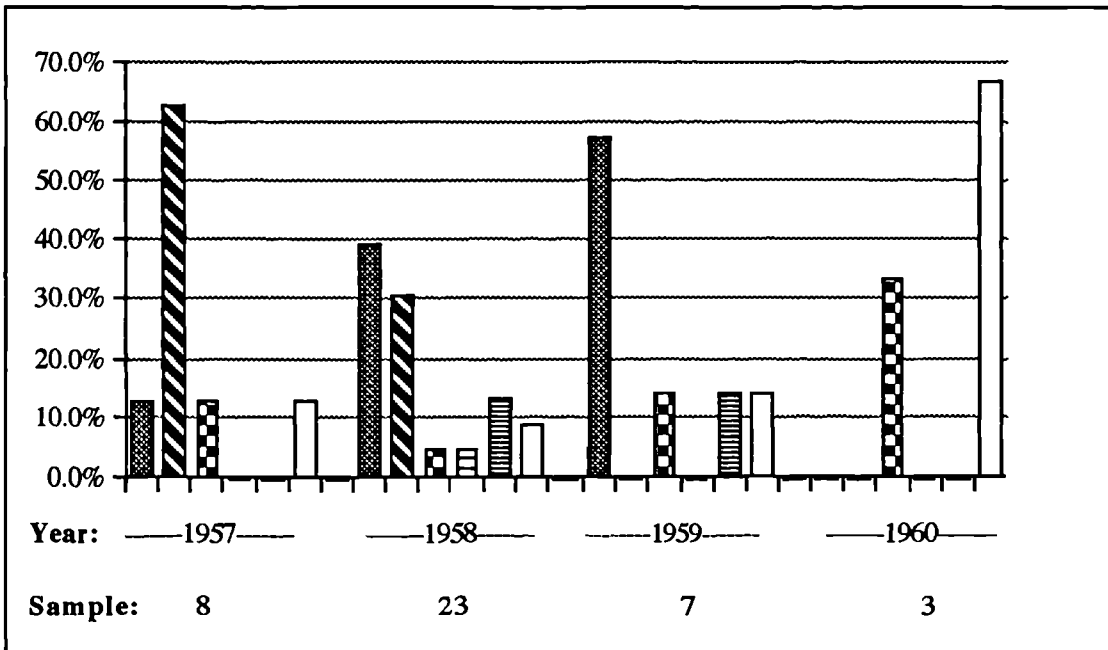
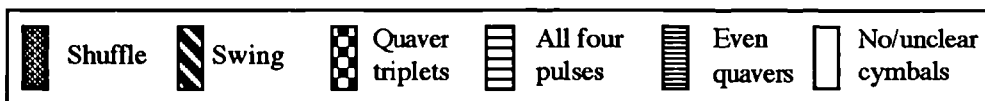


Table 2.31 Carl Perkins recordings (Selected Sample), 1957-60: cymbal rhythms.



Cymbal/hi-hat rhythms legend



The complete extant recorded output of Carl Perkins was located and subsequently mini-analyzed. Discographical information accompanying the recordings source<sup>51</sup> notes that W.S. Holland was drumming on Perkins' recorded performances from 1954 to 1959 and, during 1960, Holland was replaced by drummer Murray Harman Jr.. Harman subsequently recorded three songs with Perkins during 1960.

Among Perkins' first recordings were *Honky Tonk Gal* and *Movie Magg*, recorded in 1954 with James Perkins (rhythm guitar), Lloyd Perkins (double bass), and drummer W.S. Holland. A subsequent session included, at the request of Perkins' record producer Sam Phillips, electric guitar, violin and steel guitar. *Turn Around* was recorded with such additional instrumentation and was commercially released with *Movie Magg* on Phillips' new subsidiary record company, Flip records. Given the instrumentation on *Turn Around*, it is likely that Phillips was targeting Perkins for the country and western music market. Indeed, reflecting many country musicians' aversion to drums in country and western music (as we have previously noted in reference to Holly's 1956 recordings), Phillips was apprehensive about allowing Holland to record with Perkins on both *Turn Around* and *Movie Magg*. As Perkins (as quoted in Escott, 1990: 3) recalls,

Sam [Phillips] said, "What do you need 'em for?" I said "[Holland] just plays, he don't play loud." Sam came to agree. He said, "He don't sound like drums, he sounds like clickin'. Sounds good".

By "clicking", Phillips is probably referring to the swing rhythm on snare which is consistently employed by Holland throughout each of the aforementioned recordings. Escott (1990: 3) notes that Holland was playing with brushes on Perkins' first session and Phillips mixed the drumming "as far back as he could manage in the cramped studio". Consequently, such swing rhythms on snare were generally weak in terms of their dynamic placement in the recording mix and subsequently produced a faint

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<sup>51</sup>Recordings source: The Classic Carl Perkins (Bear Family compact discs: BCD 15494, 1990).

“clicking” sound. Percussive “clicking” in many of Perkins’ early recordings, and particularly those dating from 1956, however, was mostly supplied by on-pulse and sometimes off-pulse slap bass performances. For example, *All Mama’s Children* (Memphis, 1956) includes emphatic slap bass performances on the on-pulse. At times, off-pulse slap bass is incorporated in the instrumental solos of this recording and produces a percussive-sounding shuffle rhythm.<sup>52</sup>

Some swing rhythms on snare with accented backbeats were located in Perkins’ 1955 recorded output.<sup>53</sup> Swing rhythms on snare were also employed by Holland in Perkins’ 1956 recorded output but these were generally executed on the backbeat and occurred every two bars. The resultant accompaniment, as notated in Figure 2.24, is similar to a snare backbeat variation 3-type rhythm.



Figure 2.24 W.S. Holland early snare backbeat rhythm.

By the late 1950s, Perkins’ recorded output generally featured snare backbeat variations 1 or 2 without additional rhythmic embellishment of the type notated in Figure 2.24.

As illustrated in Table 2.28 and Table 2.29 (page 112), some recordings produced between 1956 and 1958 did not include accented snare backbeats but, rather, featured snare rhythms generally executed on all four pulses. For example, *All Mama’s*

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<sup>52</sup>Other recordings in which slap bass is incorporated include *Dixie Fried* (Memphis, 1956), *Everybody’s Trying To Be My Baby* (Memphis, 1956) and *Put Your Cat Clothes On* (Memphis, 1956). *That Don’t Move Me* (Memphis, 1956) also includes slap bass and with some slap bass executed on the backbeat.

<sup>53</sup>Swing rhythms on snare with accented backbeats were consistently used in *Honky Tonk Babe* (Memphis, 1954), *Dixie Bop/Perkins Wiggle* (Memphis, 1955), *Gone, Gone, Gone* (Memphis, 1955) and *You Can’t Make Love To Somebody* (Memphis, 1955).

*Children* (take?a, Memphis, 1956) includes a shuffle rhythm on snare and ride cymbal (the commercially released version of this recording included snare backbeats with some use of snare backbeat variation 3). Three other recordings do not include snare backbeats: *I Care* (Memphis, 1957) contains a shuffle on snare with some quaver triplet rhythms, *Levi Jacket (And A Long Tail Shirt)* (Nashville, 1958) and *Where The Rio De' Ros Flows* (Nashville, 1958) contain Latin drum beats.<sup>54</sup>

Table 2.30 and Table 2.31 (page 113) reveal that Holland mostly incorporated either shuffle or swing rhythms on cymbals. From 1958, only four tracks recorded by Holland contain even quaver rhythms on cymbals: *Jenny Jenny* (Nashville, 1958), *Pop, Let Me Have The Car* (Nashville, 1958), *You Were There* (Nashville, 1958) and *Pointed Toe Shoes* (Nashville, 1959). One additional recording, *L-O-V-E-V-I-L-L-E* (Nashville, 1960) with Murray Harman drumming, includes even quavers rhythms performed on the snare drum throughout the recording. Although even quaver rhythms were rarely incorporated in Perkins' extant recorded output, the inclusion of such nonetheless confirms an increasing tendency toward even quaver drum beats in rock'n'roll during the late 1950s, as evident in the recordings by musicians thus covered.

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<sup>54</sup>*Her Love Rubbed Off* (Memphis, 1956) mostly includes a Latin beat but some strong snare backbeats feature in guitar solos and choruses.

2.7.7 The Platters.

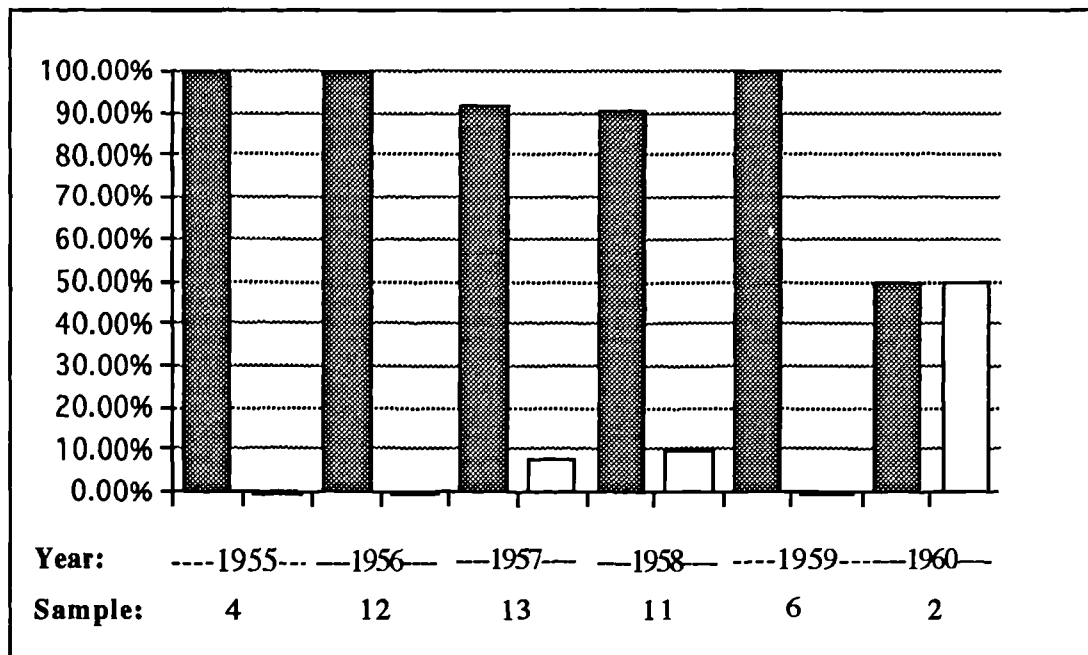


Table 2.32 Platters recordings (Selected Sample), 1955-60: backbeats.

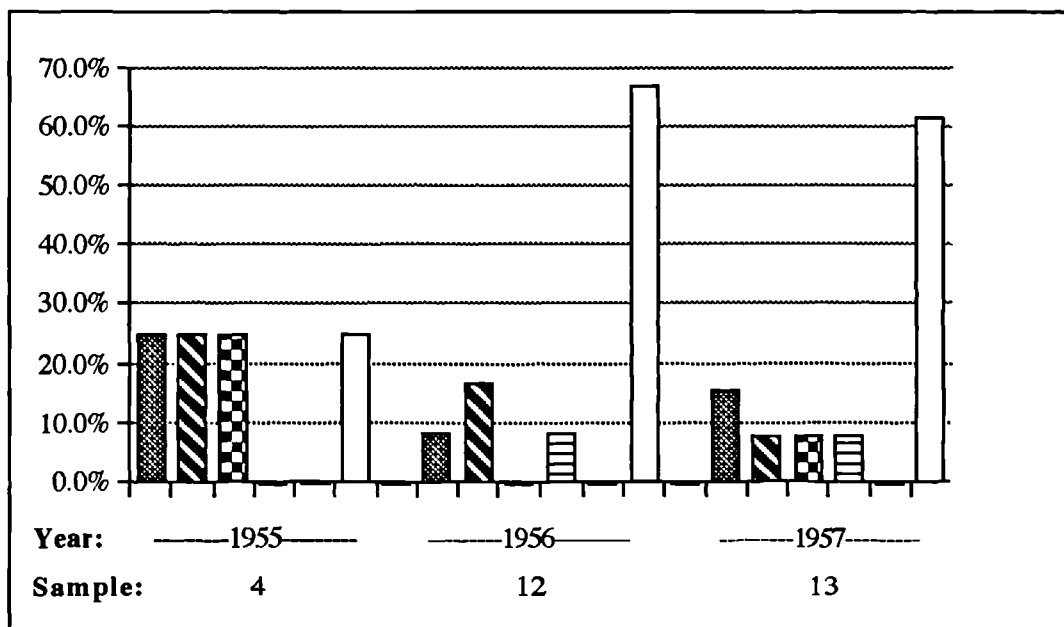
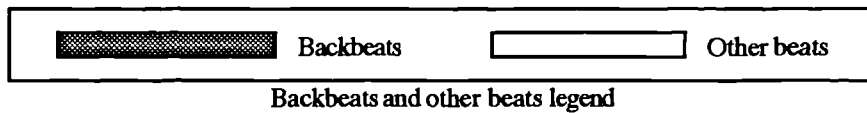


Table 2.33 Platters recordings (Selected Sample), 1955-57: cymbal rhythms.

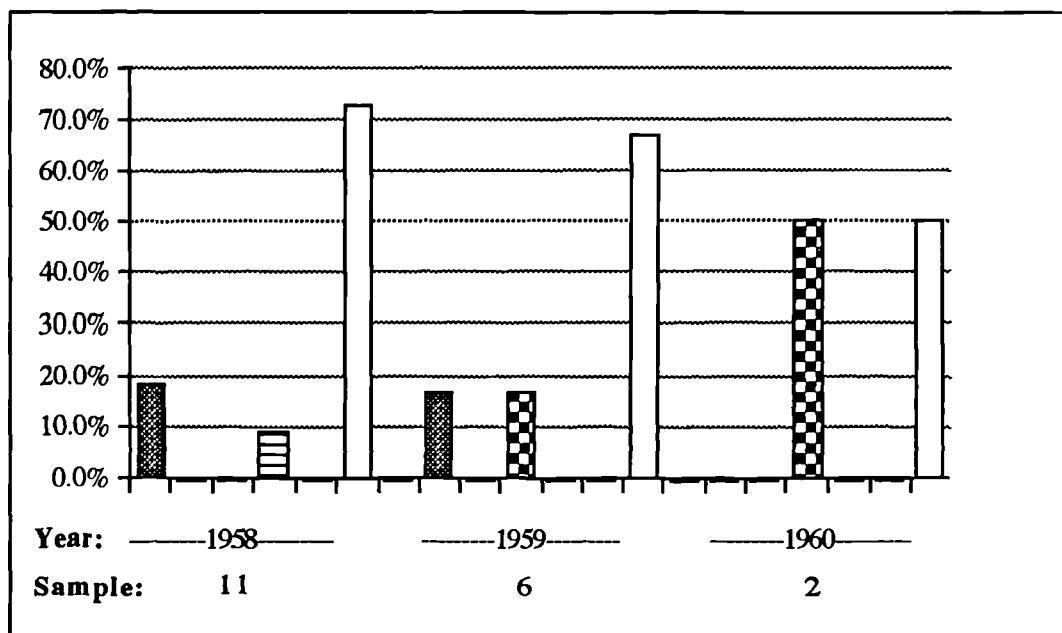
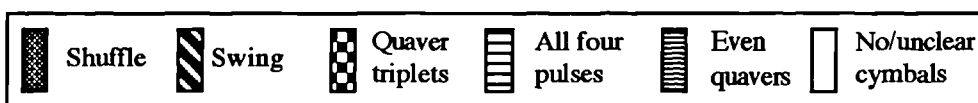


Table 2.34 Platters recordings (Selected Sample), 1958-60: cymbal rhythms.



Cymbal/hi-hat rhythms legend

Of seventy-eight recordings commercially released by The Platters between 1955 and 1960 (as listed in Gribin and Schiff, 1992: 469-470), forty-eight recordings were located and mini-analyzed. The recordings source does not include discographical information,<sup>55</sup> nor is such included in Gribin and Schiff (1992). Further, Fish (1982a, 1982b, 1982c) does not mention The Platters in his account of rock'n'roll drumming and any reference to The Platters' drummer could not be located in other published accounts of rock'n'roll.<sup>56</sup> Consequently, the following albeit brief discussion of The

<sup>55</sup>Harry Weinger notes in the sleeve notes accompanying the recordings source that "The Platters had the luxury of working with elite sessions players" and names Panama Francis as one of many musicians included in The Platters' recording sessions. We have previously noted in our discussion of Buddy Holly's recorded output that Francis was drumming on Holly's *Early In The Morning* (N.Y., 1958) and, given some of The Platters' recordings were produced in New York, it is possible that Francis was included in some recording sessions.

<sup>56</sup>Such as Weinberg (1991) and issues of *Modern Drummer* dating from 1980.

Platters' drum beats must exclude reference to particular drummers.

As illustrated in Table 2.32 above, most of The Platters recorded output included in our Selected Sample contains snare backbeat. Only three recordings were located that contain other drum beats: *When You Return* (L.A., 1957) includes a hi-hat rhythm on all four pulses, *I'll Never Smile Again* (Paris, 1958) and *Trees* (?, 1960) mostly include a snare rhythm on all four pulses.<sup>57</sup> Eighteen recordings include snare backbeat without additional snare rhythms executed on pulses 1 or 3 and feature shuffle, swing or triplet cymbal rhythms (some recordings include cymbal executions on all four pulses. See Table 2.33 and Table 2.34 above). Twenty-seven recordings feature shuffle, swing, triplet or snare-on-all-four-pulses rhythms with emphasis placed on the backbeat (see Table 2.35 below).

<p>Shuffle on snare with accented backbeat  <i>I Wanna</i>, L.A., 1955.  <i>(You've Got) The Magic Touch</i>, N.Y., 1956.  <i>Glory Of Love</i>, N.Y., 1956.  <i>I'm Sorry</i>, N.Y., 1956.  <i>Winner Take All</i>, N.Y., 1956.  <i>Helpless</i>, N.Y., 1957.  <i>I Wish</i>, N.Y., 1957.  <i>My Old Flame</i>, N.Y., 1957.  <i>For The First Time (Come Prima)</i>, ?, 1958.  <i>It's Raining Outside (Chove La Fora)</i>, ?, 1958.  <i>Sleepy Lagoon</i>, Chicago, 1959.</p> <p>Swing on snare with accented backbeat  <i>I Give You My Word</i>, N.Y., 1956.  <i>One In A Million</i>, N.Y., 1956.  <i>No Matter What You Are</i>, N.Y., 1957.  <i>Enchanted</i>, L.A., 1958.  <i>Wish It Were Me</i>, L.A., 1958.</p>	<p>Triplets on snare with accented backbeat  <i>Heaven On Earth</i>, N.Y., 1956.  <i>On My Word Of Honor</i>, N.Y., 1956.  <i>Only Because</i>, L.A., 1957.</p> <p>Snare on all four pulses with accented backbeat  <i>Only You (And You Alone)</i>, L.A., 1955.  <i>My Prayer</i>, N.Y., 1956.  <i>My Dream</i>, N.Y., 1957.  <i>No Power On Earth</i>, N.Y., 1957.  <i>If I Didn't Care</i>, Paris, 1958.  <i>Remember When</i>, Paris, 1958.  <i>Harbor Lights</i>, Chicago, 1959.</p>
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Table 2.35 The Platters recordings (Selected Sample), 1955-1960: snare rhythms with accented backbeats.

<sup>57</sup>There may be a weak backbeat on the hi-hat in the latter two recordings. However, the orchestral accompaniment largely overshadows the drum beat in these recordings and therefore it is difficult to gauge the consistency of such hi-hat rhythms throughout the recording. Consequently, these two recordings have been designated in Appendix Two as having no cymbal rhythms.

Of those recordings listed in Table 2.35, only two recordings include cymbal rhythms: *I Wanna* (L.A., 1955) includes a shuffle rhythm on cymbal and *I Give You My Word* (N.Y., 1956) has a cymbal executed on the backbeat in the final choruses.

Aside from drum beats, The Platters' recordings contained in our Selected Sample include two other prominent accompanimental rhythms, firstly, chordal triplet piano rhythms and, secondly, boogie rhythms executed on the piano and/or guitar. In reference to the former, such accompanimental rhythms combined with drum beats are reminiscent, at least to this listener, to similar such accompanimental beats contained in Fats Domino's recorded repertoire, albeit the triplet cymbal rhythms and snare backbeats of Earl Palmer's drumming with Domino are conflated into homophonic snare drum rhythms in The Platters' recordings.

The second prominent accompanimental rhythm, boogie rhythm, commonly features in The Platters' accompanimental beats. Boogie rhythms are mostly combined with those snare rhythms listed in Table 2.35. We have noted similar accompanimental beats in some recordings of other rock'n'roll musicians thus covered. However, the frequency of occurrence of such beats, the rhythmic peculiarities of snare drum rhythms and the lack of cymbal rhythms evident in The Platters' Selected Sample delineate The Platters' recordings from the rock'n'roll accompanimental style of those musicians thus covered.

2.7.8 Elvis Presley.

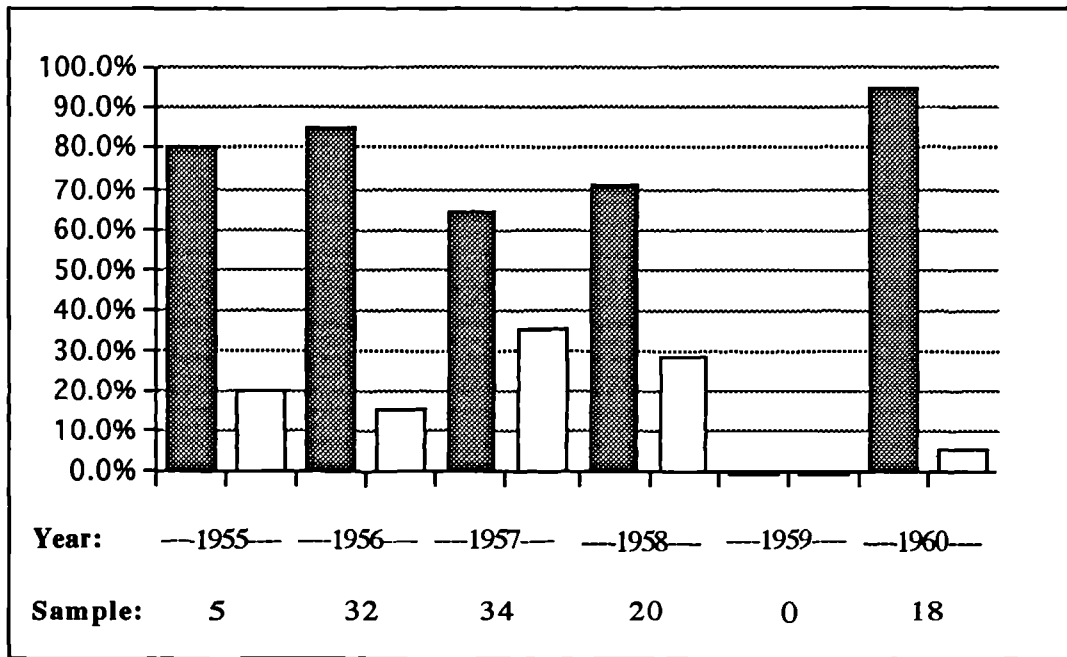


Table 2.36 Elvis Presley recordings (Selected Sample), 1955-60: backbeats.

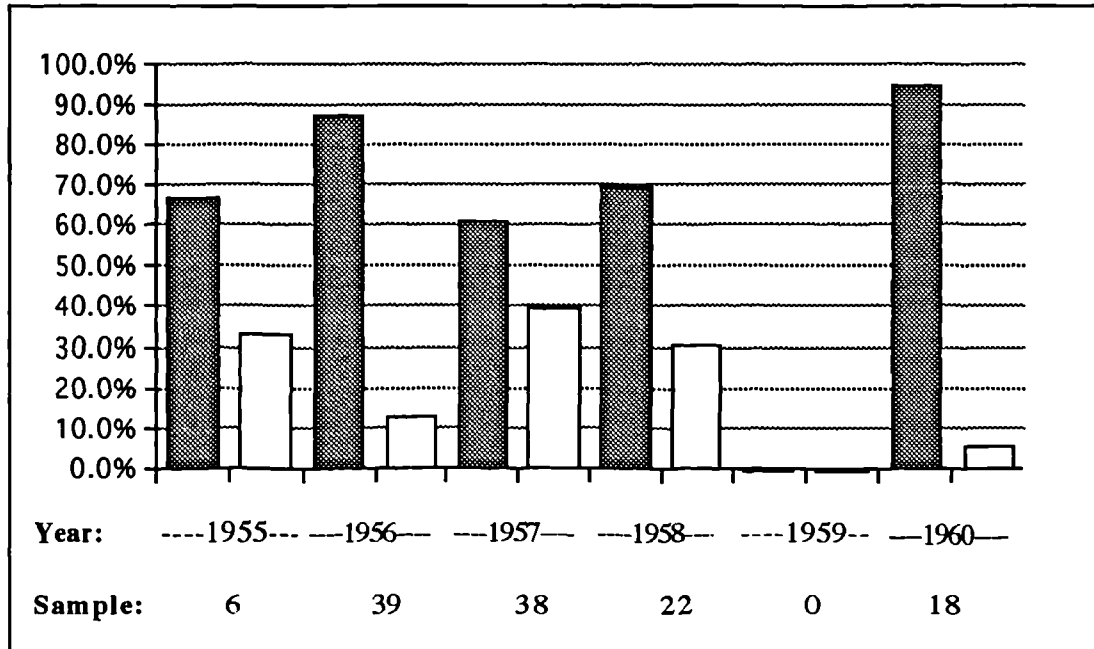
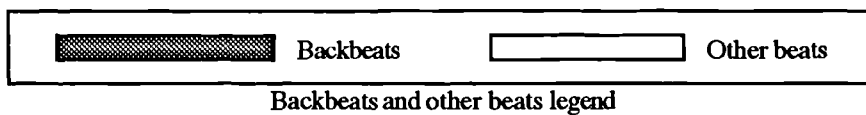


Table 2.37 Elvis Presley recordings (Extant Recordings), 1955-60: backbeats.





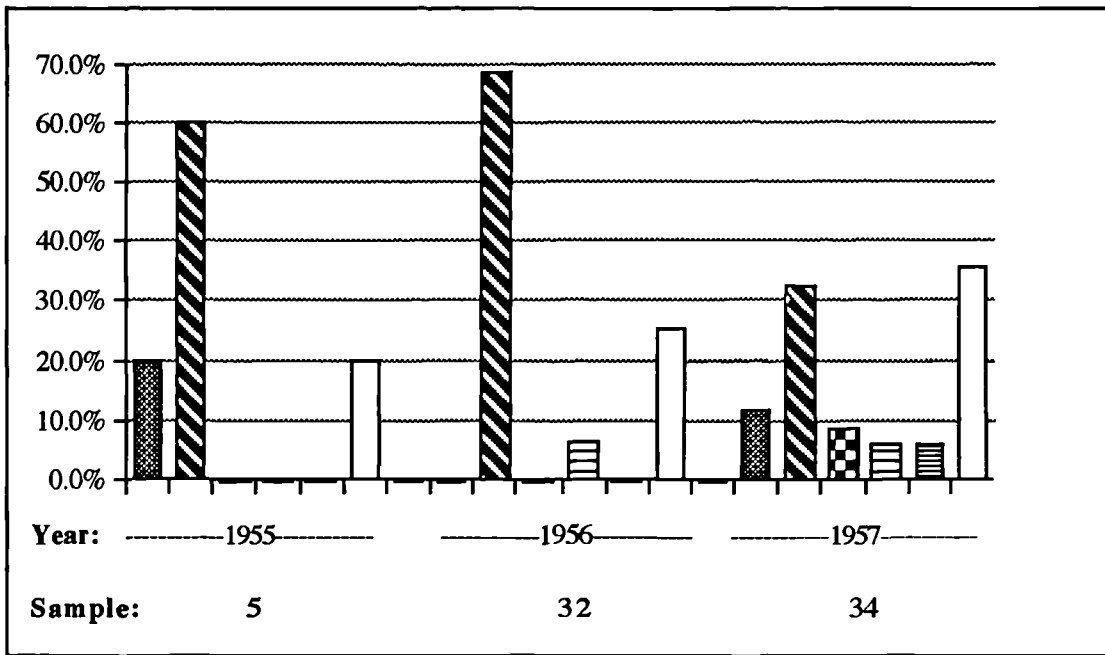


Table 2.38 Elvis Presley recordings (Selected Sample), 1955-57: cymbal rhythms.

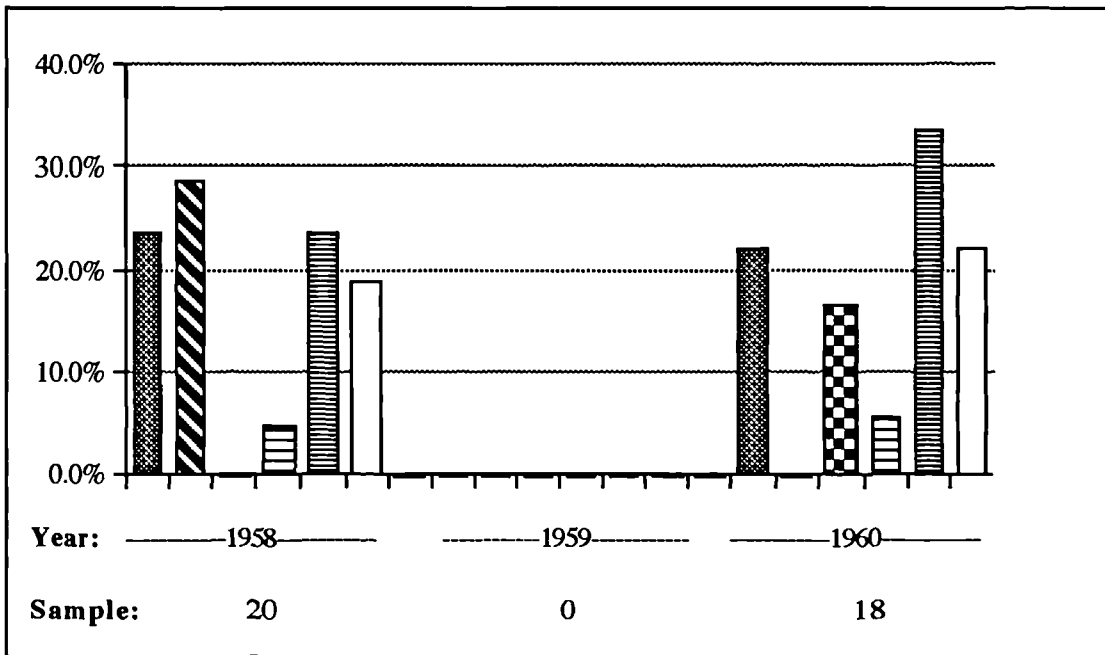
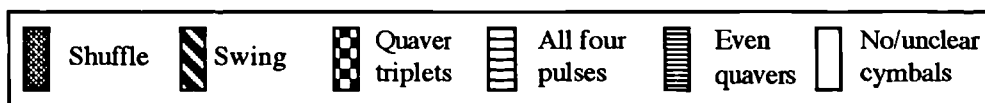


Table 2.39 Elvis Presley recordings (Selected Sample), 1958-1960: cymbal rhythms.



Cymbal/hi-hat rhythms legend

The complete commercially available recorded output of Elvis Presley was located and mini-analyzed. Discographical information accompanying the recordings sources<sup>58</sup> credits D.J. Fontana as the drummer for a majority of Presley's recordings produced between 1956 and 1960. Those recordings which exclude Fontana from the recording personnel are as follows: *We're Gonna Move*, *Love Me Tender*, *Poor Boy* and *Let Me* (all recorded during 1958 and with Richard Cornell drumming),<sup>59</sup> *King Creole* (take ?) and *Young Dreams* (recorded during 1958 and with Bernie Mattinson drumming). Johnny Bernero was drumming on Presley's 1955 recording sessions except for *I'm Left*, *You're Right*, *She's Gone*, which included Jimmie Lott drumming.

Additional takes of fourteen commercially released recordings were included in the recordings sources and, therefore, such recordings are listed in our Extant Recordings sample. Eight additional takes contain similar drum beats to their corresponding recording included in our Selected Sample. Consequently, a comparison of graphs indicating backbeat usage in our Selected Sample (Table 2.36, page 121) and Extant Recordings (Table 2.37) reveals little overall deviation regarding the frequency of occurrence of snare backbeat. The six remaining additional takes exhibit the following drumming characteristics: *I'm Left*, *You're Right*, *She's Gone* (take?, Memphis, 1955) excludes a snare backbeat, *Heartbreak Hotel* (live recording, Las Vegas, 1956) includes a snare backbeat. Three film soundtrack versions, *Don't Leave Me Now* (Hollywood, 1957), *I Want To Be Free* (Hollywood, 1957) and *Loving You* (Hollywood, 1957), exclude snare backbeats. Only one recording, *Ain't That Loving You Baby* (Nashville, 1958), exhibits significant stylistic difference in drum beat and other accompaniments

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<sup>58</sup>Elvis Presley, *The King of Rock'n'Roll: The Complete 50s Masters* (BMG/RCA compact discs: PD90689, 1992) and *Elvis Presley, From Nashville To Memphis: The Essential 60s Masters* (BMG/RCA compact discs: 07863 66160-2, 1993).

<sup>59</sup>These recordings were produced at soundtrack recording sessions for 20th Century Fox's *Love Me Tender* and recorded at Hollywood.

to its alternate take (Hollywood, 1958), the latter of which is faster in tempo and incorporates snare backbeat variation 1 rhythms. Having briefly noted variations to drum beats contained in the aforementioned additional recordings, the following discussion will focus on recordings included in the Selected Sample.

Most recordings included in the Selected Sample contain either strong or emphatic snare backbeat throughout the recording<sup>60</sup> or other snare rhythms that include backbeat accentuations (see the mini-analyses of Presley's recordings contained in Appendix 2.2). For instance, *Fame And Fortune* (Nashville, 1960) and *Thrill Of Your Love* (Nashville, 1960) include quaver triplet rhythms on snare with strong or emphatic emphasis of the backbeat. Eleven recordings dating from 1958 include snare backbeat variation 1 rhythms,<sup>61</sup> one recording, *Your Cheatin' Heart* (Hollywood, 1958), features some occasional use of snare backbeat variation 2, and three recordings include some occasional use of snare backbeat variation 3. All of the aforementioned snare backbeat variations subsequently occur in Presley's recorded output dating from 1957.

It is evident from Table 2.36 and Table 2.37 (page 121) that a significant number of recordings do not include snare backbeat but, rather, feature other drum beats, particularly snare rhythms that are clearly audible in the recording. A listing of other drum beats containing snare rhythms - performed by Fontana, Mattinson and Bernero - and recordings included in our Selected Sample that feature such snare rhythms is detailed in Table 2.40 below.

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<sup>60</sup>Particularly noticeable in Presley's 1956 recorded output are those recordings produced for the film The Reno Brothers, a period western whose name was later changed to Love Me Tender. The film soundtrack sessions for Love Me Tender included Richard Cornell drumming and produced *Poor Boy*, and *Let Me*, both of which exhibit weak snare backbeats. Other occurrences of weak snare backbeats were located in Presley's 1957 recorded, with Fontana drumming. Mostly, however, Presley's output contained either strong or emphatic backbeat executions (see Appendix Two).

<sup>61</sup>As evident in Appendix 2.2, seven recordings employ snare backbeat variation 1 throughout the recording and some occasional use of this rhythm occurs in four other recordings.

<p><b>Snare on all four pulses</b>  <i>HeartbreakHotel</i>, Nashville, 1956.  <i>First In Line</i>, Hollywood, 1956.  <i>I'm Counting On You</i>, Nashville, 1956.  <i>Don't</i>, Hollywood, 1957.  <i>I'll Be Home For Christmas</i>, Hollywood, 1957.  <i>Is It So Strange</i>, Hollywood, 1957.  <i>It Is No Secret (What God Can Do)</i>, Hollywood, 1957.  <i>Lonesome Cowboy</i>, Hollywood, 1957.  <i>My Wish Came True</i>, Hollywood, 1957.  <i>O Little Town Of Bethlehem</i>, Hollywood, 1957.  <i>Tell Me Why</i>, Hollywood, 1957.  <i>That's When Your Heartaches Begin</i>, Hollywood, 1957.  <i>White Christmas</i>, Hollywood, 1957.  <i>Young And Beautiful</i>, Hollywood, 1957.  <i>As Long As I Have You</i>, Hollywood, 1958.  <i>Don't Ask Me Why</i>, Hollywood, 1958 (this recording includes a shuffle rhythm on hi-hat).</p>	<p><b>Swing rhythm on snare</b>  <i>Mystery Train</i>, Memphis, 1955 (executed on unidentified percussion and with some occasional backbeat emphasis).</p> <p><b>Shuffle rhythms on snare</b>  <i>Danny</i>, Hollywood, 1958.</p> <p><b>Off-pulse snare executions</b>  <i>Reconsider Baby</i> (jam session), Memphis, 1956.  <i>King Creole</i>, Hollywood, 1958.  <i>Young Dreams</i>, Hollywood, 1958.</p> <p><b>Latin drum beats</b>  <i>How Do You Think I Feel?</i>, Hollywood, 1956.  <i>Hot Dog</i>, Hollywood, 1957.</p> <p><b>Bo Diddley rhythm</b>  <i>Surrender</i>, Nashville, 1960.</p>
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Table 2.40 Elvis Presley recordings (Selected Sample), 1955-60: other snare rhythms and drum beats.

A scan of the mini-analyses included in Appendix 2.2 reveals that many of the recordings listed in Table 2.40 do not contain cymbal rhythms. Further, those recordings without snare backbeat produced in 1957, with Fontana drumming, include unobtrusive drum beats mostly comprising snare on all four pulses rhythms that are mixed back in the recording. As will become evident from our following discussion, such drum beats are dissimilar to those used by Fontana in his earlier recordings with Presley.

In describing his first recording session with Presley, and indeed his first studio session, D.J. Fontana (as quoted in Fish, 1982b: 18) notes that he “learned to stay out of the way” and “just added to the sound” without “helping or hurting it”. Consequently, *Money Honey* (Nashville, 1956) and *I Was The One* (Nashville, 1956), produced during Fontana’s first session with Presley, include weakly accented

backbeats. However, other tracks from this same session, such as *Heartbreak Hotel* and *I Got A Woman*, include strong and emphatic backbeat executions on snare. Fontana's subsequent recordings with Presley, produced in 1956, similarly contain strong or emphatic snare executions of the backbeat. It is apparent, therefore, that Fontana's recollection concerning his idea to "stay out of the way" of other accompanimental activity does not accurately reflect his recorded performance practice during that period.

Table 2.38 and Table 2.39 (page 122) indicate that Presley's output produced from 1955 to 1957 mostly includes shuffle or swing rhythms on cymbals, confirming Fontana's notion (as quoted in Weinberg, 1991: 113), that he preferred to incorporate a "dotted eighth-note shuffle, kinda bouncy" cymbal rhythm in his drum beats. From 1958, however, a marked increase in even quaver cymbal rhythms is evident and, by 1960, such rhythms dominated Presley's recorded output. Presley's first recording that includes even quaver cymbal rhythms, *Jailhouse Rock* (Hollywood, 1957), also features swing rhythms on cymbal during the guitar solo. Later recordings, such as *A Big Hunk Of Love* (Nashville, 1958) and *It's Now Or Never* (Nashville, 1960), include even quaver cymbal rhythms throughout the recording. As evident from the mini-analyses contained in Appendix 2.2, many of Presley's late 1950s recordings which include even quaver cymbal rhythms are accompanied by snare backbeat variations (such recordings have previously been noted).

**2.7.9 Little Richard.**

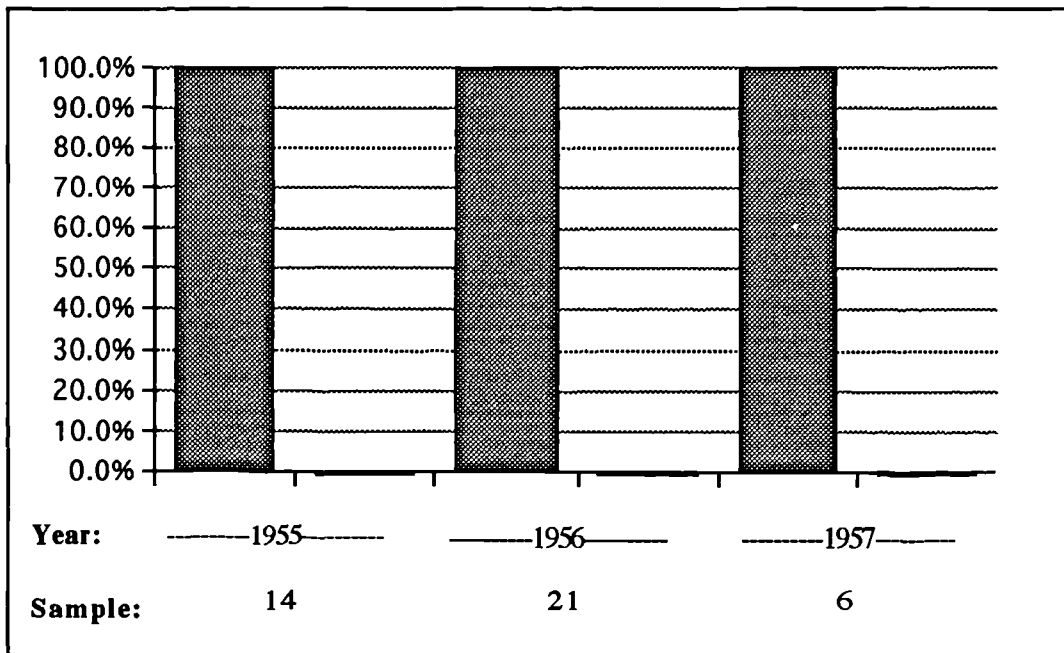


Table 2.41 Little Richard recordings (Selected Sample), 1955-57: backbeats.

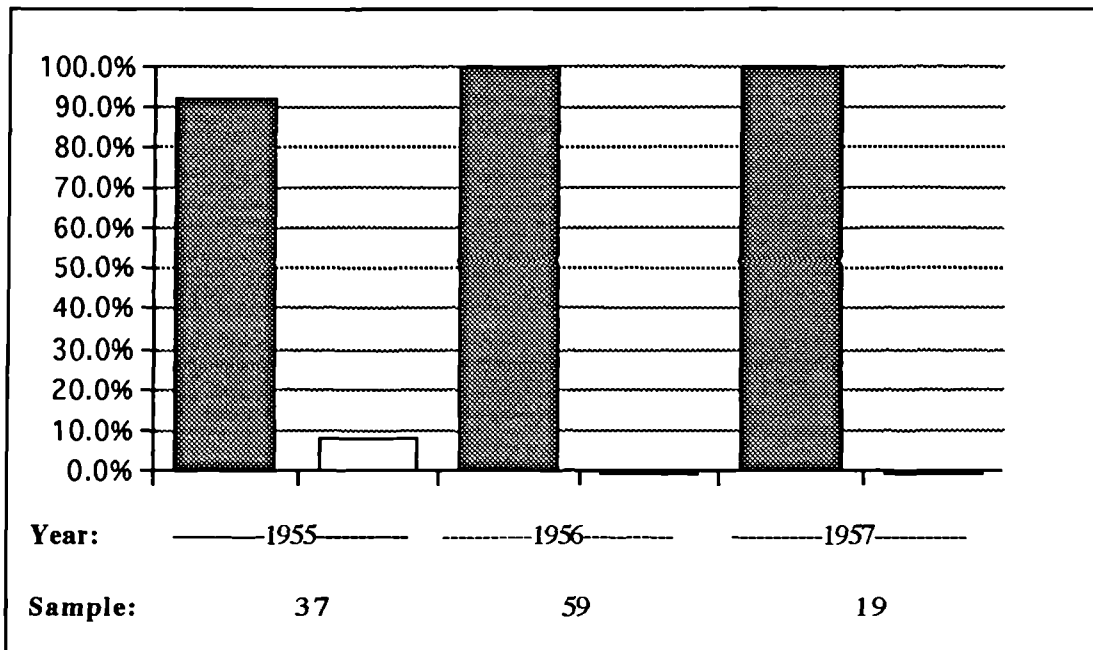
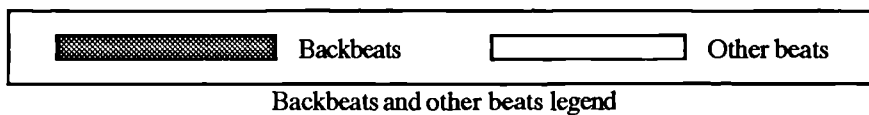


Table 2.42 Little Richard recordings (Extant Recordings), 1955-57: backbeats.



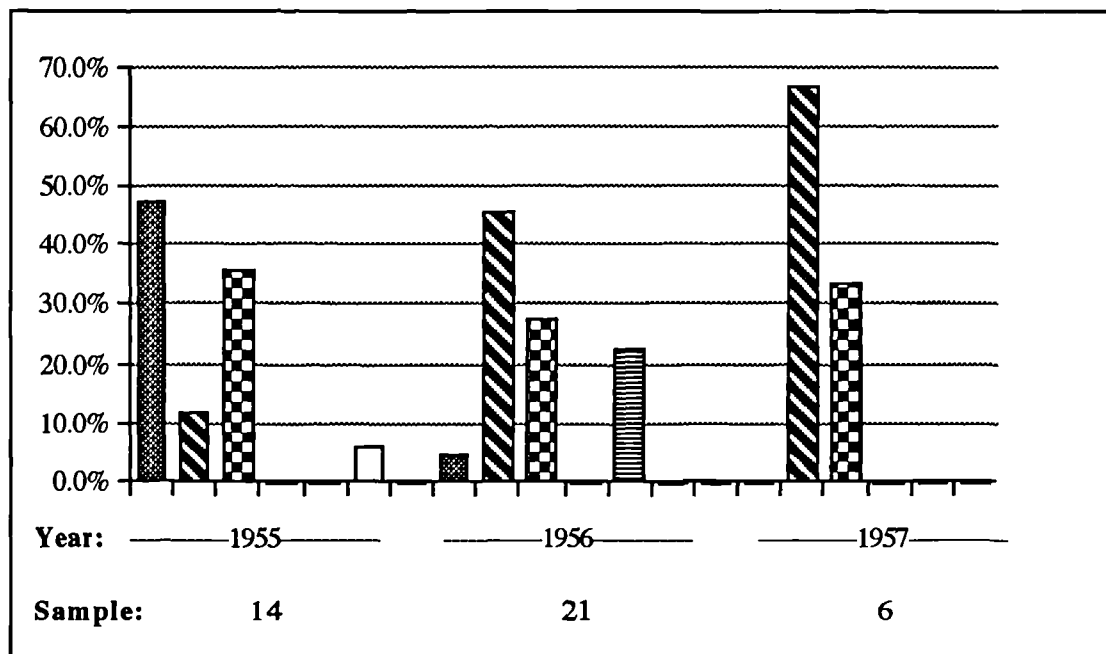
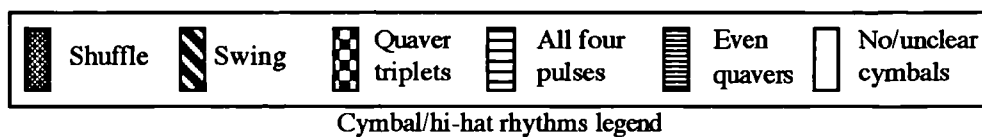


Table 2.43 Little Richard recordings (Selected Sample), 1955-57: cymbal rhythms.



The complete extant recorded output of Little Richard was located and subsequently mini-analyzed. Discographical information accompanying the recordings source<sup>62</sup> reveals that Earl Palmer was drumming on all of Little Richard's tracks produced from 1955 to 1956 except for the following recordings included in our Selected Sample: *She's My Star* (New Orleans, 1955, unknown drummer), *Long Tall Sally* (take 1), *Miss Ann* (take 1), and *True Fine Mama* (all recorded in L.A., 1955, with Oscar Moore drumming), and *She's Got It* (L.A., 1956, with Charles Connor drumming). Drummer Charles Connor performed with Little Richard's touring band during 1956, and subsequently recorded with Richard during 1957.

<sup>62</sup>Discographical information accompanies the recordings source: Little Richard: The Specialty Sessions (Ace Records compact discs: ABOXCD 1, 1989).

As illustrated in Table 2.41 above, all of Richard's recordings included in the Selected Sample contain snare backbeats and, as noted in the mini-analyses of such, these are either strongly or emphatically executed. The replacement of drummer Earl Palmer with Charles Connor, therefore, did not effect any change in snare drum usage in Richard's recordings. According to Richard (as quoted in White, 1985: 82), however, the inclusion of Connor in the 1955-6 recording sessions would have produced "the most exciting rock'n'roll of all". Connor (as quoted in White, 1985: 66), in recalling his rehearsals with Richard during 1956, suggests how such "excitement" might have been generated by his drumming:

Richard said to us, "I want Tutti Frutti to have a little more energy to it. I don't want just that single backbeat like when Earl Palmer played it in the studio." He made me change so it was more heavy on the bass drum. When I think of it now, it sounded almost like what's known as the disco beat.

Unfortunately, bass drum usage can not be clearly heard in Connor's 1956 and 1957 recordings with Richard. Regardless, Connor's testimony does confirm that snare backbeats were central to Richard's conception of a rock'n'roll drum beat.

Table 2.42 (page 127) reveals that some additional takes produced in 1955 exclude snare backbeat. The additional takes and their respective drum beats are as follows: *Maybe I'm Right* (take 1, New Orleans, 1955) includes snare on all four pulses and no cymbal work, *Slippin' and Slidin'* (take 1, New Orleans, 1955) employs a Latin beat on drums, and take 3 of that same song includes a Latin beat on bongos.<sup>63</sup>

As illustrated in Table 2.43 (page 128), shuffle, swing and triplet cymbal rhythms were commonly employed in Richard's recordings. Triplet cymbal rhythms were initially incorporated in Richard's recorded performances by drummer Earl Palmer who, as we have previously noted, was instrumental in establishing triplet cymbal rhythms in

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<sup>63</sup>As detailed in Appendix Two, the version of *Slippin' and Slidin'* included in our Selected Sample includes even quaver rhythms on snare with accented backbeats.



Domino's recordings. Triplet cymbal rhythms were subsequently adopted by Connor in his 1957 recorded performances with Richard. Two recordings produced in 1956 contain even quaver cymbal rhythms: *Lucille* and *Good Golly Miss Molly*, both of which included Earl Palmer drumming. The rhythmic conception of *Lucille*, Richard's first recording to display even quaver cymbal rhythms, will be briefly discussed below.'

According to Richard (as quoted in White, 1985: 80), *Lucille* was based on the rhythm of an earlier composition titled *Directly From My Heart To You*:

I just took the rhythm of an old song of mine called *Directly From My Heart To You* slowed down and I used to do that riff and go "Sonya!" and I made it into *Lucille*.<sup>64</sup> My cousin used to live in a place called Barn Hop Bottom in Macon, right by the railway line, and when the trains came past they'd shake the houses - chocka-chocka-chocka - and that's how I got the rhythm for *Directly From My Heart* and *Lucille*.

Little Richard's recording of *Directly From My Heart* for Specialty Records (New Orleans, 1955) is based on the same riff incorporated in an earlier recording of that same song produced in Houston, 1953 for Peacock records (see Figure 2.25).<sup>65</sup>



Figure 2.25 Richard: *Directly From My Heart To You* (riff)

The tempo of Richard's subsequent version produced in 1955, however, is slightly faster, proceeding at around 86 pulses per minute. Greater emphasis is also placed on quaver triplet rhythms; chordal quaver triplet piano rhythms and quaver triplet executions on the ride cymbal are incorporated in the later recording. Also, the horn riff - which is slightly different to the guitar and piano riff - further emphasizes a quaver triplet rhythm (see Figure 2.26).

<sup>64</sup>Sonya, also known as Queen Sonya, was the stage name of a female impersonator in Richard's home town.

<sup>65</sup>Richard's pre-1955 recordings will be discussed in Chapter Four.



Figure 2.26 Richard: *Directly From My Heart* (horn riff)

The final version of the horn riff, as incorporated in *Lucille*, includes further embellishment through the addition of a minor third and also an upper neighbour note on pulse 4. More importantly, however, the riff incorporates even quaver rather than triplet rhythms, perhaps exemplifying the “chocka-chocka-chocka” train rhythms that Richard considers influential to the song’s rhythmic conception (see Figure 2.27).<sup>66</sup>



Figure 2.27 Richard: *Lucille* (guitar and bass riff)

Chordal even quaver piano rhythms and even quaver cymbal rhythms also accompanied the transformation of *Directly From My Heart* to *Lucille*.

As we have previously observed, Palmer’s recorded performances with Fats Domino from 1954 to 1959 do not contain even quaver cymbal rhythms. It is likely, therefore, that the adoption of even quaver cymbal rhythms by Palmer in *Lucille* was informed by Richard’s musical direction rather than by Palmer’s performance practice.

Having investigated drumming in the output of our representative rock’n’roll musicians, the following section will draw conclusions from our findings.

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<sup>66</sup>The master tape of this version has been sped up and the key is somewhere between C and C#.

## **2.8 Conclusions.**

### **2.8.1 Snare Backbeat in Rock'n'Roll.**

The following conclusions may be drawn regarding the frequency of occurrence of snare backbeat in our rock'n'roll recordings sample.

- We have observed in Chapter One that many commentators consider that snare backbeat is one codifying characteristic of rock'n'roll. It is evident from our previous discussion of rock'n'roll drumming that this notion is, in fact, true. Statistical information detailing the frequency of occurrence of snare backbeat in our rock'n'roll recordings sample is located in Table 2.44 (page 133). As can be worked out from this table, 644 (around 90%) of 712 recordings included in the Selected Sample and 803 (around 92%) of 874 recordings included in the Extant Recordings sample contain snare backbeat.
- Additional takes of rock'n'roll recordings, included in the Extant Recordings sample, mostly contain drum beats that are either similar to or the same as the drum beats used in the commercially released recording.<sup>67</sup> This means that factors informing the inclusion or exclusion of snare backbeat in a recording were based upon clearly conceived style criteria. In reference to the complete recordings corpus discussed above, Table 2.45 (page 134) and Table 2.46 (page 134) illustrate that little deviance regarding snare backbeat usage occurs between the Selected Sample and Extant Recordings samplings.

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<sup>67</sup>Those few additional takes of recordings that feature dissimilar drum beats to the commercially released version have been noted in our previous discussion.

<b>Rock'n'roll recordings, 1954-60: backbeats.</b>																
<b>[1] Backbeats (in Extant Recordings);            [2] other beats (in Extant Recordings);            [3] backbeats (in Selected Sample);            [4] other beats (in Selected Sample).</b>																
Year →	1954				1955				1956				1957			
Musician ↓ Beat →	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Chuck Berry					7	1	7	1	3	0	3	0	10	2	10	2
Fats Domino	4	4	4	4	18	2	18	2	5	2	5	2	24	2	23	2
Bill Haley	6	0	6	0	10	0	10	0	17	0	16	0	31	2	31	2
Buddy Holly									10	0	10	0	12	5	12	5
Jerry Lee Lewis									4	0	4	0	55	4	44	3
Carl Perkins	6	0	3	0	15	0	9	0	32	1	21	0	12	1	7	1
The Platters					4	0	4	0	12	0	12	0	12	1	12	1
Elvis Presley					4	2	4	1	34	5	27	5	23	15	22	12
Little Richard					34	3	14	0	59	0	21	0	19	0	6	0
Year →	1958				1959				1960				Total ↓			
Musician ↓ Beat →	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Chuck Berry	10	0	10	0	9	0	9	0	9	2	9	2	53		53	
Fats Domino	29	3	26	2	5	1	5	1	15	4	15	4	118		113	
Bill Haley	19	0	18	0	16	2	16	2					103		101	
Buddy Holly	10	4	10	4									41		41	
Jerry Lee Lewis	54	0	37	0	22	0	18	0	34	0	26	0	173		132	
Carl Perkins	12	2	21	2	7	0	7	0	3	0	3	0	100		74	
The Platters	10	1	10	1	6	0	6	0	1	1	1	1	48		48	
Elvis Presley	16	6	15	5					17	1	17	1	123		109	
Little Richard													115		41	
Total sample (Extant Recordings): 874								Total sample (Selected Sample): 712								

Table 2.44 Rock'n'roll recordings, 1954-60: backbeats.

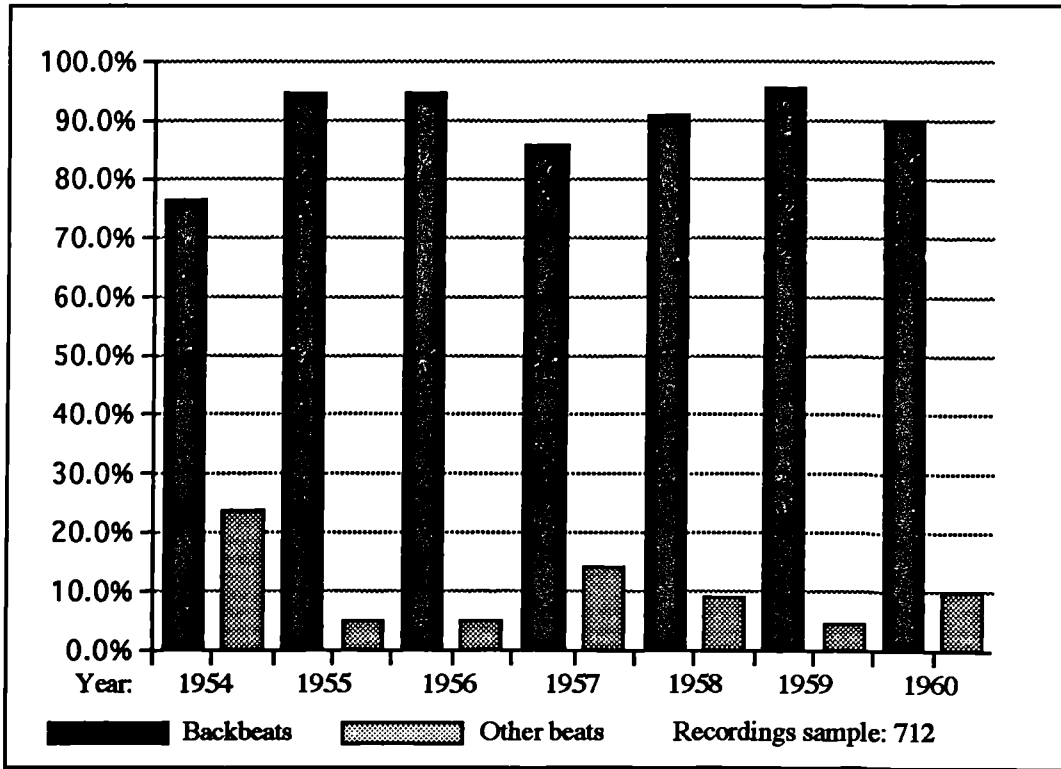


Table 2.45 Rock'n'roll recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-60: backbeats and other beats.

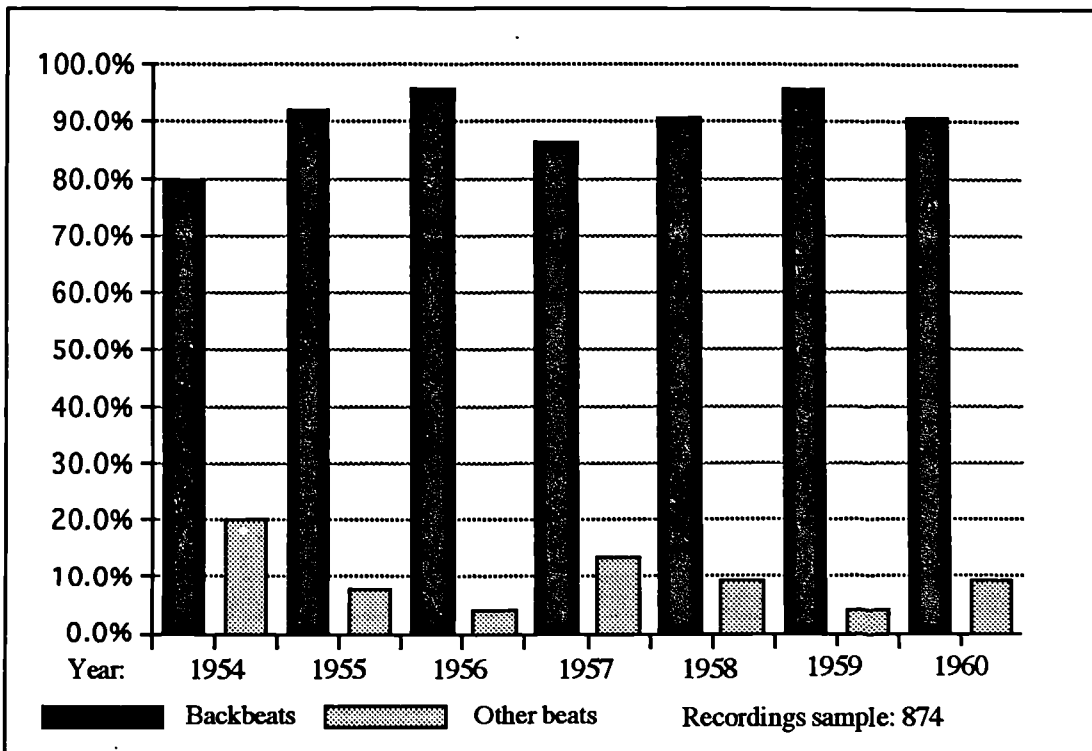


Table 2.46 Rock'n'roll recordings (Extant Recordings), 1954-60: backbeats and other beats.

- Snare backbeats were mostly strongly or emphatically executed. Only 61 of 874 recordings (Extant Recordings sample) contain weak snare backbeats. For convenience, all recordings included in the Extant Recordings sample that contain weakly executed snare backbeats are listed in Table 2.47 (page 136). The percentage of weak snare backbeats in the output (Extant Recordings sample) of each representative rock'n'roll musician is as follows:

-	Chuck Berry:	4%
-	Fats Domino:	6%
-	Bill Haley:	3%
-	Buddy Holly:	15%
-	Jerry Lee Lewis:	6%
-	Carl Perkins:	16%
-	The Platters:	13%
-	Elvis Presley:	10%
-	Little Richard:	0%

It is apparent from Table 2.47 that many additional takes, particularly those occurring in the output of Carl Perkins, contain weak snare backbeats. Some stylistic influences that informed the performance of weakly executed snare backbeat by drummers have been noted in our previous discussion of drumming in the output of our representative rock'n'roll musicians.

<p><b>Chuck Berry.</b>  <i>School Day</i>, Chicago, 1957.  <i>Memphis Tennessee</i>, Chicago, 1958.</p> <p><b>Fats Domino.</b>  <i>How Can I Be Happy</i>, New Orleans, 1958.  <i>Once In A While</i>, New Orleans, 1958.  <i>Don't Come Knockin'</i>, New Orleans, 1960.  <i>It's The Talk Of The Town</i>, New Orleans, 1960.  <i>Magic Isles</i>, New Orleans, 1960.  <i>Put Your Arms Around Me Honey</i>, New Orleans, 1960.  <i>Rising Sun</i>, New Orleans, 1960.</p> <p><b>Bill Haley.</b>  <i>(Put Another Nickel In The Jukebox) Music, Music, Music!</i>, N.Y., 1959.  <i>(Thanks For The) Summer Souvenir</i>, N.Y., 1959.  <i>Two Shadows</i>, N.Y., 1959.</p> <p><b>Buddy Holly.</b>  <i>Baby, Won't You Come Out Tonight</i>, Clovis, 1956.  <i>Changing All Those Changes</i>, Clovis, 1956.  <i>Girl On My Mind</i>, Nashville, 1956.  <i>I'm Gonna Set My Foot Down</i>, Clovis, 1956.  <i>Modern Don Juan</i>, Nashville, 1956.  <i>Raining In My Heart</i>, N.Y., 1958.</p> <p><b>Jerry Lee Lewis.</b>  <i>Deep Elem Blues</i>, Memphis, 1956/57?  <i>Lewis Boogie</i>, Memphis, 1956/57?  <i>You're The Only Star In My Blue Heaven</i> (take ?), Memphis, 1956/57?  <i>Great Balls Of Fire</i> (take ?), Memphis, 1957.  <i>Love Letters In The Sand</i>, Memphis, 1957.  <i>Cool, Cool Ways (Sexy Ways)</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Milkshake Mademoiselle</i> (take ?a), Memphis, 1958.  <i>I Could Never Be Ashamed Of You</i> (take ?), Memphis, 1959.  <i>Love Made A Fool Of Me</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>When I Get Paid</i>, Memphis, 1960.</p>	<p><b>Carl Perkins.</b>  <i>Honky Tonk Gal</i> (take ?), Memphis, 1954.  <i>Movie Magg</i> (take ?), Memphis, 1954.  <i>Turn Around</i> (take ?), Memphis, 1954.  <i>Turn Around</i>, Memphis, 1954.  <i>Dixie Bop/Perkins Wiggle</i>, Memphis, 1955.  <i>Gone, Gone, Gone</i> (take ?), Memphis, 1955.  <i>Gone, Gone, Gone</i>, Memphis, 1955.  <i>Honey Don't</i> (take 1), Memphis, 1955.  <i>Honey Don't</i> (take 2), Memphis, 1955.  <i>Let The Jukebox Keep On Playing</i> (take ?), Memphis, 1955.  <i>Let The Jukebox Keep On Playing</i>, Memphis, 1955.  <i>What You Doin' When You're Crying</i>, Memphis, 1955.  <i>You Can't Make Love To Somebody</i>, Memphis, 1955.  <i>Try My Heart Out</i>, Memphis, 1956.  <i>Shake, Rattle and Roll</i>, Nashville, 1958.  <i>Just For You</i>, Nashville, 1960.</p> <p><b>The Platters.</b>  <i>Enchanted</i>, L.A., 1958.  <i>It's Raining Outside (Chove La Fora)</i>, ?, 1958.  <i>Remember When</i>, Paris, 1958.  <i>Wish It Were Me</i>, L.A., 1958.  <i>Harbor Lights</i>, Chicago, 1959.  <i>To Each His Own</i>, N.Y., 1959.</p> <p><b>Elvis Presley.</b>  <i>I'm Left, You're Right, She's Gone</i>, Memphis, 1955.  <i>Any Way You Want Me (That's How I Will Be)</i>, N.Y., 1956.  <i>How's The World Treating You</i>, Hollywood, 1956.  <i>I Was The One</i>, Nashville, 1956.  <i>Let Me</i>, Hollywood, 1956.  <i>Money Honey</i>, Nashville, 1956.  <i>Poor Boy</i>, Hollywood, 1956.  <i>(Let Me Be Your) Teddy Bear</i> (film soundtrack), Hollywood, 1957.  <i>Here Comes Santa Claus (Right Down Santa Claus Lane)</i>, Hollywood, 1957.  <i>Lover Doll</i>, Hollywood, 1958.  <i>I Will Be Home Again</i>, Nashville, 1960.</p>
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Table 2.47 Rock'n'roll recordings (extant), 1954-60: weak snare backbeat.

- Most recordings feature snare backbeat executed throughout all formal-structural sections. Only 21 (around 3%) of 712 rock'n'roll recordings (Selected Sample) include sectional and/or sporadic use of snare backbeat. These recordings are listed in Table 2.48 below.

<p><b>Chuck Berry</b>  <i>Berry Pickin'</i>, Chicago, 1955.  <i>Sweet Sixteen</i>, Chicago, 1960.</p> <p><b>Bill Haley</b>  <i>A.B.C. Boogie</i>, N.Y., 1954.  <i>Rock Around The Clock</i>, N.Y., 1954.  <i>Oriental Rock</i>, N.Y., 1957.</p> <p><b>Buddy Holly</b>  <i>Rock Me Baby</i>, Oklahoma City, 1957.</p> <p><b>Jerry Lee Lewis</b>  <i>I'm Feelin' Sorry</i>, Memphis, 1957.  <i>You Win Again</i>, Memphis, 1957.  <i>Hello, Hello Baby</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Shanty Town</i>, Memphis, 1958/9?</p>	<p><b>Carl Perkins</b>  <i>Her Love Rubbed Off</i>, Memphis, 1956.  <i>I Don't See Me In Your Eyes Anymore</i>, Nashville, 1959.  <i>One Ticket To Loneliness</i>, Nashville, 1959.  <i>The Drifter</i>, Nashville, 1959.  <i>L-O-V-E-V-I-L-L-E</i>, Nashville, 1960.</p> <p><b>The Platters</b>  <i>I Wanna</i>, L.A., 1955.  <i>He's Mine</i>, N.Y., 1956.  <i>One In A Million</i>, N.Y., 1956.  <i>My Secret</i>, L.A., 1959.  <i>Red Sails In The Sunset</i>, Chicago, 1959.</p> <p><b>Elvis Presley</b>  <i>I Forgot To Remember To Forget</i>, Memphis, 1955.</p>
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Table 2.48 Rock'n'roll recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-60: sectional or sporadic use of snare backbeats.

- Only 35 (around 5%) of 712 rock'n'roll recordings included in our Selected Sample contain snare backbeat variation 1 rhythms (see Table 2.49, page 139). As we have noted in Chapter 2.2 above, Brown (1992: 43) considers that drum beats containing snare backbeat variation 1 rhythms are a "characteristic drum beat of 1950s rock". Only 13 (around 2%) of 712 recordings included in our Selected Sample contain snare backbeat variation 2 rhythms (see Table 2.50, page 140). We have also noted in Chapter 2.2 that Porter (1979: 53) deems such rhythms as "early rock figures". Given the aforementioned statistics regarding the frequency of occurrence of snare backbeat variations 1 and 2 in rock'n'roll, it would be reasonable to state that both Brown's and Porter's notions of rock'n'roll drum beat are incorrect. 60 (around 8%) of 712



- recordings contain snare backbeat variation 3 rhythms (see Table 2.51, page 141).
- Although some early recordings by Carl Perkins contain snare backbeat variation 1 rhythms, snare backbeat variations mostly occur in rock'n'roll recordings produced from around 1957. In reference to the rock'n'roll recordings corpus discussed in Chapter Two, Jerry Lee Lewis' recorded output with Jimmy Van Eaton drumming contains the greatest number of snare backbeat variation rhythms.


	
<u>Throughout a recording:</u>	<u>Occasional use in a recording:</u>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chuck Berry</b>  <i>Betty Jean</i>, Chicago, 1959.  <i>Too Pooped To Pop</i>, Chicago, 1959.  <i>I Got To Find My Baby</i>, Chicago, 1960.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fats Domino</b>  <i>I'll Always Be In Love With You</i>, New Orleans, 1958.  <i>Isle Of Capri</i>, New Orleans, 1958.  <i>I'm Ready</i>, New Orleans, 1959 (handclaps).  <i>When I Was Young</i>, New Orleans, 1959.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Jerry Lee Lewis</b>  <i>Fools Like Me</i>, Memphis, 1958 (crotchet rest, quaver-quaver, crotchet, crotchet variation).  <i>Friday Night</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Hillbilly Fever</i>, Memphis, 1959.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Carl Perkins</b>  <i>Pop, Let Me Have The Car</i>, Nashville, 1958.  <i>You Were There</i>, Nashville, 1958.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Elvis Presley</b>  <i>Have I Told You Lately That I Love You</i>, Hollywood, 1957.  <i>Now And Then There's A Fool Such As I</i>, Nashville, 1958.  <i>I Need Your Love Tonight</i>, Nashville, 1958.  <i>Girl Next Door Went A'Walking</i>, Nashville, 1960.  <i>I Gotta Know</i>, Nashville, 1960.  <i>It's Now Or Never</i>, Nashville, 1960.  <i>The Girl Of My Best Friend</i>, Nashville, 1960.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Bill Haley</b>  <i>B.B. Betty</i>, N.Y., 1958 (in guitar solo).  Handclaps in sax solo).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Jerry Lee Lewis</b>  <i>Cold, Cold Heart</i>, Memphis, 1956/57?  <i>Matchbox</i>, Memphis, 1957.  <i>Mean Woman Blues</i>, Memphis, 1957.  <i>Rockin' With Red</i>, Memphis, 1957.  <i>Rock'n'Roll Ruby</i>, Memphis, 1957.  <i>So Long, I'm Gone</i>, Memphis, 1957.  <i>Ubangi Stomp</i>, Memphis, 1957.  <i>Matchbox</i>, Memphis, 1958.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Carl Perkins</b>  <i>Shake, Rattle and Roll</i>, Nashville, 1958 (in final choruses).  <i>I Don't See Me In Your Eyes Anymore</i>, Nashville, 1959 (in verses only).  <i>When The Moon Come Over The Mountain</i>, Nashville, 1959 (handclaps in guitar solo).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Elvis Presley</b>  <i>A Big Hunk O' Love</i>, Nashville, 1958.  <i>Doncha' Think It's Time</i>, Hollywood, 1958.  <i>A Mess Of Blues</i>, Nashville, 1960 (handclaps).  <i>Such A Night</i>, Nashville, 1960.</p>

Table 2.49 Snare backbeat variation 1.


	
<u>Throughout a recording:</u>	<u>Occasional use in a recording:</u>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fats Domino</b>  <i>Stack And Billy</i>, Hollywood, 1957 (occurring every two bars).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Bill Haley</b>  <i>Lean Jean</i>, N.Y., 1958.  <i>Skinny Minnie</i>, N.Y., 1958.  <i>Sway With Me</i>, N.Y., 1958.  <i>The Walkin' Beat</i>, N.Y., 1958.  <i>In A Little Spanish Town</i>, N.Y., 1959.  <i>Shaky</i>, N.Y., 1959.  <i>The Dragon Rock</i>, N.Y., 1959 (final two pulses include a quaver rest, quaver-quaver-quaver rhythm).  <i>Where Did You Go Last Night?</i>, N.Y., 1959.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Buddy Holly</b>  <i>Wishing</i>, Clovis, 1958.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Bill Haley</b>  <i>Be By Me</i>, N.Y., 1959 (handclaps in sax solo).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Carl Perkins</b>  <i>The Drifter</i>, Nashville, 1959 (in verses).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Elvis Presley</b>  <i>Your Cheatin' Heart</i>, Hollywood, 1958 (in choruses).</p>

Table 2.50 Snare backbeat variation 2.


	
<b>Occasional use on pulses 2 and/or 4</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fats Domino</b></p> <p><i>It Keeps Rainin'</i>, New Orleans, 1960.  <i>Put Your Arms Around Me Honey</i>, New Orleans, 1960.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Buddy Holly</b></p> <p><i>Changing All Those Changes</i>, Clovis, 1956.  <i>Little Baby</i>, Clovis, 1957 (in piano solo).  <i>Maybe Baby</i>, Oklahoma City, 1957 (in final verses and choruses).  <i>Reminiscing</i>, Clovis, 1958.  <i>Take Your Time</i>, Clovis, 1958.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Jerry Lee Lewis</b></p> <p><i>Great Balls Of Fire</i>, Memphis, 1957.  <i>Why Should I Cry Over You</i>, Memphis, 1957.  <i>Big Legged Woman</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Break Up</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Breathless</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Carrying On</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Don't Be Cruel</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Down The Line</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Drinkin' Wine Spo-Dee-O-Dee</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>I'll Sail My Ship Alone</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>I'm Sorry, I'm Not Sorry</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Jailhouse Rock</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Johnny B. Goode</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Let The Good Times Roll</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Pink Peddle Pushers</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Real Wild Child</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Someday</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>You're The Only Star In My Blue Heaven</i>, Memphis, 1958.  <i>Lovin' Up A Storm</i>, Memphis, 1958/59?  <i>Am I To Be The One</i>, Memphis, 1959.  <i>Ballad Of Billy Joe</i>, Memphis, 1959.  <i>Let's Talk About Us</i>, Memphis, 1959.  <i>Little Queenie</i>, Memphis, 1959.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Jerry Lee Lewis (cont'd)</b></p> <p><i>Near You</i>, Memphis, 1959.  <i>Night Train To Memphis</i>, Memphis, 1959.  <i>Billy Boy</i>, Memphis, 1959/60?  <i>My Bonnie</i>, Memphis, 1959/60?  <i>As Long As I Live</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>Baby, Baby Bye Bye</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>Bonnie B.</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>Don't Drop It</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>Gettin' In The Mood</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>Hound Dog</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>I Can't Help It</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>In The Mood</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>John Henry</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>Keep Your Hand Off It/Birthday Cake</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>Mexicali Rose</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>No More Than I Get</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>Old Black Joe</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>When I Get Paid</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>When My Blue Moon Turns To Gold Again</i>, Memphis, 1960.  <i>Your Cheatin' Heart</i>, Memphis, 1960.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Carl Perkins</b></p> <p><i>All Mama's Children</i>, Memphis, 1956.  <i>Boppin' The Blues (take?)</i>, Memphis, 1956.  <i>Dixie Fried</i>, Memphis, 1956.  <i>Everybody's Trying To Be My Baby</i>, Memphis, 1956.  <i>Put Your Cat Clothes On</i>, Memphis, 1956.  <i>That Don't Move Me</i>, Memphis, 1956.  <i>Highway Of Love</i>, Nashville, 1959 (handclaps in sax solo).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Elvis Presley</b></p> <p><i>I Got Stung</i>, Nashville, 1958.  <i>Soldier Boy</i>, Nashville, 1960.  <i>Stuck On You</i>, Nashville, 1960.</p>

Table 2.51 Snare backbeat variation 3.

- 65 (9%) of 712 recordings included in the Selected Sample feature snare rhythms executed on all four pulses with accented backbeats. The various types of snare rhythms that commonly figure in the Selected Sample are as follows:
  - shuffle on snare with accented backbeats (see Table 2.52);
  - snare on all four pulses with accented backbeats (see Table 2.53);
  - swing on snare with accented backbeats (see Table 2.54);
  - quaver triplets on snare with accented backbeats (see Table 2.55).

<p>Chuck Berry <i>I've Changed</i>, Chicago, 1957.</p> <p>Fats Domino <i>I'm Walkin'</i>, New Orleans, 1957. <i>Sailor Boy</i>, New Orleans, 1957. <i>Country Boy</i>, Hollywood, 1958. <i>Darktown Strutters' Ball</i>, New Orleans, 1958. <i>Lil' Liza Jane</i>, New Orleans, 1958. <i>Margie</i>, Hollywood, 1958. <i>When The Saints Go Marching In</i>, Hollywood, 1958. <i>Yes, My Darling</i>, New Orleans, 1958. <i>Am I Blue</i>, New Orleans, 1960.</p> <p>Bill Haley <i>Hot Dog Buddy Buddy</i>, Berlin, 1958. <i>Sweet Sue, Just You</i>, N.Y., 1958. <i>Vive Le Rock And Roll</i>, Berlin, 1958. <i>Be By Me</i>, N.Y., 1959. <i>The Catwalk</i>, N.Y., 1959. <i>The Dragon Rock</i>, N.Y., 1959.</p>	<p>Jerry Lee Lewis <i>It All Depends (Who Will Buy The Wine)</i> (undubbed master), Memphis, 1956/57? <i>Long Gone Lonesome Blues</i>, Memphis, 1957. <i>It All Depends (Who Will Buy The Wine)</i> (overdubbed master), Memphis, 1958.</p> <p>Carl Perkins <i>Sittin' On Top Of The World</i>, Nashville, 1958. <i>Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On</i>, Nashville, 1958.</p> <p>The Platters <i>I Wanna</i>, L.A., 1955. <i>(You've Got) The Magic Touch</i>, N.Y., 1956. <i>Glory Of Love</i>, N.Y., 1956. <i>I'm Sorry</i>, N.Y., 1956. <i>Winner Take All</i>, N.Y., 1956. <i>Helpless</i>, N.Y., 1957. <i>I Wish</i>, N.Y., 1957. <i>My Old Flame</i>, N.Y., 1957. <i>For The First Time (Come Prima)</i>, ?, 1958. <i>It's Raining Outside (Chove La Fora)</i>, ?, 1958. <i>Sleepy Lagoon</i>, Chicago, 1959.</p>
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Table 2.52 Rock'n'roll recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-60: shuffle on snare with accented backbeat.

<p><b>Chuck Berry</b> <i>In-Go</i>, Chicago, 1958.</p> <p><b>Bill Haley</b> <i>Thirteen Women</i>, N.Y., 1954.</p> <p><b>Buddy Holly</b> <i>Girl On My Mind</i>, Nashville, 1956.</p> <p><b>Jerry Lee Lewis</b> <i>You Win Again</i> (undubbed master), Memphis, 1957. <i>You Win Again</i> (overdubbed master), Memphis, 1957.</p>	<p><b>The Platters</b> <i>Only You (And You Alone)</i>, L.A., 1955. <i>My Prayer</i>, N.Y., 1956. <i>My Dream</i>, N.Y., 1957. <i>No Power On Earth</i>, N.Y., 1957. <i>If I Didn't Care</i>, Paris, 1958. <i>Remember When</i>, Paris, 1958. <i>Harbor Lights</i>, Chicago, 1959.</p>
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Table 2.53 Rock'n'roll recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-60: snare on all four pulses with accented backbeat.

<p><b>Fats Domino</b> <i>Howdy Podner</i>, Hollywood, 1955. <i>Oh Whee</i>, New Orleans, 1957. <i>Don't Come Knockin'</i>, New Orleans, 1960.</p> <p><b>Carl Perkins</b> <i>Honky Tonk Babe (Gal)</i>, Memphis, 1954. <i>Movie Magg</i>, Memphis, 1954. <i>Turn Around</i>, Memphis, 1954. <i>Dixie Bop/Perkins Wiggle</i>, Memphis, 1955. <i>Gone, Gone, Gone</i>, Memphis, 1955. <i>You Can't Make Love To Somebody</i>, Memphis, 1955.</p>	<p><b>The Platters</b> <i>I Give You My Word</i>, N.Y., 1956. <i>One In A Million</i>, N.Y., 1956. <i>No Matter What You Are</i>, N.Y., 1957. <i>Enchanted</i>, L.A., 1958. <i>Wish It Were Me</i>, L.A., 1958.</p>
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Table 2.54 Rock'n'roll recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-60: swing on snare with accented backbeat.

<p><b>Chuck Berry</b> <i>Merry Christmas Baby</i>, Chicago, 1958. <i>Worried Life Blues</i>, Chicago, 1960.</p> <p><b>Carl Perkins</b> <i>Just For You</i>, Nashville, 1960.</p>	<p><b>The Platters</b> <i>Heaven On Earth</i>, N.Y., 1956. <i>On My Word Of Honor</i>, N.Y., 1956. <i>Only Because</i>, L.A., 1957.</p> <p><b>Elvis Presley</b> <i>Fame And Fortune</i>, Nashville, 1960. <i>Thrill Of Your Love</i>, Nashville, 1960.</p>
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Table 2.55 Rock'n'roll recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-60: quaver triplets on snare with accented backbeat.

### 2.8.2 Other Drum Beats in Rock'n'Roll.

- Many recordings that do not contain snare backbeat feature, firstly, drum beats that contain shuffle, swing or quaver triplet rhythms on snare drum or snare drum on all four pulses or, secondly, drum beats that contain cymbal rhythms but no snare drum ostinati.
- Only 3 (around 0.4%) of 712 recordings included in the Selected Sample and 4 (around 5%) of 874 recordings included in the Extant Recordings sample contain Bo Diddley beats (see Table 2.56).<sup>68</sup> The perceived popularity of Bo Diddley rhythms, as noted by Gillett (1983: 31), Hoffman (1983: 177-8) and Keil (Keil and Feld, 1994: 104), is therefore informed by factors other than its frequency of occurrence in rock'n'roll.

Elvis Presley <i>Surrender</i> , Nashville, 1960.	Buddy Holly <i>Not Fade Away</i> , Clovis, 1957. <i>Love's Made A Fool Of You</i> , Clovis, 1958.
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Table 2.56 Rock'n'roll (Selected Sample): Bo Diddley drum rhythms.

- Only 15 (around 2%) of 712 recordings included in the Selected Sample and 17 (around 2%) of 874 recordings included in the Extant Recordings sample contain Latin drum beats either throughout the recording or in particular structural sections only (see Table 2.57).<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup>Aside from the Bo Diddley beats listed in Table 2.56, Fats Domino's additional take of *The Sheik Of Araby* (take?, New Orleans, 1958) contains a Bo Diddley drum beat and *La-La* (version 2, New Orleans, 1960) includes a Bo Diddley rhythm performed in the riffing horns accompaniment.

<sup>69</sup>Two additional takes, included in the Extant Recordings sample, contained Latin drum beats: Little Richard's *Slippin' And Slidin'* (New Orleans, 1955, take 1) and take 3 of that same recording.

<p><b>Chuck Berry</b>  <i>Berry Pickin'</i>, Chicago, 1955.  <i>La Juanda</i>, Chicago, 1957.</p> <p><b>Fats Domino</b>  <i>The Sheik of Araby</i> New Orleans, 1958.</p> <p><b>Bill Haley</b>  <i>Rockin' Rita</i>, N.Y., 1957.  <i>El Rocko</i>, N.Y., 1957.  <i>Chiquita Linda</i>, N.Y., 1958.  <i>Skokiaan</i>, N.Y., 1959.  <i>Puerto Rican Peddler</i>, N.Y., 1959.</p>	<p><b>Buddy Holly</b>  <i>Listen To Me</i>, Clovis, 1957.  <i>Words Of Love</i>, Clovis, 1957.</p> <p><b>Carl Perkins</b>  <i>Her Love Rubbed Off</i>, Memphis, 1956.  <i>Levi Jacket (And A Long Tail Shirt)</i>, Nashville, 1958.  <i>Where The Rio De Ros Flows</i>, Nashville, 1958.</p> <p><b>Elvis Presley</b>  <i>How Do You Think I Feel</i>, Hollywood, 1956.  <i>Hot Dog</i>, Hollywood, 1957.</p>
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Table 2.57 Rock'n'roll recordings (extant), 1954-60: Latin drum beats.

### 2.8.3 Cymbal Rhythms in Rock'n'Roll.

The following conclusions relate to cymbal rhythms contained in the Selected Sample. For convenience, the frequency of occurrence of particular cymbal rhythms contained in the Selected Sample is detailed in graph form below (see Table 2.58, page 146).

- Cymbal performances contained in many recordings produced throughout 1954 were not clearly audible due to the type of studio production and subsequent recording mix;
- long-short type cymbal rhythms, exemplified in shuffle and swing rhythms, characterize the output of our representative rock'n'roll musicians produced from 1954 to around 1959;
- quaver triplet cymbal rhythms were located in many recordings, particularly the output of Fats Domino with Earl Palmer drumming;
- the frequency of occurrence of cymbal rhythms on all four pulses gradually decreased during the period 1954 to 1960;
- the frequency of occurrence of even quaver cymbal rhythms gradually increased during the period 1956 to 1960. By 1960, a majority of rock'n'roll recordings



contained even quaver cymbal rhythms. Even quaver cymbal rhythms commonly feature in the late 1950s output of Jerry Lee Lewis with Jimmy Van Eaton drumming;

- drum beats that do not contain cymbal rhythms consistently feature in the Selected Sample. In particular, The Platters' output commonly features drum beats that do not contain cymbal rhythms.

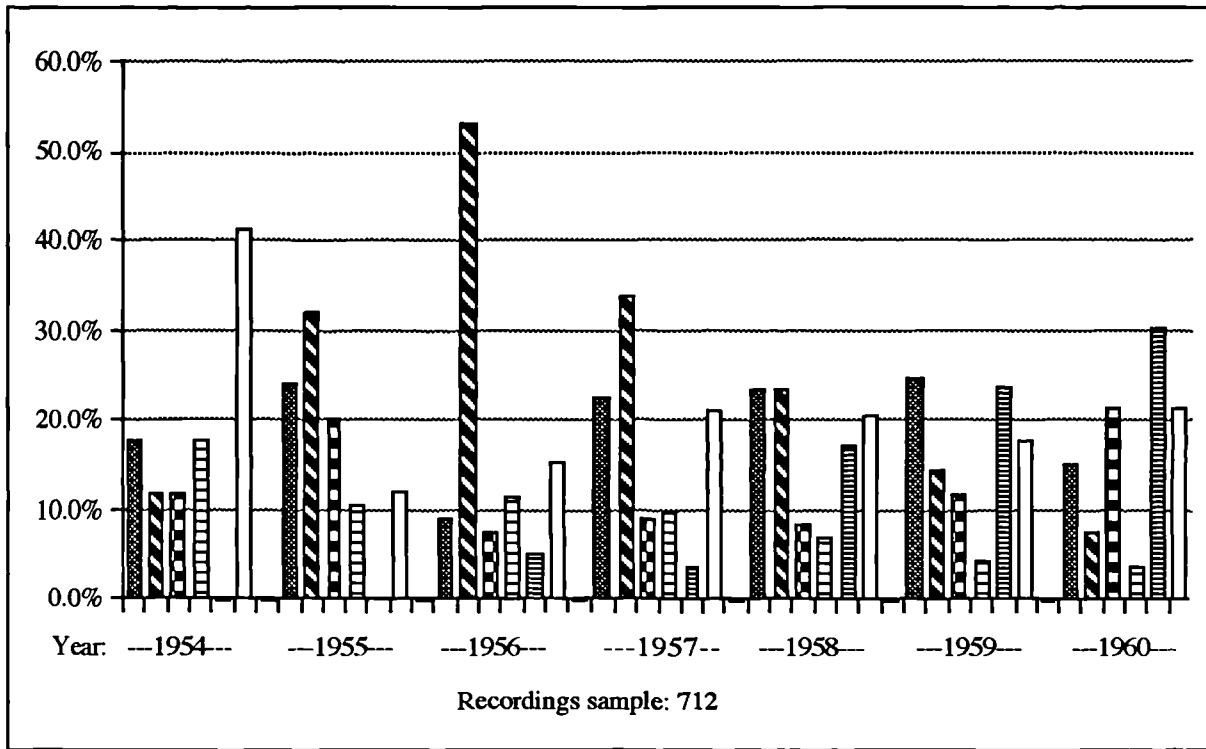
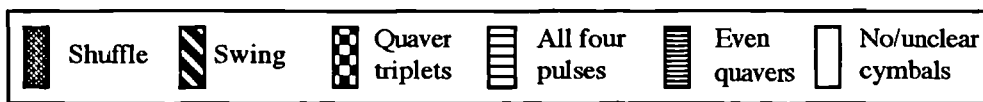


Table 2.58 Rock'n'roll recordings (Selected Sample), 1954-60: cymbal/hi-hat rhythms.



Cymbal/hi-hat rhythms legend

The following chapters will involve an investigation of drumming in pre-rock'n'roll musical styles in order to elucidate the stylistic heritage of snare backbeat and other

rock'n'roll drum rhythms listed above. Our survey of drumming in pre-rock'n'roll musical styles will be chronologically based beginning around the turn of this century with early jazz styles. As will become evident below, jazz drumming was largely informed by the development of the drum-kit during the early part of this century. Among the various types of musical styles that have influenced rock'n'roll drumming, jazz drumming must therefore be considered as significant, for it would seem that rock'n'roll drumming would evolve from performance practices that developed during the jazz era in conjunction with the expansion and subsequent standardization of the drum-kit. Other musical styles relevant to our search for the rhythmic roots of snare backbeat will be identified in later chapters.

## Chapter Three

### 3.1 Rhythmic Roots of Rock'n'Roll: Jazz.

In order to understand the rhythmic roots of rock'n'roll in jazz it is wise to review some accounts of rhythmic organization that inform our received knowledge of the genre.

One of the few published accounts that approaches the subject of rhythm in jazz from a stylistic perspective and in any depth is Schuller's (1968) Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development.<sup>1</sup> Schuller devotes around twenty one pages to a discussion of some characteristics of jazz rhythm and "how these characteristics unique to jazz relate to its African heritage" (ibid.: 10). We will consider Schuller's characteristics of jazz rhythm, investigate their alleged "uniqueness" and determine their relevance to an understanding of the development of rock'n'roll drumming and some other accompanimental rhythms.

Schuller posits that the "uniqueness" of jazz rhythm derives from two primary sources: "a quality jazz musicians call 'swing', and the consistent 'democratization' of rhythmic values" (ibid.: 6). "Both characteristics" he continues, "derive exclusively from African musical antecedents" (ibid.) The "African" quality of jazz rhythm comprises the major portion of Schuller's discussion and specifically relates to the rhythm of jazz melody. However, four pages are devoted to defining "swing" and rhythmic "democratization". As we shall see, these two concepts largely inform the reader's understanding of the development of early jazz beats.

"Swing", according to Schuller, denotes "the accurate timing of a note in its proper

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<sup>1</sup>Oliver (1991: 17) notes that Schuller's Early Jazz... was "welcomed for its musicological approach and for the academic respectability of its author". Indeed, many earlier texts on the development of jazz, such as Stearns (1958) and Hodeir (1956), espouse an opinion concerning jazz rhythm, its stylistic sources and development, but avoid any analytic inquiry. Other studies which include some analytic discussion of rhythm, such as those by Berendt (1992) and Collier (1978), will be referenced during the course of this investigation.

place” and is

a force in music that maintains the perfect equilibrium between the horizontal and vertical relationships of musical sounds; that is, it is a condition that pertains when both the verticality and horizontality of a given musical moment are represented in perfect equivalence and oneness (1968: 7).<sup>2</sup>

Of course, these phrases can be applied to a range of musical practices informing a variety of musical styles. For example, it is clear that such “swing” characterizes the rhythm of much Western art music. Equilibrium between verticality and horizontality, as explicated in Rameau’s theory of fundamental bass, characterizes much early French Baroque music. Similarly, “perfect equivalence and oneness” between the horizontal and vertical is one concept that informs the compositional technique of integral serialism. To avoid this kind of misunderstanding of the term “swing”, Schuller posits that there are two characteristics of the swing element in jazz that generally do not occur in “classical” music (*ibid.*).<sup>3</sup> The first characteristic concerns the specific type of “accentuation and inflection” with which notes are played or sung. The second

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<sup>2</sup>A similar explication of “swing” can be found in Schuller (1989). Here, the concept specifically refers to the post-1932 jazz forms that encompass the period commonly referred to by many jazz commentators as the “swing” era. In this text Schuller (1989: 224) states that “swing” requires aspects which are the result of a highly complex joining of feeling and mental control, as well as a matter of specific technical control of one’s instrument. In the first instance I am referring to the ability to maintain a perfect equilibrium between the “horizontal” and “vertical” relationships of musical sounds. This equilibrium occurs when both the verticality and horizontality of a given musical moment are represented in perfect equivalence and oneness.

Schuller notes that inflection and accentuation are equally important to “equilibrium” but omits any detailed discussion of such dimensions. Rather, he notes that accentuation and inflection involve “an incredibly subtle process which, although audible to the unaided ear, is analyzable only in the realm of microacoustics” (*ibid.*: 225) and then invites the reader to compare some graphic illustrations representing simple acoustical analyses of recorded phrases that “swing” to others that don’t (*ibid.*: 855-859).

Although Schuller has expanded upon his explication of “swing” by adding some empirical (graphic) analyses, his concept of “swing” - as expressed in Schuller (1968) - remains essentially the same. It is reasonable to assume therefore, that Schuller’s concept of the “swing” element in jazz is generally applicable to a wide range of jazz forms.

<sup>3</sup>Berendt (1992: 453) adopts a similar position when he states that jazz rhythm is different to that of “European” music - by which he presumably means Western art music - in its “special relationship to time, defined as ‘swing’”. However, aside from noting that “swing creates intensity through friction and superimposition of the levels of time” (*ibid.*: 455), no precise definition or investigation of the swing element in jazz is forthcoming.

involves the “continuity - the forward propelling directionality - with which individual notes are linked together” (1968: 7). Schuller notes that these characteristics are “present in all great jazz” and are attributes that “do not necessarily exist in great classical music” (ibid.). Explanations of “accentuation and inflection”, “forward propelling directionality”, “great jazz” and “great classical music” are not forthcoming in Schuller’s discussion of “swing”. Rather, Schuller continues with his comparison of rhythm in jazz and “classical” music noting that there are *elemental relationships in “classical” music* where “pitch is considered more important than rhythm” and that “in ordinary classical phrasing rhythmic impetus is often relegated to a secondary role” (ibid.). Then, in contrast to “ordinary classical phrasing”, Schuller (1968: 8) posits that “pitch” in jazz is

unthinkable without a rhythmic impulse at least as strong; rhythm is as much a part of musical expression as pitch or timbre - and possibly more important

and concludes that

This extra dimension in the rhythmic impulse of a jazz phrase is what we call “swing”.

What is the “extra dimension in the rhythmic impulse” that comprises “swing”? Presumably, it involves “perfect equivalence and oneness”, “forward propelling directionality” and a particular type of “accentuation and inflection”, but it is unclear in Schuller’s brief discussion as to how such characteristics relate to the “rhythmic impulse of a jazz phrase”. “Perfect equivalence and oneness” and “forward propelling directionality” inform us of Schuller’s opinion of the “swing” element in jazz rhythm but they do not highlight any musical structures that are presumably prerequisite to this rhythmic impulse. Consequently, the reader remains in the dark as to the musical-structural constituents of the “swing” element in jazz.

A similar disregard of stylistic specificity is implicit in Schuller’s discussion of “classical” music. This is particularly evident in Schuller’s notion - as previously cited - that “rhythmic impetus is often relegated to a secondary role” in “ordinary classical

phrasing". What are the musical-structural constituents of "rhythmic impetus" and "ordinary classical phrasing" and in what respect(s) can such "rhythmic impetus" be considered as "secondary"? Which "classical" music styles has Schuller in mind when he refers to "ordinary classical phrasing"? Although some "classical" musics do highlight pitch-based rather than rhythmic elements - for example, La Monte Young's *Composition 1960 #7*<sup>4</sup> - the phrasing in this and other similar examples is certainly not "ordinary" in the sense "common". In contrast to Schuller's view, some commentators might consider that rhythm is more important than pitch in "classical" music, particularly in such musics as Renaissance instrumental dance music, the development sections in Beethoven's sonata form movements, "Dance of the Adolescents" from Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, and Reich's *Music For Eighteen Musicians*.<sup>5</sup> Why is it, then, that according to Schuller such "classical" music does not "swing"? It is clear that Schuller's lack of generic and stylistic specificity regarding jazz and "classical" music has resulted in problems in offering precise musical-structural analysis of the "swing" element in jazz rhythm. But perhaps Schuller includes some stylistic detail in his investigation of the consistent "democratization" of rhythmic values - his second characteristic of jazz rhythm that informs its "uniqueness".

Schuller (1968: 8) defines the "democratization" of rhythmic values as follows:

By the "democratization" of rhythmic values, I mean very simply that in jazz so-

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<sup>4</sup>This work entirely consists of the notes B and F# that, as La Monte Young notes in his score, are to be held "for a long time". Similarly, La Monte young's *His Brass* (1957) and *Strings* (1958) both employ single notes and simple combinations of notes that are held for extraordinary long periods. Other "classical" compositions might be considered by some commentators to highlight pitch-based rather than rhythmic elements, but such judgements are dependant upon one's understanding of "rhythm" - a term that I do not wish to problematize within this context. It seems to me, however, that such works as *Son Binocle* from Erik Satie's *Les Trois Valses Distinguées du Précieux Dégoûté* and Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke VII* might also be included here.

<sup>5</sup>Such music styles are commensurate with Schuller's (1968: 7) definition of classical music, that he expresses as follows:

"Classical" music is used to define the European non-jazz tradition, as exemplified by composers like Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Debussy, Schoenberg, etc..

called weak beats (or weak parts of rhythmic units) are *not* underplayed as in “classical” music. Instead, they are brought up to the level of strong beats, and very often even emphasized *beyond* the strong beat.

By “weak beats”, Schuller is referring to the rhythmic units that subdivide an isochronous pulse without necessarily sounding. Examples of “classical” phrasing and inflection are offered to illustrate how a “classical” interpretation of “weak beats” differs from that of jazz. “Weak beats” in the Scottish tune *The Campbells Are Coming*, the theme from Mozart’s Third Horn Concerto (third movement), and a two-bar excerpt from Brahms’ Fourth Symphony (an oboe melody from the first movement) are marked “˘” to indicate a short inflection and lack of accent. “Strong beats” in these examples are marked “ˆ” (see Figure 3.1). Schuller, therefore, interprets his cited excerpts by placing such inflection markings above those notes that he considers should be either stressed or shortened in performance.



Figure 3.1 Brahms, Fourth Symphony: excerpt (Schuller, 1968: 9).

The patterns of inflections in his cited excerpts that result from the combination of the “strong beats” - which are emphasized in performance - with the “weak beats” are described by Schuller as producing a “sing-song” effect (ibid.: 9). In contrast, Schuller states that a more “equalized inflection” occurs in jazz phrasing. He then cites Dizzy Gillespie’s *One Bass Hit* as an example where rhythmic “democratization” between “strong” and “weak” rhythmic units is evident (see Figure 3.2).



Figure 3.2 Dizzy Gillespie, *One Bass Hit* (Schuller, 1968: 9).

Schuller's notation of *One Bass Hit* implies that rhythmic "democratization" involves specific types of accentuation and inflection. The accentual and inflective markings placed above the quavers that are performed after the crotchet pulse of the 4/4 bar - that is, those quavers that comprise Schuller's "weak beats" - suggest that they are accented and are held for their full durational value. Therefore, these quavers would be more likely to mark the rhythmic profile of the phrase than those non-accented and comparatively shorter sonic events that occur on each crotchet pulse. Is this the "specific type of accentuation and inflection with which notes are played or sung" that comprises Schuller's definition of "swing", as previously discussed? If so, is Schuller inferring that a relationship exists between "accentuation and inflection" - as informed by the "democratization of rhythmic values" - and "forward propelling directionality", his other characteristic of swing? If this is the case, then it is necessary to explain precisely how rhythmic "democratization" propels. If no relationship exists between "rhythmic democratization" and "forward propelling directionality", then what "forward propelling directionality" in jazz rhythm is Schuller referring to? Further, Schuller's interpretation of *The Campbells Are Coming*, the theme from Mozart's Third Horn Concerto and a two-bar excerpt from Brahms' Fourth Symphony implies that "weak beats" are "underplayed" in classical music. Is this, in fact, true? Let us explore further Schuller's concept of rhythmic "democratization" in reference to "classical" music.

In contrast to early jazz, Schuller states that "classical" music (as understood by Schuller) lacks the quality of swing and the "consistent democratization of rhythmic values" (1968: 7-9). Indeed, in contrast to the accentual and inflective patterns indicated in Figure 3.2 (above), a "classical" musician, cognizant of performance practices of mid 18<sup>th</sup> century Western art music, might interpret the same phrase as



follows:<sup>6</sup>



Figure 3.3 *One Bass Hit*, substitution 1.

Here, the crotchet pulse and duple metricality serve as important elements informing the accentuation of particular notes within the phrase. In keeping with the performance practice of 18<sup>th</sup> century music, slight accents would be imposed on crotchet pulses one and three of the 4/4 bar even though such performance indications normally would not have appeared in the music notation. As Leopold Mozart notes in his *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* (1756),<sup>7</sup> such accents are directly linked to the metricality of the composition:

The accent, expression, or intensity of the tone will fall as a rule on the strong or initial note .... But there are distinct varieties of these initial or “good” notes. The particularly strong notes are the following: in every measure, the note beginning the first quarter; in the half measure, the first note, or, in 4/4 time, the first note of the third quarter .... These, then, are the initial notes on which the maximum intensity of the tone will fall, wherever the composer has indicated no other expression (Mozart as quoted in Strunk, 1952: 603).

Aside from accentual interpretations, such as those espoused by Mozart, the inflection of “classical” phrases might also differ from that of early jazz. For example, a “classical” interpretation of the above phrase might be marked by evenness in the performance of the quavers, or alternately, a restrained use of rubato commensurate

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<sup>6</sup>Of course other “classical” interpretations are possible, these being dependant upon such factors as the context of the phrase within the music composition and the music genre to which it belongs. The interpretation of the phrase offered here only serves to highlight differences in accentuation and inflection between the two styles and should not be considered as paradigmatic of “classical” phrasing throughout its history. Rather, the accentual and inflective interpretation imposed on this musical phrase references the stylistic tendency of mid-eighteenth century German music and, therefore, reflects Schuller’s notion of the “classical” as revealed by the accentual and inflective markings with which he interpreted excerpts from Mozart’s Horn concerto and Brahms’ Fourth Symphony.

<sup>7</sup>As Strunk (1952: 599) notes, Mozart’s method for the violin is “an important source for the study of musical practice in the period immediately preceding the dawning of the classical era”. As such, it will suffice to support the “classical” accentuation that I have imposed on Schuller’s example.

with a stylistically tasteful delivery of the phrase (depending upon the generic context of the phrase and also its structural placement within the composition). Another possible inflective interpretation would be to accent the “weak beats” and connect these by slurs to notes that are played on the pulse, as notated in Figure 3.4.



Figure 3.4 *One Bass Hit*, substitution 2.

Such rhythmic punning, as incorporated in the performance of late Baroque music, is reminiscent of Schuller’s concept of rhythmic “democratization” in the accentuation of off-pulses.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the accentuation of passing appoggiaturas, much favoured in France and Germany towards the end of the Baroque, also reflects Schuller’s concept of rhythmic “democratization”.<sup>9</sup> For example, by considering some of the mid-eighteenth century interpretative conventions associated with the performance of passing appoggiaturas, the following phrase,



Figure 3.5 *One Bass Hit*, substitution 3.

might be performed as

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<sup>8</sup>For example, the tenor aria *Ich will bei meinem Jesu wachen* from Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*, bars 6 - 10 and recurring four times throughout the aria, Telemann *Tafelmusik*, Premiere Production, Trio for two violins and continuo, *Affettuoso*, bars 15-16. Accentuation of off-pulse notes would not be marked as such in the score but, rather, would be left to the interpretative discretion of the performer.

<sup>9</sup>A passing appoggiatura is an ornament comprising an accented off-pulse note, usually short in duration, that is slurred across to the longer, on-pulse note which it is decorating. It is described by Joachim Quantz in his 1752 publication, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*, as follows:

There are two sorts of appoggiaturas. One is taken, like accented notes, on the down beat; the other like passing notes, on the up beat of the bar. The first could be called striking, and the other passing appoggiaturas [where] one must hold the dots long and stress the notes on which the slurs start (Quantz as quoted in Donington, 1982: 119).



Figure 3.6 *One Bass Hit*, substitution 4.

Given our albeit brief investigation of classical phrasing, it would be reasonable to state that the accentuation of “weak beats” is not unknown in Western art music. This is contrary to Schuller’s view that rhythmic “democratization” - as informed by a particular pattern of accentuation and inflection - is the exclusive property of jazz phrasing. Schuller’s notion of what constitutes the elements of “classical” rhythm (and also phrasing) appears, therefore, to reflect a conservative position in that it references some stylistic conventions relating to late European 18<sup>th</sup> century music and disregards pre-1750 music styles and the new approaches to rhythmic organization that characterized much music composition from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It is evident from the above that Schuller’s discussion of rhythm mostly relates to jazz phrasing and performance practice by single line melodic instruments of an early jazz band. But what of percussive and other accompanimental rhythms comprising jazz? Accompanimental rhythms are not singled out for discussion by Schuller although reference is made to *drumming in later popular music styles*. Here Schuller (1968: 9-10) suggests that rhythmic democratization is also explicit:

Another manifestation of the [democratization of rhythmic values] is the so-called drum backbeat on the second and fourth beat of a bar, especially popular in modern jazz drumming and rock and roll music.

He continues by noting a similar type of rhythmic “democratization” at work in the behaviour of the “average jazz musician” - an account presumably supported by Schuller’s (ibid.: 10) observation of jazz musicians and his own physical response to *jazz - who will*

count 1-2-3-4 but snap his fingers on 2 and 4, thus putting greater emphasis on these ordinary weak beats than on 1 and 3. (What a far cry from the 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4 of military marches!).

Schuller's claim must be taken as anecdotal given the absence of any empirical evidence concerning firstly, the behaviour of the "average jazz musician" and secondly, the performance practice of military music beats. However, Schuller (1968: 25) does offer an historical antecedent for emphasizing the "weak beats" of the bar in jazz:

one of the simplest examples of the Negro's inherent love for polyrhythmic organization is the custom of clapping to the weak beats of a bar. In fact, it is as complete a transformation of the African's polyrhythmic approach as is possible within the simple framework of the 4/4 bar. Both sets of beats compete with each other in attempting to dominate the rhythmic continuity. This antipodal approach is the very element that is missing in European art music, and at the same time is the element that sets up a basis for "swinging".

Thus, Schuller concludes that the Negro's "inherent love for polyrhythmic organization" informed the "swing" element in jazz and that "European art musics", in contrast, lacks an "antipodal approach" necessary for "swinging".

We will deal with the influence of contiguous musical styles - including "military marches" - on the development of jazz beats in a moment. In the meantime, I will take to task Schuller's statement concerning the lack of "antipodal" rhythms - by which he is inferring backbeats - in "European art music". The following few examples, drawn from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, will suffice to illustrate that "antipodal" tendencies existed in Western art music accompaniments prior to the development of jazz.

The left hand piano accompaniment in Brahms's Hungarian Dance No.5 (Figure 3.7) explicitly stresses the "weak beats" of the bar



Figure 3.7 Brahms Hungarian Dance No.5, bars 1-4

as does his Hungarian Dance No.7 (Figure 3.8). Also notable in Hungarian Dance No.7 is the emphasis placed on the “weak” beats of bars two and four in the melody.



Figure 3.8 Brahms Hungarian Dance No.7, bars 1-4.

Similar such accompaniments occur in many piano works by Louis Moreau Gottschalk, including *La Bananier* (ca. 1845), *The Banjo* (ca. 1854), *Tournament Galop* (ca. 1854), *La Gallina* (ca. 1859), *Polka de Concert* (ca. 1865) and *Pasquinade* (ca. 1869). Other examples of an “antipodal approach” were found in nineteenth and early twentieth century orchestral repertoire and opera accompaniments. For example, orchestral marches - such as Strauss’ *Radetzky March* and Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstance march no.1* - and polkas - including Strauss’ *Blumenfest-Polka* and *Polka Française* - include snare executions on the “weak beats” of the bar coupled with bass drum strikes on 1 and 3. Such “antipodal” beats also occur in orchestral accompaniments other than marches and polkas. Oompah-type harmonic accompaniments, comprising bass rhythms on the “strong” beats followed by chordal rhythms on the “weak” beats, often occur in Verdi operas. *Della mia belle in cognita ..* or the choral *Tutto è festa, tutto è gioia*, both from Verdi’s *Rigoletto*, for example, display such accompaniments.<sup>10</sup>

Given the above, it is clear that at least some “European art musics” adopt an “antipodal approach” to accompanimental rhythmic organization. Let us now briefly turn our attention to Schuller’s notion concerning the “1-2-3-4” of military marches.

<sup>10</sup>Similar beats to those previously described occur in many other Verdi operas. For example, Verdi’s *Macbeth*, act two, scene three beginning with Lady Macbeth’s *Si colmi il calice ...* and recurring throughout the scene. Oompah-type accompaniments also occur in some instrumental sections of Verdian opera. Listen to, for example, the “folk-like” music announcing the arrival of the king in *Macbeth*, act one, scene two (following *Oh donna mia!*).

Schuller (1968: 10), as previously cited, intimates that military march accompaniments did not emphasize the “weak beats”. My brief survey of turn-of-the-century marches, however, revealed that similar such rhythms to those previously described characterize some accompaniments of turn-of-the-century wind-band marches. In such musics, oompah rhythms are often shared between low and high brass instruments (for example, Sousa’s *With Pleasure*, 1895) and are also executed on bass and snare drums. Indeed, in reference to march beats, Brown (1976: 145) notes that the most common drumming rhythm found in march music of this period “consists of two flams played on the weak beats of the measure” and executed on the snare drum (see Figure 3.9).

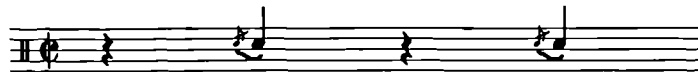


Figure 3.9 Snare drum march rhythm (Brown, 1976: 145).

Turn-of-the-century piano arrangements of marches, such as those appearing in The Copyright Sousa March Folio (1897), also feature accompanimental oompah beats. Sousa’s *The Directorate*, for example, includes left-hand oompah rhythms throughout.<sup>11</sup> Here accentuation of the “weak beats” is also evident in the melody (see bars 17 and 19 of Figure 3.10 ).

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<sup>11</sup>“Antipodal” rhythms also occur in Sousa’s piano transcription of marches in compound duple meter, such as *The Charlatan* (for example, bars 5-8). Here, the left hand accompaniment comprises an oompah beat:





Figure 3.10 Sousa, *The Directorate*, March, bars 17-20.

Similarly, Sousa's piano transcription of *Hail To The Spirit Of Liberty* (Figure 3.11) includes "antipodal" rhythms in the accompaniment. These are subject to variation in alternate bars (see bars 6 and 8), resulting in a rhythm reminiscent of that found in Strauss' *Radetzky March* (for example).



Figure 3.11 Sousa, *Hail To The Spirit Of Liberty*, March, bars 5-8.

Given this albeit brief survey of selected 19th and early 20th century musics it would be reasonable to conclude that firstly, the accentuation of "weak beats" is not unknown to Western Art music accompaniments and secondly, an "antipodal approach" is also evident in oomph beats as characteristically employed in marches, including those transcribed for piano. In his discussion of the origins of early jazz rhythm, Schuller has neglected the influence of such contiguous musics on the development of early jazz beats, preferring to posit the "Negro's inherent love for polyrhythmic organization" as precursory to the jazz "swing" element (Schuller, 1968: 25, as quoted above).

Schuller's opinions concerning the existence and origins of antipodal rhythms in jazz raise more questions than answers concerning the genealogy of the snare backbeat, so

characteristic of much rock and roll drumming throughout its history. Did early jazz drummers employ snare backbeat in their drumming? How was an “antipodal approach” to rhythm informed by the “Negro’s inherent love for polyrhythmic organization”? What influence, if any, did march beats have on the development of jazz drumming and to what extent did jazz drumming inform rock’n’roll drum beats? To begin to answer these questions we will firstly investigate jazz drumming and other accompaniments to obtain a clear musical-structural understanding of early jazz beats. Our investigation will take into account the development of the drum kit during the early part of this century. As we shall see, a correlation exists between the expansion of the drum-kit and the development of much jazz drumming technique and performance practice. We will also consider the influence of selected 19<sup>th</sup> century music forms, including military marches, on the development of early jazz rhythms. For the purpose of this investigation, I will refer to the consistent accentuation and inflection of “weak beats” as “off-pulsing” rather than employ Schuller’s ideologically loaded term “democratization”. The term “off-pulse” will refer to Schuller’s “weak beats” and “on-pulse” to describe the placement of sonic events on those pulses that Schuller refers to as “strong beats”.

### **3.2 Jazz Drumming: Early Jazz.**

In accordance with Schuller’s (1968) use of the term, “early jazz” will refer to those ensemble and solo instrumental music jazz styles preceding the swing era, such as dixieland and ragtime. Because we are primarily concerned to locate snare backbeat in early jazz, our survey will mostly focus on jazz drumming and, therefore, ensemble-based jazz will prominently figure in our investigation. However, other accompanimental rhythmic activity in ensemble-based early jazz and solo jazz



instrumental styles will be briefly investigated in order to locate backbeat accentuations. As a starting point for our investigation, let us firstly turn our attention to some published accounts concerning general rhythmic aspects of early jazz accompaniments.

There appears to be some consensus among jazz commentators regarding the rhythmic style of early jazz accompaniments. Stearns (1958: 4-5), in his discussion of the development of jazz in New Orleans states that

The basis of jazz is a march rhythm but the jazzman puts more complicated rhythms on top of it. He blows a variety of accents between and around, above and below, the march beat.

Schafer notes that the impact of band music on jazz (as developed in New Orleans from 1890 to 1915) was in a “strengthening” of its “beat”. Such “strengthening” was provided by

a tension between the march’s strong, striding 1-and-3 beat emphasis and the Afro-American penchant for 2-and-4 accents (Schafer, 1977: 10).

Leaving aside for the moment Schafer’s reference to the “Afro-American penchant for 2-and-4 accents”,<sup>12</sup> Schafer is referring here to the oompah beat which, as we have previously noted, characterized nineteenth century march accompaniments, including drumming (see page 159).

Correspondences between march and jazz beats have been noted by other authors. According to Stearns (1958: 142) for example, it is probable that an oompah march beat informed the left-hand technique of piano ragtime compositions:

In its simplest form, the rhythm of ragtime consists of a steady beat in the left hand and a syncopated beat in the right hand. Thus the left hand plays a heavy 2/4 rhythm, much like the march from which it is probably borrowed.

Indeed, the tempo indication of *marcia di tempo* that occurs on most of Scott Joplin’s published piano rags supports this hypothesis.

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<sup>12</sup>Afro-American musics of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century containing “2-and-4 accents” will be discussed later in this thesis.

Other published accounts of early jazz accompanimental rhythms include cursory references to marches. Smith (1977), for example, notes a march influence in the practices of turn-of-the-century New Orleans funeral bands. According to Smith (1977: 33), these practices had a “direct bearing on the genesis of jazz”:

During the [funeral] ceremony musicians played written music and, if they could not read, as was often the case, played it by ear. After the ceremony, the music was group improvisation in the jazz-march genre.

Similarly, Small (1987: 268) intimates a march influence in ragtime when defining this music genre as a fusion of “jigs, coon songs and dances of the minstrel shows, as well as ... the music of wind bands” with “the oompah bass of march music”.<sup>13</sup>

Common to the previously cited accounts of jazz accompanimental rhythm is the idea that march rhythms were represented in early jazz as it developed and flourished in New Orleans. Indeed, marching bands, including both military and civilian based ensembles, were a strong musical tradition in New Orleans and the use of marches for parades, funerals and other such activities in this city can be traced back to at least the early nineteenth century (see, for example, Kmen, 1966: 201-209 and Schafer, 1977). During this period, Kmen (1966: 233) notes that African-Americans were actively engaged in martial music, had their own militia companies which gave them a chance to play as well as to march, and also shared the “city’s mania for brass bands and parades”. This leads one to suspect that the influence of marches on the development of the “swing” element in jazz was at least equally as important as the “Negro’s inherent love for polyrhythmic organization” (Schuller, 1968: 25, as previously quoted). New Orleans’ “mania for brass bands” continued into the early twentieth century thus

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<sup>13</sup>The influence of marches on the development of jazz in New Orleans is also noted by Modern Drummer (1980a) and Fiehrer (1991: 21) who proposes that “the sources of jazz, in the eighteenth-century social dance and *martialparade* [my italics], are those of a geographically diffuse French colonial society”. Similarly, in describing ragtime, Isodore Witmark writing in 1899 noted that “the change of accent in the [ragtime] accompaniment is kept up continually in the same way as the beat of a snare drum” (Witmark as quoted in Witmark and Goldberg, 1939: 155). Here, Witmark is presumably comparing backbeat snare accompaniments of marches to similar such accompaniments occurring in instrumental ragtime.

creating a pool of musicians for early jazz ensembles. For example, such influential New Orleans jazz drummers as Baby Dodds (b. 1894),<sup>14</sup> Zutty Singleton (b. 1898) and Tony Sbarbaro (b.1897) performed in marching bands early in their career.

If it is taken, then, that jazz developed in New Orleans, as the above references suggest and Stearns (1958: 37-40), Collier (1978: 57), Gridley (1985: 38-42) and many other jazz commentators claim,<sup>15</sup> then it would be reasonable to assume that some musical correspondence exists between march rhythms - as performed by New Orleans bands - and early jazz drumming. In particular, we would expect oompah drum beats to feature in early jazz drumming. Is this the case?

In reference to his early jazz drumming style, Baby Dodds (as quoted in Gara, 1992: 3) notes that

I used to carry any melody on the snare drum that a [jazz] band played. I got that idea from listening to symphonic music and also from playing in street parades.

Dodds is inferring here that his early jazz drumming style involved a melodic conception and that this was informed by his performance experience in parade bands and also by his exposure to “symphonic music”.<sup>16</sup> In reference to early jazz, a melodic conception necessitates varied rhythms, perhaps similar in kind to those rhythms

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<sup>14</sup>Modern Drummer (1980a: 56) and Brown (1976: 204) state that Dodds was born in 1898. Dodds, however, recalls 1894 as his date of birth (see Gara, 1992: 4).

<sup>15</sup>It must be noted, however, that not all jazz commentators have agreed with this notion. As Raeburn (1991: 4) notes, the war of words during the 1940s between traditional jazz enthusiasts and the then jazz avant-garde provided the context for a challenge to the belief that jazz developed in New Orleans. Horn (1993: 248) also notes that numerous attempts have been made to “dent, if not demolish” the belief that jazz developed in New Orleans. By quoting Collier (1978), however, Horn (ibid.) subsequently asserts that “in truth, the old legend is certainly correct.”

<sup>16</sup>By “symphonic music”, Dodds is referring to Western Art Music - including opera - that he heard whilst standing outside of the Tulane Theatre in New Orleans (see Gara, 1992: 3).

entailing a “variety of accents between and around, above and below, the march beat” that, according to Stearns (1958: 5) marked the rhythmic activity of front-line melodic instruments. We have noted above, however, that many commentators consider an oompah beat characteristic of early jazz accompaniments and further, that by adopting this beat the influence of marches on jazz is explicit. In briefly describing his early jazz drumming, Dodds makes no reference to an oompah beat. It is clear that some clarification is required concerning the influence of march rhythms on early jazz drumming. Let us take a closer look at the relationship between early jazz drumming and nineteenth century marches.

Some musically specific influences of marches or “military music” on early jazz drumming are given by Brown (1976) in his doctoral thesis on jazz drumming to 1942. These influences are encapsulated in the following paragraph:

When Baby Dodds, Zutty Singleton and Tony Sbarbaro sat down to play jazz they did so on basically European and American military band instruments, held their drumsticks in the traditional grip of European marching ensembles and used a playing technique based on American rudimental drumming traditions. Their playing techniques and instruments reflect, to some degree, the impact military music had upon jazz and ... there is little doubt that all jazz drummers owe a great deal to the tradition of military music in America (Brown, 1976: 47).

Brown is suggesting that “to some degree” the influence of “military music” on early jazz drumming concerns firstly, instrumentation and secondly, drumming technique.<sup>17</sup> Other influences of marches on early jazz drumming will be discussed below, but let us firstly consider how instrumentation and “playing technique” reflect the impact of military music on jazz drumming.

In his reference to instrumentation, Brown (1976: 47, as previously quoted) is alluding to the use of bass drum, snare drum and cymbals in both nineteenth century marching

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<sup>17</sup>Although not specifically referring to drums or drumming, Schafer (1977: 8) also notes that “brass bands gave jazz its instrumentation, its instrumental techniques, its basic repertoire.”

bands and early jazz ensembles. Each of these instruments normally required their own player in marching bands, although a cymbal could be attached to the bass drum allowing both cymbal and bass drum to be played by one drummer. Thus, a nineteenth century marching band generally included two or three percussionists. The incorporation of bass drum, snare drum and cymbals in early jazz bands was necessarily accompanied by a change in role for the late 1800s drummer: early jazz drummers, mostly drawn from the marching band tradition, were now expected to be multi-percussionists. The reduction in the number of percussionists employed in an early jazz band was no doubt influenced by economic considerations and, during the late 1800s, experimentation with multi-percussion performance, particularly by drummers employed in vaudeville who were expected to perform on a wide variety of percussion, including items used for sound effects.

To a certain extent the concept of a single player for bass drum, snare drum and cymbals was enabled by the development of drumming hardware for multi-percussion performance. Of particular concern to us here is the bass drum pedal which underwent considerable development during the late 1800s. Early examples of these mechanisms were anchored to the bass drum and connected to both the bass drum and suspended cymbal. Consequently, cymbal executions coincided with bass drum rhythms thus emulating the bass drum and cymbal function in late nineteenth century marching bands. Around the turn of the century, foot operated pedals connected to the bass drum only enjoyed increasing popularity and by the early 1900s became the norm.<sup>18</sup> The clumsy and stiff mechanism of bass drum pedals meant some restriction of bass drum rhythmic activity. Nonetheless, these mechanisms enabled the drummer to execute simple, on-pulse bass drum and cymbal rhythms typical of contemporaneous military music, including marches. We will later investigate the incorporation of such rhythms

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<sup>18</sup>See Brown (1976: 98-107) for a discussion of bass drum pedal development during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

in early jazz. In the meantime, however, it is worth noting another solution to multi-percussion performance that was employed by drummers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: “double drumming”.

The awkwardness of using a bass drum pedal caused many drummers to rely on double drumming as a means enabling performance on two percussion instruments. This technique involved hitting the bass drum with either the tip or butt of the drum stick rather than a bass drum pedal and then moving on to play the snare drum. To facilitate performance on both the snare drum and bass drum, the former was tilted and positioned close to the bass drum.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, a minimum of movement was required by the drummer when performing snare rolls interspersed with bass drum executions, for example. The rhythmic flexibility afforded by double drumming, however, did not result in an increase of rhythmic activity on the bass drum. As Ludwig notes in his description of the technique,

The bass drum was placed to the right of the player with the cymbal on top. They would strike the bass drum and cymbal with the snare stick, then quickly pass to the snare drum for the afterbeat with an occasional roll squeezed in (William Ludwig as quoted in Brown, 1976: 98).

According to Ludwig then, bass drum and cymbal rhythms coincided when double drumming, as would have been the case if a drummer utilized prototypal bass drum pedals, and these rhythms contained single on-pulse strikes. Additional rhythms were provided by the snare drum in the form of “afterbeats” (by which Ludwig is inferring single backbeat executions) and “rolls” that were “squeezed in”. In order to understand how snare rolls were “squeezed” into march rhythms we will proceed to Brown’s second point concerning the influence of “military music” on early jazz drumming: drumming technique (as previously noted on page 165).

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<sup>19</sup>Photographic evidence suggests that double drumming endured into the early 1900s. Gara (1992: 45) for example, includes a photo of Baby Dodds performing with King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band in Chicago, 1923. This photo clearly reveals the snare drum angled in such a manner as to allow double drumming.

According to Brown (1976: 47), early jazz drumming technique was based on “American rudimental drumming traditions”. Here, Brown is specifically referring to three rudimental drumming techniques that are peculiar to snare drum performance practice: flams, rolls and ruffs (Brown, 1976: 132, see Figure 3.12).<sup>20</sup>



Figure 3.12 Snare drum rudimental drumming techniques: flam, roll and ruff.

Brown (1976: 47-55) intimates that these techniques were not conceived in conjunction with the development of nineteenth century military music but rather, comprised a drumming tradition that dates back to the drum and fife corps of eighteenth century America. As drum and fife corps activity diminished around the mid 1800s the military drumming tradition continued in military marching bands. By the late 1800s however, Brown (1976: 58) notes that the preservation of drumming rudiments in the nineteenth century can largely be attributed to the rise of the military and civilian band movement. Indeed, this period saw the establishment of large military ensembles such as the Patrick Gilmore, John Philip Sousa and Arthur Pryor bands, the latter two of which were formed in the aftermath of the Gilmore band's popularity during the 1880s.<sup>21</sup>

The popularity of these and other similar such bands - marking the “Golden Age”<sup>22</sup> of the band - greatly contributed to the establishment of provincial marching bands across America. The importance of small civilian marching bands to the preservation of

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<sup>20</sup>*Modern Drummer* (1980a: 17) similarly notes that the drumming techniques of the early jazz drummer were “an assortment of rolls, flams and ruffs”.

<sup>21</sup>Many of Sousa's band members were drawn from Patrick Gilmore's ensemble, which disbanded in 1892 following Gilmore's death in that same year.

<sup>22</sup>This descriptor is employed by Schafer (1977:2), Taylor (1979: 62) and Greene (1992: 41). The “Golden Age”, according to Schafer and Greene, occurred in the late 1800s and early 1900s; however, Taylor cites 1860 to 1900 as being the apogee of marching band popularity.

rudimental drumming techniques and military drumming performance practice is not discussed in any detail by Brown. However, the contribution of such bands to the preservation of rudimental drumming techniques can equally be considered as important. Dodds (as quoted in Shapiro and Hentoff, 1992: 27), for example, notes that he

learned in the streets, first learning to beat the big drum correctly so as to know just where to put a particular beat and make it fit with the music. Later I graduated to side drum. We were a brass band then and used a couple of piccolos and clarinets.

Dodds' reference to "graduating" to the side drum is particularly revealing because it implies a sequenced course of instruction beginning with the practice of simple rhythms ("where to put a particular beat") to more complex drumming associated with military band snare drum performance practice. After his course of "learning" in marching bands, Dodds acquired the terminology relating to the rhythms that he performed. He notes that

the rudiments are the things we did with a number to be played. It was just different things we did to make the number go and to make the other fellows play. In other words in a calm, ordinary way you push the number and the other musicians too (Dodds as quoted in Gara, 1992: 9).

Although Dodds didn't receive any formal tuition on drums - and in this respect his musical education probably differed from that of drummers in Sousa's ensemble, for example - Dodds nonetheless acquired rudimental drumming skills through his performance experience in civilian marching bands. Rudimental drumming skills, therefore, were practiced by drummers associated with touring virtuoso marching bands as well as small provincial marching bands. Let us now turn our attention to how rudimental drumming - characteristically employed in marches - was incorporated in early jazz drumming. We will give particular attention to ragtime drumming because, according to Brown (1976: 83), it is in this particular genre that lies "the real beginning



of jazz drumming”.<sup>23</sup>

Discussion of early jazz drumming must proceed with caution because it is often difficult to hear drumming rhythms in turn-of-the-century recordings of ragtime. Recording technology of this period was such that banjo, guitar or piano accompaniments tended to conceal drum rhythms. Also, the aforementioned instruments might themselves be mistaken for a percussion instrument, particularly the strumming of a banjo or guitar which tended to add more of a percussive than harmonic element to early ragtime recordings.<sup>24</sup> We must also remember that snare drums and bass drums were often prohibited from recording sessions for fear that they might obscure the melodic and harmonic lines of other instruments. Consequently, an analysis of early ragtime drumming based on recorded evidence might not give an accurate picture of ragtime drumming as it occurred in its “live” or non-recorded form. Published compositions and arrangements of turn-of-the-century ragtime, however, include drum scores detailing the rhythm of each percussion instrument and thus provide us with further research material. I am not positing that such arrangements reflect the stylistic breadth of turn-of-the-century ragtime drumming. Indeed, some exceptional drummers were innovative in their approach to jazz, as suggested by various early twentieth century musicians in their published anecdotes.<sup>25</sup> Given the

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<sup>23</sup>Unfortunately, Brown (1976) is unclear in his explication of early jazz drumming, preferring to concentrate on the drumming style of selected musicians as contained on recordings which he deems as representative of the period. One result of such a methodology is that a general overview of early jazz drumming based on empirical evidence is not forthcoming. Rather than exclusively relying on Brown’s study, the following brief investigation will also include reference to those few remaining English language accounts that deal with early jazz drumming in some musical depth.

<sup>24</sup>We will later discuss banjo and guitar accompaniments in terms of their rhythmic profile.

<sup>25</sup>New Orleans musician Danny Barker, as quoted in Brown (1976: 83), remarks on the drumming ability of “Black” Benny who had an “African beat”. Similarly, Dodds remembers McMurray, a New Orleans drummer, as being both innovative and influential. According to Dodds (as quoted in Gara, 1992: 7), McMurray “used a very small snare drum which looked like a banjo, and my inspiration came

lack of clearly recorded evidence, however, such innovative drumming cannot be investigated in any musical-structural detail. We will therefore proceed from the notion that drumming as notated in published turn-of-the-century arrangements of ragtime is indicative of norms of early ragtime drumming performance practice. Later recordings of early jazz, dating from the late nineteen tens and onwards, clearly reveal drumming patterns.<sup>26</sup> As such, selected recordings from this period will prominently figure in our investigation of early jazz drumming alongside drumming notations appearing in published accounts.

An examination of a drumming score from an anonymous turn of the century arrangement of *Maple Leaf Rag* reveals the snare and bass drum engaged in an oompah rhythm - the bass drum providing the “oom” and the snare following with “pah” (see Figure 3.13).

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from his drumming”.

<sup>26</sup>Some jazz commentators, such as Berendt (1992: 332), state that Krupa was the first drummer who “dared to use the bass drum on recordings in the twenties”. Attentive listening to recordings from the early twenties prove this statement false. In fact, the recording technology used during this period was such that the bass drum could be effectively recorded without it completely overshadowing other accompaniments. Perhaps Berendt is drawing attention to the fact that not all jazz drummers brought their bass drum into the studio. The restricted space in many recording studios of this period may have influenced drummers’ decision to choose other percussion instruments for recordings.



Figure 3.13 *Maple Leaf Rag* (drumming excerpt) by anon. arranger (Schuller, 1974).

This drum beat, as we have previously observed, sometimes characterized the accompaniments of nineteenth century orchestral marches and polkas where oompah drum beats reinforce (or perhaps merely duplicate?) oompah beats shared between low and high brass instruments. Similarly, the drumming in the orchestral arrangement of *Maple Leaf Rag* coincides with an harmonically based oompah accompaniment. The snare drum rhythm, however, is subject to some embellishment. As evident in Figure 3.13, ruffs precede most off-pulse snare executions. Also notable in this musical excerpt is the continuation of snare quaver rhythms in bars 18, 20, 22 and 24. The particular snare and bass drum rhythm in these bars reflects a similar oompah beat variation contained in the accompaniment of the orchestrated arrangement and also in the left hand (bass register) of the original piano composition which formed the basis of the orchestral arrangement (see Figure 3.14, bars 18, 20, 22 and 24).

## Section 2:

17 *Tempo di marcia*

21 etc.

Figure 3.14 Joplin: *Maple Leaf Rag* (excerpt).

What is curious about this rhythmic tendency - a one bar oompah beat followed by an oompah beat variation - is its similarity to some repetitive drumming rhythms found in nineteenth century marches and polkas, such as Strauss' *Radetzky March*, *Polka Française*, Op. 296 and Sousa's *Hail To The Spirit Of Liberty*. Here, then, one influence of Western art musics on early jazz drumming is explicit.

So far we have noted that snare backbeat - evident in the snare rhythm of oompah beats - was occasionally employed in ragtime drumming. However, oompah beats were only one stylistic feature of early jazz drumming: they were by no means dominant characteristics. As Brown (1976: 133) notes:

rarely did ragtime drummers play on the after-beat as was often done in military marches ... instead, they created a flurry of activity by embellishing the rhythmic pattern of the melody.

Indeed, other drum rhythms in the orchestral arrangement of *Maple Leaf Rag* mostly imitate the rhythms of front line melodic instruments which are, in turn, transcribed from the right hand piano rhythms of Joplin's original composition. Such melodically conceived snare rhythms, interspersed with an occasional oompah beat, are also found in other turn-of-the-century orchestral arrangements of Scott Joplin rags, including those appearing in the turn of the century publication titled The Red Back Book (*The Ragtime Dance, The Entertainer, The Easy Winners, The Chrysanthemum, The Cascades, Sun Flower Slow Drag*) and also *Sugar Cane*.<sup>27</sup>

In contrast to the notated drum parts comprising published turn-of-the-century orchestral arrangements of ragtime, where it may be assumed that rhythms were precisely executed,<sup>28</sup> recorded evidence of jazz drumming from the nineteen tens suggests that the execution of snare rhythms lacked the rigidity that was required of rudimentary military drumming. Referring to Buddy Gilmore's drumming on James Europe's recording of *Castle House Rag* (N.Y., 1914), Modern Drummer (1980a: 18) notes the use of both a "military structure" and "jazz syncopation" in Gilmore's final drum break. Modern Drummer's reference to a "military structure" presumably refers to the semiquaver and semiquaver triplet rhythms as notated in their excerpt from *Castle House Rag* (see Figure 3.15). The liberation of these rhythms from military-style

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<sup>27</sup>The "Red Back Book" is a nickname given to the early twentieth century orchestrated rags titled Fifteen Standard High Class Rags, some of which were orchestrated by unknown arrangers. None were orchestrated by Joplin. *Sugar Cane* did not appear in this early edition but was published separately (Gunther Schuller's 1974 edition of the eight extant orchestrated Joplin rags, titled The Red Back Book, includes *Sugar Cane*).

<sup>28</sup>If, as Tirro suggests, "the rags of Scott Joplin are meant to be reproduced from the score with accuracy and metrical precision" (1992 :30) - as evident in Joplin's performance of his piano rags that are preserved on pianola rolls - then it would be reasonable to assume that the orchestrated versions of his rags would similarly be performed with due attention to rhythmic precision.

drumming was accomplished by “jazz syncopation” - as suggested by the accent figurations in Figure 3.15 - and long-short type semiquaver rhythms.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 3.15 *Castle House Rag* (excerpt, *Modern Drummer*, 1980a: 18).

Another example of the “loosening” of military rudimental drumming is revealed in a 1917 recording of *The Ragtime Drummer* for solo percussion, performed by James Lent, a widely known and respected drummer of the early twentieth century.<sup>30</sup> As evident in Figure 3.16, Lent incorporated military style drumming rhythms comprising rolls and flams performed on the snare drum. However, such characteristically military drumming was interspersed with off-pulse accents which, as the title of the composition suggests, are reminiscent of the syncopated melodic lines of ragtime.

<sup>29</sup>The latter are not accurately notated by *Modern Drummer*, but it is noted earlier in the article that the early ragtime drummer had to “bend his patterns and melodic interweavings” in accordance with other ensemble textures (1980a: 17).

<sup>30</sup>See Brown (1976: 141-150) for a discussion and the complete notation of the drum part to *The Ragtime Drummer*.



Figure 3.16 *The Ragtime Drummer* (as notated by Brown, 1976: 147).

It would be reasonable to assume that the early jazz drummer was aware of the disparity between military-style drumming rhythms and the improvised and rhythmically “ragged” melodic lines of other instruments. Consequently, syncopated figures, off-pulse accents and unevenness in the execution of extended quaver passages (for example) - those characteristics that comprise Schuller’s concept of rhythmic democratization - served to align jazz drumming with similar such rhythmic characteristics inherent in the improvisations of front-line melodic instruments. In this sense, military rhythms and rudimental drumming techniques were rhythmically “loosened” in the interests of ensemble playing.

By the turn-of-the-century, syncopated drumming fired by the rhythms of ragtime melody began to feature in the repertoire of large touring concert bands. Stearns (1994: 123) notes, for example, that

John Philip Sousa, on his European tours from 1900 to 1904, carried ragtime and the Cakewalk to London, Paris, Moscow, and elsewhere, making a point of featuring a drummer who could “syncopate” while the band played *At a Georgia Camp Meeting* as an encore.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup>At *A Georgia Camp Meeting* was subsequently recorded by the Sousa band in 1908.

*At A Georgia Camp Meeting*, by Frederick A. Mills, was published in 1899 and described by Mills on the sheet music as a “characteristic march that can be used effectively as a two-step, polka, or cakewalk” (Mills as quoted in Schafer and Riedel, 1973: 31). Mills’ reference to some popular turn-of-the-century dance music genres in describing his composition is revealing. Similar tempi and accompanimental beats evident in the early twentieth century march, polka and the ragtime cakewalk - as previously noted - resulted in an intermingling of these genres. Consequently, such musics could either be danced or marched to. Indeed, during the late 1800s there existed a vogue for dancing to actual marches, attesting to the popularity of this musical genre.<sup>32</sup> In this respect *Creole Belles* (1900) must have also been a great favourite as it was recorded by the Sousa Band five times between 1902 and 1912.<sup>33</sup> Given the popularity of large touring concert bands, it would be reasonable to assume that melodically conceived drum rhythms - as featured in concert band repertoire - prominently figured in early twentieth century drumming performance practice.

So far our attention has focused on snare drum rhythms. However, syncopation and off-pulse accents also marked other percussive activity in early ragtime drumming. For example, most of Baby Dodds’ recordings with King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band featured woodblock rather than snare rhythms. Listen to, for example, *Just Gone*, (Chicago, 1923), *Dippermouth Blues* (Richmond, 1923) and *Canal Street Blues*, (Chicago, 1923) where Dodds’ drumming can be clearly heard. Other early jazz drummers distributed rhythmic activity across a diverse range of percussion. Drummer

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<sup>32</sup>The tendency to dance to actual marches can be traced back to at least the late 1880s. For example, Sousa notes that in 1889 his *Washington Post March* was “almost immediately chosen by the dancing masters at their yearly convention to introduce their new dance, the two-step” (Sousa, 1928: 117). See also Lamb (1980), “March: 19th and 20th century Military and Popular Marches” in Stanley Sadie (ed.) *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* Vol. 11, p.652.

<sup>33</sup>Much in the style of instrumental ragtime, *Creole Belles* comprises an oompah accompaniment - low brass are performing on-pulse and other winds/brass are off-pulsing - , syncopated melodies and counter-melodies, and ragtime-style snare rhythms.



Tony Sbarbaro<sup>34</sup> for example, plays a variety of percussion on the Original Dixieland Jazzband's recording of *Clarinet Marmalade* (N.Y., 1918). As we shall see, backbeat cymbal crashes and snare rolls, syncopated woodblock and cowbell rhythms, as featured in early jazz drumming, created a complex of varied rhythmic activity.

In describing his early jazz drumming, Sbarbaro (as quoted in *Modern Drummer*, 1980a: 20) noted that "you had to keep going, keep filling in as much as possible". Here Sbarbaro is referring to his melodically conceived and rhythmically dense drumming on snare drum, woodblock and cowbell, as evident on his early jazz recordings. Such characteristic drumming was commonly interspersed with ostinati comprising off-pulse snare rolls. Figure 3.17 can be taken as one example of Sbarbaro "filling in as much as possible".

The figure displays four staves of musical notation for percussion instruments. The first staff is labeled 'Woodblock' and begins with a measure number '45'. It contains a series of eighth notes with accents, some beamed together. The second staff is labeled 'Cowbell' and contains a series of eighth notes with accents, some beamed together. The third staff begins with a measure number '49' and contains a series of eighth notes with accents, some beamed together. The fourth staff contains a single eighth note followed by a long rest, and then a cymbal crash marked '(Cymbal)' with an accent and a downward arrow.

Figure 3.17 *Clarinet Marmalade* (excerpt).

The drumming as notated in Figure 3.17 can be considered representative of much of Sbarbaro's drumming throughout the twenties, particularly in choruses where he

<sup>34</sup>Sbarbaro later changed his surname to "Spargo".

tended to favour the woodblock and cowbell. Sbarbaro's cymbal crash on pulse four of bar 50 is of interest here because of its emphatic occurrence on the backbeat. As Modern Drummer (1980a: 19) notes, the use of a crash or choked cymbal on the fourth pulse of the last 4/4 bar of a phrase was a common occurrence in early jazz drumming and lent the music an "element of anticipation" and was interesting for its "unexpected abruptness, if nothing else". Such cymbal performance continued throughout the twenties and is clearly evident in, for example, the drumming of Kaiser Marshall with Fletcher Henderson and his Orchestra. In particular, Henderson's *The Stampede* (1926) includes many hi-hat executions on the final pulse of a 4/4 bar. Each execution marks the end of either large structural sections (verses, choruses and solos) or phrases (generally four, eight or sixteen bar periods). The root of this performance practice is not mentioned by Modern Drummer (1980a) or Brown (1976) but it would be reasonable to speculate that its beginnings were in vaudeville acts and drumming performance practice in silent movie and theatre accompaniments. In these contexts a drummer was employed as a sound effects person who utilized, for example, cymbal rolls and crashes to depict thunder and lightning. Single cymbal executions however, could also be used to punctuate or conclude jokes and stage acts. Perhaps in similar fashion, cymbal crashes were adopted by ragtime drummers to punctuate or conclude musical sections, the novelty and "unexpected abruptness" of which was heightened by the backbeat rhythmic placement of the execution.<sup>35</sup>

Also notable in Figure 3.17 (above) is Sbarbaro's use of a Charleston rhythm in bar 50. The Charleston dance craze swept America through the twenties and, consequently, the Charleston rhythm was at its height of popularity during this period. However, the rhythm regularly appeared in early jazz accompaniments. As a

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<sup>35</sup>I am considering here the backbeat cymbal execution as a terminal event in a musical continuum rather than as an anacrusis. The idea of placing the cymbal execution on pulse 4 rather than on pulse 1, as normally the case in military drumming, might be perceived as a type of rhythmic punning.

drumming rhythm, the Charleston often appears in three guises: firstly, “straight” without any rhythmic ornamentation or subdivision; secondly, as a series of accented quavers played on either snare, woodblock or cowbell or a combination of these instruments; and finally, as a series of rolls on the snare drum.<sup>36</sup> The Charleston drumming rhythm in *Clarinet Marmalade* adheres to the second of these three types, that is, the rhythm is subdivided into quavers and shared between the cowbell and the woodblock. Among some of the favourite drumming patterns in jazz drumming, the Charleston rhythm was frequently used to mark major musical sections or to delineate phrases. Sbarbaro’s use of the Charleston rhythm in *Clarinet Marmalade* generally delineates phrases and is often followed by a cymbal crash on pulse 4.

Another distinctive rhythm found in ragtime jazz drumming is that produced by snare rolls alternated with single snare strikes. That is, a snare roll emphasizing pulses two and four might alternate with a single snare execution marking pulses one and three. This rhythm was extensively employed in many late nineteenth century marches and generally in conjunction with bass drum rhythms on pulses 1 and 3. For example, the drumming rhythm as notated in Figure 3.18 marks long structural sections of the following Sousa marches: *Chariot Race* (1890), *The Liberty Bell* (1893), *The Stars and Stripes Forever* (1896), *El Capitan* (1897) and *Washington Post* (1889).



Figure 3.18 Snare roll based march beat.

Similar snare roll based march beats characterized much jazz drumming during the

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<sup>36</sup>This is a notional account of Charleston rhythm performance practice on drums, based upon my repeated but unstructured listening to a wide range of early jazz recordings containing Charleston drum rhythms.

1920s.<sup>37</sup> During this period, snare rolls were executed by either drum sticks or performed on the snare with brushes. The brush technique consisted of dragging the entire flat surface of the brush across the snare drum (this is indicated by the roll markings in Figure 3.19 and Figure 3.20) and then producing a muffled accent on staccato notes with a single brush execution. As detailed in Figure 3.19 and Figure 3.20 the snare roll could occur either on pulse 1 and 3 or 2 and 4. However, as we shall see, many early jazz drummers tended to favour single snare strikes on pulses 1 and 3 and snare rolls on pulses 2 and 4.



Figure 3.19 Snare roll rhythm (a).



Figure 3.20 Snare roll rhythm (b).

In *The Ragtime Drummer*, Lent juxtaposes snare roll rhythm (a) with syncopated quaver passages (see Figure 3.16, page 176). Recordings by other prominent drummers of the period, such as Zutty Singleton and Bob Conselman, also exhibit the use of the snare roll rhythms notated above. Indeed, *Modern Drummer* (1980a: 20) notes that

one of the key elements of Singleton's style was the maintaining of the pulse on the snare drum through the use of press rolls accentuated on the second and fourth beats.

Singleton's snare drum rhythms can be clearly heard in his early recordings with such groups as The Tuxedo Jazz Band, Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and the Jelly-Roll Morton Trio. For example, the fast tempo *Turtle Twist* (Jelly-Roll Morton Trio, New

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<sup>37</sup>Aside from their use in early jazz, such rhythms also comprised the drumming of some jazz inspired Western art musics. For example, Hindemith's orchestral ragging of Bach's c minor fugue, *Rag Time (wohltemperiet)* (1921), incorporates similar snare rolls interspersed with xylophone rhythms, the latter of which are reminiscent of early jazz woodblock rhythms. Also, Stravinsky's *Ragtime* (1919) includes similar snare rolls and accents on the backbeat (without the snare mechanism engaged).

York, 1929) incorporates the same rhythm notated in Figure 3.19 executed on snare with brushes and combined with crotchet rhythms on the bass drum. Snare roll rhythm (a) also characterizes slower tempo pieces, such as *Lulu's Mood*, recorded by the Zutty Singleton Trio. Here, Singleton possibly uses brushes on the snare drum rather than sticks and bass drum executions occur on pulses one and three of a 4/4 bar. This beat is consistently used throughout the recording.<sup>38</sup> Bob Conselman's recording of *That's A Plenty* with the Benny Goodman Trio (Chicago, 1928) occasionally includes the aforementioned snare roll rhythms alongside some soloistic ragtime-style playing on other percussion. Conselman's soloistic playing tends to emphasize off-pulse rhythms and his bass drum rhythms generally comprise executions on all four pulses.

Similar drum beats to those previously described survived in the drumming of other well known drummers who were prominent in their field throughout the late nineteen twenties and early thirties. However, New Orleans ragtime-style soloistic playing on snare and other percussion - as previously described - remained a dominant characteristic of drumming during this period. Gene Krupa's drumming, for example, includes snare roll rhythms alongside some soloistic snare playing that was much in the manner of ragtime drumming and, in particular, the snare style of Conselman (as briefly discussed above). Krupa's soloistic ragtime-style snare playing is most noticeable in *All I Do Is Dream Of You* (Benny Goodman Trio) and also McKenzie and Condon's Chicagoans' recording of *Nobody's Sweetheart*, (Chicago, 1927).<sup>39</sup>

Krupa's drumming in *Nobody's Sweetheart* is of particular concern to us here because

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<sup>38</sup>Ray Bauduc's drumming on *Cajun Love Song* (recorded by the Eddie Miller Quartet) employs the same rhythm. Aside from the guitar solo section where the snare is executed on all four pulses without a roll marking pulses two and four, snare roll rhythm (a) is consistently employed.

<sup>39</sup>As we shall see, Krupa continued to employ soloistic ragtime-style drumming throughout the nineteen thirties, this contributing to his popularity as "the most famous drummer in all jazz" (*Modern Drummer*, 1980b: 52). Some commentators, however, consider Krupa's drumming style during the swing era as invasive. Schuller (1989: 21), for example, considers Krupa an "ofttimes annoyingly overbearing drummer".

Krupa consistently employs accented snare backbeat in the final solo break.

From the mid nineteen twenties to the early thirties, oompah rhythms that included an additional emphasis on the backbeat increasingly featured in the style of early jazz drumming performed in Chicago, including the drumming of those New Orleans-born musicians who relocated to Chicago during the mid nineteen twenties, such as Dodds, Singleton and Sbarbaro. This rhythmic tendency, peculiar to Chicago, has been noted by various commentators. *Modern Drummer* (1980b: 17), for example, states that Chicago drummers were noted for a technique known as “solid left hand” in which the snare rhythms played by the left hand “kept time in addition to the bass drum”. Thus, backbeat rhythms were emphasized by the left hand leaving the right hand to perform syncopated rhythms on the woodblock, cowbell and cymbals (*ibid.*). Berendt (1992: 189-190) also discusses this phenomenon and includes some notated drum rhythms as exemplars of New Orleans and Chicago drumming style:

In New Orleans style and ragtime [see Figure 3.21], the rhythmic emphasis is on the so-called “strong” beats: on 1 and 3, just as in march music. From here on, jazz rises to an ever-increasing rhythmic complexity and intensity. Dixieland and Chicago style [see Figure 3.22], as well as New Orleans jazz as played in Chicago during the twenties, shifts the accents to 2 and 4, so that while 1 and 3 remain the “strong” beats, the accent now is on 2 and 4. Thus the peculiar “floating” rhythmic atmosphere from which swing takes its name was created.



Figure 3.21 New Orleans Ragtime beat (Berendt, 1992: 189).



Figure 3.22 Dixieland Chicago beat (Berendt, 1992: 189).

Although Berendt notes the accentual differences between New Orleans and Chicago drumming, his discussion and subsequent notation of a “Dixieland Chicago beat” is misleading for two reasons. Firstly, he implies that the Dixieland Chicago drum beat as

notated is paradigmatic of Chicago drumming in the late 1920s. Clearly, this is not the case. Chicago drummers employed ragtime rhythms alongside this beat, as evident in the drumming of Krupa, as previously noted. Further, according to Brown (1976: 284) and *Modern Drummer* (1980b: 17), such ragtime-style rhythms were often transferred to the suspended cymbal by drummers active in Chicago during this period. Secondly, Berendt is suggesting in his notation of a Dixieland Chicago beat that snare rhythms were executed on all four pulses with additional emphasis given to pulses two and four. Is this true?

In his performance of *Alligator Crawl* with Louis Armstrong's Hot Seven (Chicago, 1927), Dodds incorporates executions on pulses two and four only rather than on all four pulses. Further, these rhythms are performed on a cymbal rather than a snare drum, as implied by Berendt's Dixieland Chicago beat (Figure 3.22, above). Zutty Singleton employs a similar cymbal rhythm in his performance of *Savoyager's Stomp* with Carroll Dickerson's Savoyagers. Here, an oompah beat, shared between the bass drum and suspended cymbal, is interspersed with syncopated ragtime style rhythms performed on various percussion. Kaiser Marshall, also a popular drummer of the period, occasionally employed similar cymbal rhythms in many of his recordings with Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra (for example, *Sugar Foot Stomp*, New York, 1925).<sup>40</sup> In the aforementioned examples, backbeat cymbal executions generally occur in loud tutti sections and/or towards the end of the recording. Other recordings were located that incorporate snare backbeat but, in contrast to Berendt's Dixieland Chicago beat, pulses one and four are not sounded. Brown (1976: 281), for instance, notes that Frank Snyder's drumming with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings frequently involves snare or woodblock rhythms on "only the weak beats in the measure, accenting them in the Northern [i.e. Chicago] style". Other examples of similar such drumming include

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<sup>40</sup>See Brown (1976: 339-40) for further examples of choked cymbal executions on the backbeat in the recorded repertoire of Krupa and Paul Kettler (drumming with Bix Beiderbecke).

Eddie Lang - Joe Venuti and their All Star Orchestra's recording of *Farewell Blues* (N.Y., 1931, with Neil Marshall drumming) which contains accented snare backbeats towards the end of the recording, and Andrew Hilaire, who includes an emphatic snare backbeat in the last two choruses of *Black Bottom Stomp* (Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers, Chicago, 1926). Given the above, it follows that Berendt's drum notation of a "Dixieland Chicago beat" should more correctly read as:



Figure 3.23 Dixieland Chicago drum beat.

It should also be made clear that this drum beat generally featured in short structural sections rather than occupying the entire recording, as intimated by Berendt. Further, accented backbeats most commonly occurred in the final choruses of a recording or within loud tutti sections.

### 3.2.1 Conclusion: Backbeat in Early Jazz Drumming.

Given our brief survey of early jazz drumming and its origins, the following general conclusions concerning the roots of the rock'n'roll snare backbeat apply:

- snare and cymbal backbeats - in the form of oompah beats - can be traced to nineteenth century orchestral marches and polkas and, later, marches as performed by wind and brass marching and concert bands in the U.S.A.; and
- by the late twenties in Chicago oompah drum beats contained strong emphasis of the backbeat mostly occurring in long structural sections of a recording, generally the final chorus and/or loud tutti sections.

Mostly, however, early jazz drumming comprised:

- varied and syncopated rhythms. These complemented the rhythmically



“ragged” melodic lines of other instruments and were executed on snare drum, woodblock or cowbell or distributed amongst these instruments; and

- snare roll rhythms. These rhythms - also drawn from 19th century march and polka drumming practices - comprised snare rolls alternated with single executions and might be executed on either drum sticks or brushes. Snare executions on pulses 1 and 3 and snare rolls on pulses 2 and 4 were commonly employed in early jazz drumming.

All of the above general characteristics were usually juxtaposed within a musical section, such as a verse or chorus, or were employed throughout a musical section.

### 3.2.2 Backbeat in Other Early Jazz Accompaniments.

Aside from oompah drum beats, other accompanimental activity similarly emphasized backbeat rhythms. For example, a common early jazz accompaniment featured oompah beats shared between tuba and banjo, the latter supplying the backbeat while the tuba player plays on pulses 1 and 3, presumably reserving the backbeat as an opportunity for taking a breath. Much of the late 1920s recorded repertoire of Johnny Dodds with Baby Dodds drumming clearly reveals accented backbeats produced by the banjo, particularly those recordings where Baby Dodds records with the bass drum only. For example, *Come on and Stomp, Stomp, Stomp* (Chicago, 1927), *Joe Turner Blues* (Chicago, 1927) and *When Erastus Plays His Old Kazoo* (Chicago, 1927) contain tuba and bass drum performances on pulses 1 and 3 with the banjo providing rhythms which accent the backbeat.<sup>41</sup>

Oompah beats also characterized some piano performances and, in particular, a

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<sup>41</sup>These recordings do not include woodblock, cowbell or snare rhythms. However, occasional hi-hat strikes occur at ends of phrases.

technique and style of piano playing that flourished in New York throughout the 1920s and 30s commonly referred to as “stride”. As Machlin (1985: 8) notes, this term refers to the

alternation of a fundamental pitch, placed deep in the bass range of the piano and played on the strong beats of a 4/4 measure (beats 1 and 3), with a chord that fills out and more completely identifies the same harmony, played in the tenor or mid-range of the piano on weak beats (beats 2 and 4).

Thus, the term probably originated from the motion of the left hand which is “striding back and forth over the left half of the keyboard” (ibid.)(see figure 3.24).<sup>42</sup>



Figure 3.24 Stride piano: left hand accompaniment.

Occasionally, a double bass -sometimes substituted for a tuba in early jazz ensembles - provided additional emphasis to backbeats in banjo or stride piano accompaniments by incorporating “slap bass” technique. “Slap bass” involves the sounding of pulses one and three alternated with a percussive effect on the backbeat. The latter is achieved by slapping the string against the fingerboard with the right hand.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the bassist fills in the pulses previously reserved for the tuba player to take a breath. According to Berendt (1992: 319), Pops Foster - among the first and “most influential of early jazz

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<sup>42</sup>Perhaps the best exemplars of early stride piano style can be found in the recorded repertoire of Thomas “Fats” Waller, particularly his thirty three solo piano recordings that were recorded and commercially released by RCA Victor Records between the years 1927 to 1941 (recently released on The Fats Waller Piano Solos: Turn On The Heat, RCA Bluebird compact disc: 2482-2-RB, 1991). These recordings characteristically employ a left hand stride piano accompaniment, regardless of the tempo or rate of harmonic motion. At times, the stride piano style follows a rubato or improvisatory opening section, as is the case in, for example, *Clothes Line Ballet* (N.Y., 1934).

<sup>43</sup>Brown (1976: 326) notes bassist Jim Lanigan’s slap-bass technique in the Chicagoans’ recording of *Sugar and China Boy* (1927) in which “Krupa cannot be heard” because the “majority of rhythmic activity comes from Lanigan and the banjo playing of Eddie Condon.” Other examples of slap-bass will be cited below.

bassists”<sup>44</sup> - can be easily identified on early jazz recordings by his “slapping technique”. Berendt is unclear regarding the musical-structural constituents of Foster’s slap-bass technique. However, Foster’s testimony concerning his early performance practice includes reference to his “slapping” and affords insight into the rhythms of early jazz double bass accompaniments:

The bass and the drums are the foundation that the rest of the band works on .... What I like to do is get to romping on a fast number and slap out a good rhythm .... I don’t know who started the pizzicato bass. It was always in music and I don’t think anyone around New Orleans invented it. When we used to pick the bass we’d hold onto the bow at the same time .... I still usually hold onto the bow while I pick unless I’m going to slap the strings too. In New Orleans we’d have two pick notes in one bar, then you’d go six bars of bowing, and maybe have one note to pick (Foster as quoted in Stoddard, 1973: 76).

Foster’s performance practice of playing “two pick notes in one bar” provided an opportunity to incorporate slap bass as an additional percussive layer to that provided by the drums. However, Foster’s earlier reference to “slapping out a good rhythm” suggests that slap bass might also involve varied rhythms. It is likely that both Berendt and Foster are incorporating the term “slap bass” to encompass percussive rhythms on the backbeat and also on-pulse “Bartok pizzicato” executions, the latter of which involves pulling the double bass string away from the fingerboard then allowing it to slap back.<sup>45</sup>

Let us now turn our attention to how the aforementioned beats developed during the 1930s and 40s. Our attention will largely focus on drum beats and, once again, we will

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<sup>44</sup>Berendt (1992: 319) considers that “all bassists of traditional jazz refer back to Pops Foster” because of Foster’s work with such prominent jazz musicians as Freddie Keppard, King Oliver, Kid Ory, Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet “and all the other New Orleans greats”.

<sup>45</sup>Aside from Foster’s early recordings, Bartok pizzicato can be clearly heard in the recorded output of other early jazz bassists. For example, bassist John Lindsay, recording with Jelly Roll Morton’s Red Hot Peppers, extensively incorporates Bartok pizzicato in *Black Bottom Stomp* and *Grandpa’s Spells* (both recorded in Chicago, 1926). In particular, Lindsay’s use of Bartok pizzicato can be clearly heard in the double bass solo of *Grandpa’s Spells*.

briefly review the development of the drum-kit in order to better understand how innovations in drumming hardware affected performance practice.

### **3.3 Jazz Drumming: The Swing Era.**

The drum-kit, as we know it today, was more or less standardized through the nineteen thirties. New items of percussive hardware were added and other hardware was refined. For example, the Chinese tom-toms that were popular during the 1920s were replaced during the 1930s with tunable tom-toms. Tunable tom-toms were available in a number of sizes and featured adjustable heads that could be either tightened or loosened in order to change the pitch of the drum. The first hi-hat cymbals appeared around 1927 and proved to be popular among jazz drummers. Within a decade the hi-hat became a standard piece of percussive hardware in the drummers ensemble. The collection of cymbals used was also expanded from the simple suspended cymbal that was fixed to the bass drum to include many free standing cymbals positioned around the kit. This expansion of the drum-kit meant that drummers could develop the ability to play independent rhythm patterns with each hand - a performance practice that will be referred to as "coordinated independence" from now on.

Although the development of coordinated independence was in its experimental stage during the late 1920s and early '30s much modern drumming technique did evolve throughout this period, such as playing the hi-hat with the right hand and snare drum with the left hand. Aside from this performance practice, coordinated independence was most evident in drum solos where varied rhythms might be executed across the full range of percussion comprising the drum-kit. Indeed, by the late 1930s, drummers were allowed solos that were much longer than the couple of bars allocated to them in

the 1920s and early thirties<sup>46</sup> and it is in such structural sections that dense rhythmic activity informed by coordinated independence was most likely to be heard.<sup>47</sup> As we shall see, swing era drumming was otherwise restrained in terms of providing varied rhythmic display.

According to Brown (1976: 310), swing era drumming strongly derived from early 1930s Chicago drumming style, the latter of which he describes as follows,

The ragtime influence is obvious but instead of playing in two the meter is four



Furthermore, the overabundance of rhythmic activity that characterized ragtime drumming is absent. Ostinato patterns either in the form of accented rolls



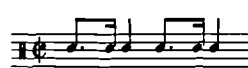
and



or the ride cymbal rhythm



and



are commonly played for an

entire chorus or more. These techniques would become popular with virtually all jazz drummers by the end of the decade, including the New Orleans musicians.

Brown is suggesting in the above quote that swing era drumming was informed by innovative rhythmic “techniques” developed by drummers active in Chicago during the early 1930s. In particular, we can identify three main “techniques” considered by Brown as characteristic of 1930s jazz drumming: 1) the change from “playing in two” to drumming that emphasizes crotchet rhythms in a 4/4 bar; 2) the incorporation of snare roll based beats; and 3), ride cymbal ostinati. We will briefly consider each of these techniques below in order to gain a better understanding of swing era drumming.

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<sup>46</sup>I am referring here to such short drum solos as those by Chick Webb in The Jungle Band’s recording of *Dog Bottom* (N.Y., 1929).

<sup>47</sup>Benny Goodman’s recording of *Sing, Sing, Sing* (1937) with Gene Krupa drumming was particularly important in this respect as it was one of the first jazz recordings to feature an extended drum solo alongside other instrumental solos, many of which were supported by the drums alone.

3.3.1 From  to .

Brown's notion that the oompah beat, which by the late 1920s in Chicago featured accented backbeats on cymbal or snare drum, gave way to beats that emphasized all four crotchets of a 4/4 bar finds much support in published accounts of swing musical style. In reference to accompanimental rhythms, Collier (1978: 189), for example, notes that during the late 1920s and early '30s the "2/4 in the ground beat" developed into a "4/4 feel". Schuller (1989: 18, 21, 210, 223, 664) when discussing the recorded output of various 1930s swing bands, also notes that swing band rhythm sections played a "4/4 beat" as opposed to the "older two-beat style"<sup>48</sup> and Clarke (1995: 200-1) notes the "increasing pressure ... to play in 4/4 rather than 2/4 in rhythm sections" during the swing era. These and other accounts of swing era rhythmic organization<sup>49</sup> support Brown's notion of a shift from "playing in two" to a "meter of four", the latter rhythmic phenomenon of which is variously described by the aforementioned commentators as a "4/4 feel", "4/4 beat" or "chomp chomp" rhythm. In order to avoid any confusion that might result from such discrepant terminology, I will employ the phrase "flat four beat" when referring to quadruple meter swing era beats that tend towards an even emphasis of all four pulses.

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<sup>48</sup>Later in his book, Schuller (1989: 277) recapitulates this notion by noting that "a steady four-to-the-bar chomp-chomp beat, unvaried and relentless in all four rhythm instruments" was a "primary element" of swing style. By "chomp-chomp" beat, Schuller is referring to that beat described above as a "4/4 feel". In reference to guitar accompaniments, Schuller (1989: 65) considers that Ellington's *Stompy Jones* (1934) broke new ground in the realm of rhythm with guitarist Freddy Guy's "steady chording" on all four pulses.

<sup>49</sup>Tirro (1992: 218) states that rhythmic accentuation in swing era "solos and the arrangements... falls more frequently on the beat - often on the strong beat - and becomes one of the chief characteristics of the style." Tirro's notated excerpts of *Rattle and Roll* (Benny Goodman Band, 1946) and *House Rent Boogie* (Count Basie Band, 1947) - the latter described as a "big band arrangement in swing style" (ibid.: 249) - provide the reader with some evidence regarding this notion. The drumming for these excerpts comprises both the bass and snare drums performing on all four pulses of a 4/4 bar and thus supports Brown's techniques of 1930s Chicago drumming style.

As indicated in Brown's drumming notations above (page 190), a flat four beat was largely sounded by bass drum rhythms.<sup>50</sup> Modern Drummer (1980b: 17), referring to drumming in Chicago during the early swing era, supports Brown's notion when remarking upon the shift to bass drum rhythms comprising all four crotchets of a 4/4 bar from performances on the first and third crotchets only, the latter of which "was mostly the case in early jazz drumming." Neither Brown (1976) nor Modern Drummer (1982b) offer reasons regarding why such a prominent shift to flat four beats occurred during the swing era. Perhaps one probable musical reason concerns the introduction of the double bass as a standard swing band rhythm section instrument. We have previously noted that early jazz bass drum rhythms coincided with tuba accompaniments on pulses 1 and 3 (much in the manner of 19th marches) and that pulses 2 and 4 were generally reserved as an opportunity for the tuba player to take a breath. With the double bass succeeding the tuba as a swing band bass instrument, bass drum rhythms as previously incorporated in early jazz oompah beats would now detract from the crotchet rhythm (flat four) accompaniments of the double bass and later, piano and guitar accompaniments.<sup>51</sup> Thus, crotchet bass drum rhythms were commonly employed during the swing era in order to support the flat four accompaniments of other instruments comprising the rhythm section rather than contributing another rhythmic layer in the bass register. Some albeit limited support for

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<sup>50</sup>Brown (1976: 452) also notes that whenever jazz drummers played the bass drum during an extended solo, they "usually played it on all four beats in the measure".

<sup>51</sup>Some early swing era accompaniments commonly incorporated double bass performances on pulses 1 and 3 rather than flat four rhythms. For example, double bass accompaniments featured in Duke Ellington's Brunswick session recordings include performances on pulses 1 and 3. At times, slap bass on the backbeat was also featured (listen to, for example, the following recordings from Ellington's Brunswick sessions: *It Doesn't Mean A Thing*, N.Y., 1932; *Rose Room*, N.Y., 1932; *Blue Harlem*, N.Y., 1932; and *Jazz Cocktail*, N.Y., 1932. Throughout these recordings, slap bass rhythms are supported by stride piano accompaniments thus contributing to an oompah-type accompaniment reminiscent of that found in late 1920s Chicago style jazz, as previously discussed). By the late 1930s, however, double bass accompaniments emphasized all four pulses in a style commonly referred to as "walking bass" (Megill and Demory, 1993: 317 and Schuller, 1989: 868, for example, note that "walking bass" denotes a double bass accompaniment that characteristically contains crotchet rhythms).

this notion can be found in the tuning practices of prominent swing era drummers who adjusted the timbre of the bass drum in order to allow the double bass part to be clearly heard. Drummer Dave Tough for example, used a wooden beater on the bass drum and employed a relatively loose tension on the bass drum heads, thus avoiding the “boomier” sound that some other swing drummers were achieving.<sup>52</sup> By adjusting his bass drum in this manner, Tough claimed that “it wouldn’t interfere with the [double] bass as far as the tonality was concerned” (*Modern Drummer*, 1982b: 55). In this sense, Tough’s sensitivity to a tonal blending between double bass and bass drum sounds reflects a greater concern for ensemble playing during the swing era.

Aside from bass drum rhythms on all four pulses, Brown’s (1976: 310) notation of a flat four beat also includes snare backbeats, representative of an enduring “ragtime influence” on early 1930s Chicago drumming (see page 190 for Brown’s notated examples). Although the incorporation of snare backbeat executions, particularly during the “out-chorus”, can be considered as a continuation of similar such drumming performance practices dating from the late 1920s (as previously discussed on page 184), backbeat executions on cymbals also endured during the early 1930s. For example, *Best Wishes* (Sonny Greer drumming with Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra, N.Y., 1932) includes hi-hat executions on the backbeat midway through the recording for 18 bars. Also, Brown (1976: 339) notes that during the early 1930s Krupa, recording with Red Nichols, “plays choked cymbal crashes on the weak beats,

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<sup>52</sup>Tough’s distinctive tuning of his bass drum was noted by Don Lamond who replaced Tough in late 1945 as the drummer with Woody Herman’s First Herd. (Herman’s First Herd was a swing band. Herman formed the be-bop oriented Second Herd band in 1947.) Lamond performed on Tough’s drum-kit for the first few months of his employment and noted that

I didn’t even want to pick up my own drums. Davey had the bass drum tuned in such a way that it blended with the string bass; it sounded as if the bass notes were coming out of the bass drum (Lamond as quoted in Deffaa, 1987: 28)



particularly on the out-chorus.”<sup>53</sup> By the late 1930s, however, accented drum or cymbal backbeats were dated. Indeed, many jazz commentators suggest that the occurrence of backbeat in late swing era recordings was anachronistic. For instance, Clarke (1995: 205), referring to Krupa’s drumming during the late 1930s, states that

Krupa’s drumming was very much in the Chicago mould, with dixielandish accents. It always comes as a shock ... to hear the lumpy 2/4 beat on *Down South Camp Meeting*, from August 1936. (Stacy said years later, ‘you can’t ask all drummers to keep good time’).<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, Schuller (1989: 192-3) considers that by the late 1930s the incorporation of accented snare backbeat was “clichéd”:

Hear [Armstrong] on *Jubilee* (1938), playing with absolute control, technical and aesthetic, guided by his superb musical instincts. The Russell band also has things well in hand, except for Barbarin’s unfortunate tendency now to imitate the worst of Krupa’s clichés, his overbearing emphasis of beats 2 and 4. (Hear it even more obviously on *On The Sunny Side of the Street*.) Krupa was by now the most popular and most imitated drummer in the land, and there is a bitter irony in Barbarin’s need to parrot Krupa, for the latter learned most of what *he* knew as a young man in Chicago from Barbarin, then working with King Oliver.

Both Clarke and Schuller’s reference to the late swing era drumming of Gene Krupa is revealing. It seems that within the context of 1930s jazz drumming Krupa can be considered to be on one hand a revisionist - looking backward to the drumming style prevalent in Chicago during the late 1920s - and on the other hand, as an innovator in bringing to swing accompaniments a prominent rhythmic layer that is juxtaposed against a dominant flat four beat.<sup>55</sup> It is important to note however, that Krupa did not

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<sup>53</sup>Brown (1976: 339) subsequently cites *Strut Miss Lizzie* as a representative recording in this respect.

<sup>54</sup>By “good time”, pianist Jess Stacy (as quoted by Clarke) is most likely referring to the maintenance of an unobtrusive flat four beat.

<sup>55</sup>Aside from accenting the backbeat, Krupa incorporated other early jazz drumming approaches throughout the 1930s and ‘40s, such as performing ragtime-style rhythms (these were generally executed on tom-toms or snare drum) and engaging in dense accompanimental rhythmic activity. Such drumming was subject to much criticism by jazz commentators. For example, one music critic described Krupa’s 1940s performances with his own big band as

noisy and without discipline. It created no atmosphere, and to me there was neither excitement nor inspiration in [Krupa’s] performance (Gerald Pratley as quoted in Larcombe, 1979: 14).

consistently employ accented backbeats throughout a recording. Rather, in line with Chicago-style drumming of the late 1920s, backbeats were reserved for either loud tutti sections, final choruses or solos.<sup>56</sup> Such performance practice is generally overlooked by jazz commentators, including Clarke (1995) and Schuller (1989).

By the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s snare drum rhythmic activity typically included accentuations of distinctive rhythms comprising horn riffs (such as chordal punctuations) or other rhythmic figures that were occasionally played by brass or wind sections within the big band. Brown (1976) is unclear as to precisely when drummers began to punctuate horn riffs with snare accentuations. However, in discussing the 1930s drumming of Chick Webb, Brown (1976: 427) does note that

Like many drummers of this period Webb did not usually accent the riff patterns played by the ensemble, or the short rhythmic figures occasionally played by either the brass section or reeds. The absence of these techniques is a major difference between 1930s big band drummers and the big band drummers of later years.

According to Brown, then, snare accentuations of riff rhythms occurred in big band drumming of “later years” - presumably during the 1940s and beyond. However, some pioneering efforts prevalent in 1930s drumming must not be lightly dismissed. Aside from the 1930s drumming of Krupa - which as we have previously noted was nonconforming in its use of dense snare or tom-tom rhythmic activity - other prominent

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Krupa’s early jazz drumming concepts as employed through the 1930s and ‘40s were no doubt considered incongruous within the context of swing era flat four beats, as indeed was Krupa’s tendency to foreground his own playing above that of other accompanimental lines. At times however, Krupa does display some restraint, particularly when a vocalist is featured. A representative example in this respect is *Gene’s Boogie* (N.Y., 1947).

<sup>56</sup>*Roll ‘Em* (Krupa drumming with Benny Goodman and His Orchestra Hollywood, 1937) for example, includes emphatic snare backbeats in the final chorus and at times throughout loud tutti sections in the recording. If we agree with Schuller that Krupa was the “most imitated drummer in the land” then such imitation is evident in Sonny Greer’s drumming with Duke Ellington where emphatic snare backbeats occasionally occur in loud tutti sections (for example, *Cotton Tail*, Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra, Hollywood, 1940) and also evident in Cozy Cole’s drumming with Cab Calloway and His Orchestra (Cole employs snare backbeats throughout the trumpet solo in *The Cabbage*, Chicago, 1940).

swing era drummers punctuated or embellished horn rhythms with snare executions. For example, Maurice Purtill, drumming with Glenn Miller and his Orchestra, occasionally incorporates snare punctuations throughout *In The Mood* (1939). These generally punctuate chordal horn accents, particularly those that mark the introduction and final chorus (otherwise, Purtill's drumming mostly includes a swing on hi-hat rhythm with an open hi-hat on pulses one and three). Other examples of snare punctuations in 1930s swing era drumming are noted by Schuller (1989). For instance, in his discussion of Count Basie's recording *Lady Be Good* (1936), Schuller (1989: 235) notes Jo Jones' "deft touches of accents" that include snare rim shots, cross-accents and also choked cymbal rhythms. These techniques, according to Schuller, emphasize a structural feature or, at other times, reiterate and punctuate a "point made by one of the soloists." The extent to which snare punctuations occurred during the late 1930s is not subject to any systematic investigation by Schuller (1989), *Modern Drummer* (1982b) or Brown (1976) and, consequently, it is impossible to accurately pinpoint when this "major difference" (to use Brown's terminology) in drumming technique was effected. Clearly, further research is required in this regard.<sup>57</sup>

So far, we have discussed swing era flat four beats with particular reference to bass drum rhythms and snare drum activity. The following section will concentrate on Brown's second characteristic of 1930s jazz drumming: snare roll rhythms.

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<sup>57</sup>Aside from furthering our understanding of swing era drumming, the need for such research is given added impetus because, as we shall see, snare punctuations in swing era drumming are precursory to bebop snare technique.

### 3.3.2 Swing Era Snare Roll Rhythms.

According to Brown (1976: 310, as previously quoted on page 190), swing era drumming incorporated “ostinato patterns” in the form of “accented snare rolls”. By “accented” Brown is specifically referring to the accentuation of pulses two and four, regardless of whether or not such pulses comprise a snare roll or single snare execution. Indeed, this is made clear by Brown in his drum notations illustrating a change from “playing in two” to a “meter in four” and also in his notations of snare roll beats, which include notated accents on pulses two and four of the snare rhythm (see page 190). Further, Brown (*ibid.*) states that these “techniques” became popular with virtually all jazz drummers by the end of the 1930s.<sup>58</sup> We have previously noted, however, that many jazz commentators consider flat four beats as a dominant swing era rhythmic conception. Surely, then, accented snare backbeats would disrupt the flat four beat that many commentators consider fundamental to swing era musical style. Let us briefly investigate some selected recorded performances by Sonny Greer and Gene Krupa (two prominent swing era drummers) in order to clarify the use of accented backbeats in snare roll rhythms during the 1930s.

Sonny Greer’s drumming with Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra, documented in the *The Brunswick Sessions* recordings (1932-35), can be considered as representative of early swing drumming.<sup>59</sup> In these recordings, Greer employs snare roll rhythms in both fast and slow tempo numbers but, in contrast to Brown’s notion,

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<sup>58</sup>Later in his text, Brown (1976: 349) reinforces this notion by stating that “stylistic emphasis on heavily accented weak beats, a favorite of several drummers who recorded with Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton during the last half of the 1920s, becomes a major ingredient of swing Era jazz.” Although Brown correctly notes the roots of the accented “weak beat” in late 1920s jazz as recorded in Chicago, subsequent empirical evidence or further discussion of this “major ingredient of swing era jazz” is not forthcoming.

<sup>59</sup>According to Brown (1976: 424), Greer - who remained a member of the Ellington orchestra until 1951 - exemplifies the commercial jazz drummer of the swing era.

these rhythms do not exhibit any tendency to accent the backbeat. *Best Wishes* (N.Y., 1932) for example, comprises the snare roll rhythm as notated in Figure 3.25 for 16 bars midway through the recording. As indicated in this notation, backbeat snare rolls are not accented by Greer.



Figure 3.25 Ellington, *Best Wishes* (N.Y., 1932, drumming excerpt).

This same snare roll rhythm can be heard throughout *Jazz Cocktail* (N.Y., 1932) and *Margie* (N.Y., 1935), at the beginning of *Blue Rumble* (N.Y., 1932), the final 16 bars of *Blue Mood* (N.Y., 1932), at times in *Lightin'* (N.Y., 1932), mostly throughout *Stars* (N.Y., 1932), at times in *Swing Low* (N.Y., 1932), and is mostly used throughout *Drop Me Off In Harlem* (N.Y., 1933). Bass drum rhythms, when clearly able to be heard in these recordings, appear to fall on each pulse of a 4/4 bar. Similarly, banjo strumming is restricted to on-pulse rhythms, thus contributing to the flat four beat provided by snare and bass drum rhythms.

Swing era recordings featuring drummer Gene Krupa<sup>60</sup> display similar such drum beats to those previously described. The slow 4/4 instrumental *By The Shalimar* (Red Nichols and His Orchestra, N.Y., 1930) and *Rockin' Chair* (Gene Krupa and His Orchestra, 1941) largely comprise unaccented snare roll rhythms. Krupa's performances with the Benny Goodman Trio include similar snare roll rhythms but with off-pulse rolls replaced by dragging the brushes across the snare drum. For example, *Body And Soul* (Krupa with the Benny Goodman Trio, 1935) incorporates this particular rhythm throughout, at times juxtaposed with some "ragtime" type

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<sup>60</sup>Krupa's popularity as a swing era drummer is noted by many jazz commentators. Brown (1976: 345) for example, describes Krupa as "the best known jazz drummer in the world". Similarly, *Modern Drummer* (1980b: 53) states that "Gene Krupa was the first drummer in jazz history to attain a position of global renown".

rhythms executed on snare with brushes. As noted by Krupa in describing his early drumming technique,<sup>61</sup> such rhythms were prevalent in Chicago during the early swing era:

I used all the Chicago beats, four with one hand and a light press with the other on the second and fourth beats, hand to hand rolls accented and a lot of woodblock rhythms (Krupa as quoted in Larcombe, 1979 :13).

At times, Krupa incorporated variations of such “Chicago beats”, as in Benny Goodman’s 1936 recording of *Smoke Dreams* (see Figure 3.26). Here, Krupa’s snare brushwork provides an unobtrusive accompaniment for Helen Ward’s languid vocal line.



Figure 3.26 Krupa: *Smoke Dreams* (drumming excerpt).

Given our albeit brief investigation of some recorded performances by Greer and Krupa, it would be reasonable to acknowledge that snare roll rhythms were commonly employed in long structural sections of swing era recordings but, in contrast to Brown’s (1976: 310) notion, as mentioned above, accented backbeats did not feature in such rhythms. Rather, snare roll rhythms contributed to the flat four beat provided by bass drum, guitar and piano accompaniments.



Having investigated some paradigmatic bass and snare drum rhythms, the following discussion will concern itself with Brown’s third “technique” of swing era drumming: ride cymbal ostinati.

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<sup>61</sup>Particularly, Krupa is referring here to his performances with such bands as Red Nichols and his Five Pennies

### 3.3.3 Swing Era Ride Cymbal Ostinati.

When not engaging in snare roll beats, backbeats, or comping snare rhythms, swing era drummers commonly employed cymbal and hi-hat rhythms throughout lengthy structural sections. These rhythms were generally played by the right hand of the drummer and, as noted by Brown (1976: 310, as previously cited) contained combinations of crotchet and long-short type rhythms. Brown (ibid.) notates the latter as dotted quaver, semiquaver rhythms, but many commentators acknowledge that although cymbal rhythms are typically notated as such, they might be played as a long-short type rhythm divisible by quaver triplets.<sup>62</sup> We have also previously noted that Brown (1976: 319) considers swing era ride cymbal rhythms as generally comprising

combinations of  and  rhythms. As a

paradigmatic rhythm, however, jazz commentators generally agree that the first of Brown's notated cymbal rhythms was most commonly employed.<sup>63</sup> This is particularly the case when hi-hat cymbal rhythms were featured. Tirro (1992: 237), for example, remarks that

Swing drummers ... played 4/4 on the bass drum ... but they began to "ride"

<sup>62</sup>See, for example, *Modern Drummer* (1980b: 19), Erskine (1986: 38-39) and Breithaupt (1995: 176).

<sup>63</sup>Given the musical-structural depth of his study, it is curious that Brown does not state this commonly held perception of swing era cymbal rhythms. However, Brown's subsequent notations of swing era drumming include only the first of his two swing era ride cymbal rhythms and thus suggests to the reader that such a rhythm was pervasive during this period. See the following notations: Brown (1976) p. 340 (*Deep Down South*, Krupa with Bix Beiderbecke, 1930), p. 358 (*After You've Gone*, Krupa with the Benny Goodman Trio, n.d.). Here Krupa plays the "ride cymbal rhythm on the closed high-hat ... with the left hand play[ing] accents on two and four on the tom-tom"), p. 371 (*Tea For Two*, Krupa with Benny Goodman Quartet, n.d.), p. 445 (Brown's example of swing era hi-hat rhythms), and finally, pp. 446-7 (examples of Jo Jones' hi-hat technique). For further notated evidence of cymbal swing rhythms, see Duke Ellington's big band arrangement of *Ko-Ko* (1940, with Sonny Greer drumming) as reproduced in Roger Kamien (ed.) (1990) *The Norton Scores: An Anthology for Listening* Fifth Edition, New York: W.W. Norton, pp.1084-1102. Here, a swing rhythm on hi-hat is featured from bar 9 to bar 70.

the sock cymbal, or high hat, with a 2/4 pattern that set up a minor conflict of rhythmic interest.

Tirro's subsequent notation (see Figure 3.27) comprises on-pulse bass drum rhythms coupled with hi-hat rhythms comprising crotchet followed by dotted quaver, semiquaver combinations. From now on, and for the sake of convenience, I will refer to the latter as a "swing" rhythm.<sup>64</sup>

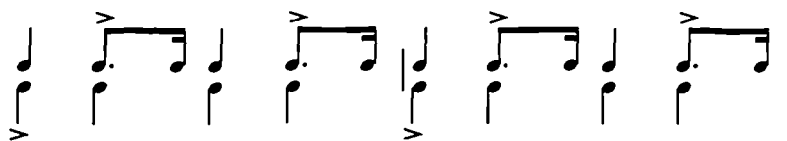


Figure 3.27 Swing era drum beat (Tirro, 1992: 237).

The "minor conflict of rhythmic interest" to which Tirro (1992: 237) refers involves the accentuation of backbeat hi-hat rhythms against bass drum rhythms on pulses 1 and 3, as indicated in his notation above, resulting in a divaricate swing beat. Reminiscent of Brown's explication of accented snare roll beats (as previously discussed), Tirro's notation suggests that swing era drumming contained accented backbeats executed on the hi-hat. Is this true?

Prominent early swing era jazz drummers such as Jo Jones - credited by Brown (1976: 443) and *Modern Drummer* (1980b: 18) as an innovator in the use of cymbal rhythms - and, later in the 1930s, Gene Krupa often played swing rhythms on a half open hi-hat.<sup>65</sup> The resultant effect was that of a sustained sound, eliminating the oompah or

<sup>64</sup>Swing rhythm will also refer to crotchet and crotchet, quaver triplet variations and also long-short deviations that occur between semiquaver and triplet rhythmic divisions. Cf. "swing [on cymbal/hi-hat/snare]" in Appendix Two "Terms and Recordings Descriptors for Appendices Two and Three."

<sup>65</sup>The derivation of both the swing rhythm and the performance practice of playing the swing rhythm on hi-hat or cymbal has not been subject to any systematic research. Collier (1978: 189-90) however, does offer his opinion to the reader concerning the roots of swing rhythm:

In New Orleans practice, the two short strokes that fell on the second and fourth beats were played almost evenly, as can be heard in the playing of Tony Sbarbaro in the Original



“2/4 feel” of early jazz styles. Occasionally, however, hi-hat playing was accompanied by striking the left hand stick on the post of the hi-hat, generally on the backbeat. Jo Jones’ in his recordings with Count Basie during the 1930s commonly employs this performance practice. In such performances of hi-hat swing rhythms, the hi-hat remains open on pulses one and three and was closed on the backbeat, as indicated in Figure 3.28. Thus, executions on the backbeat were staccato in effect, rather than sustained, and complimented the timbre of hi-hat cymbal post sounds as executed on the backbeat by the drummer’s free hand. Was it these staccato sounds that Tirro was hearing when suggesting that backbeat hi-hat rhythms were accented?

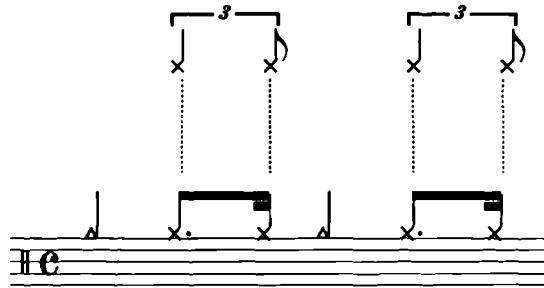
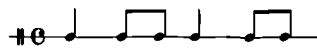


Figure 3.28 Jo Jones: swing on hi-hat.

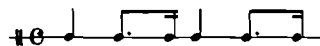
Indeed, it might at first seem that such performances of hi-hat swing rhythms would

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Dixieland Jazz Band, or that of Jasper Taylor behind Morton on “Big Fat Ham”:



But the swing drummers began to extend the first of this little pair of notes at the expense of the second, to produce something more like:



The effect, eventually, was that the tiny final stroke came to be heard almost as a little pickup or grace note for the succeeding stroke; that is, it seemed to belong to the note after it rather than the note before.

In our investigation of early jazz, we noted that drumming mostly comprised varied rhythmic activity. Collier however, is suggesting that the first rhythm notated above was paradigmatic of early jazz drumming and further, that a lineage exists from this rhythm to swing rhythms. No empirical evidence is presented by Collier to substantiate this claim. In contrast to Collier, Gridley (1985: 80) states that “New Orleans drummer Warren ‘Baby’ Dodds ... has been credited with pioneering the use of the ride rhythm which he played on the snare drum”. Unfortunately, Gridley neglects to discuss nor cite any references concerning Dodds’ pioneering role. Clearly, further research into the roots of swing rhythm is required.

result in accented backbeats. Modern Drummer (1980b: 18) however, clarifies this issue:

Jones' hi-hat style has been characterized as swinging, driving but never obtrusive ... [his] early recordings with the Count Basie band clearly demonstrate his smooth and flowing hi-hat style which emphasized a longer, more open sound on 1 and 3, as opposed to a 2 and 4 emphasis.

Jones' hi-hat performances therefore, contributed to the maintenance of a flat four beat rather than emphasizing the backbeat. Musical evidence of this performance practice abounds in the recorded output of Jones. Indeed, a flat four swing rhythm on hi-hat characterizes many of Jones' swing era recordings, regardless of whether he was performing with small groups or big bands. For example, a swing rhythm on hi-hat can be clearly heard with the Count Basie Quartet through 1938 (e.g., *How Long Blues*, *The Dirty Dozen*, *Hey Lawdy Mama*, *The Fives*, *Boogie Woogie*, all recorded in N.Y., 1938), the Count Basie Orchestra (e.g. *Doggin' Around*, 1938, *Taxi War Dance*, 1939), Count Basie's Kansas City Seven (e.g. *Lester Leaps In*, 1939), and the Benny Goodman Sextet (e.g. *I Found a New Baby*, 1941 and *Breakfast Feud*, 1941). As we shall see, swing rhythm continued into the bebop era and co-defined bebop style. Firstly, however, we will conclude the above investigation of swing era drumming with reference to the occurrence of accented snare backbeat in some recorded swing era repertoire.

### **3.3.4 Conclusion: Backbeat in Swing Era Drumming.**

In reference to the previous discussion of swing era drumming, the following general conclusions regarding the roots of the rock'n'roll snare backbeat may be drawn:

- We have previously noted that when performing cymbal swing rhythms the drummers' free (and generally left) hand was able to engage in coordinated independence. Such coordinated independence sometimes resulted in

drummers hitting the hi-hat post on the backbeat, although this performance practice did not detract from the sounding of a flat four beat. At other times, some drummers consistently accented the backbeat on hi-hat or a choked cymbal throughout long structural sections of a recording. Such performance practice was common to Chicago style drumming and, in particular, the drumming of Gene Krupa;

- Chicago style drumming, exemplified in performances by Krupa and Barbarin, for example, also included accented snare backbeats in loud tutti sections, final choruses or instrumental solos. Such drumming derived from early jazz drumming in Chicago (as previously observed).

Mostly, swing era jazz drumming consisted of

- cymbal or hi-hat swing rhythm ostinati that did not emphasize backbeats;
- snare roll rhythms comprising single snare executions on pulses 1 and 3 and unaccented snare rolls on the backbeat;
- comping snare and bass drum executions that often punctuated or embellished horn rhythms.

### **3.4 Jazz Drumming: Bebop.**

As the big band era drew to a close during the early forties, many drummers were drawn to New York where a group of musicians, including Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell and Charlie Parker (“Bird”), were developing a new jazz style: bebop. Bebop was characterized by faster tempos and, in the case of ballads, much slower tempos than those generally required for dancing. It was however, fast tempo bebop that instigated a new approach to jazz drumming, as suggested in the following testimony of drummer Max Roach (as quoted in *Modern Drummer*, 1980c: 24) regarding his performance experience with Charlie Parker:

Bird's approach demanded new drumming concepts. He set tempos so fast, it was impossible to play a straight ... four style, so we had to work out variations.

By "straight four style" Roach is probably referring to bass drum rhythms on all four pulses which as we have noted was one characteristic of swing era flat four beats. Given this assumption, Roach is therefore suggesting in the above quote that faster tempos restricted the frequency of bass drum executions (a consequence arising from the physical limitations of executing bass drum rhythms with a foot-pedal). Thus, unable to execute bass drum rhythms on all four pulses at fast tempos, drummers were driven to "work out variations". But what "variations" did bebop drummers subsequently employ in order to adapt to fast tempos? Drummer Kenny Clarke is instructive on this point. Referring to "a real fast tune - *Old Man River*", Clarke (as quoted in Gitler, 1985: 55) notes that

the tempo was too fast to play four beats to the measure, so I began to cut the time up, you know, but to keep the same rhythm going, I had to do it with my hand, because my feet ... just wouldn't do it.

As intimated by Clarke, the development of be-bop drumming was characterized by the gradual removal of the bass drum from its time-keeping role of playing "four beats to the measure" to a level where it could freely punctuate rhythms or, in Clarke's words, "cut the time up." This performance practice is commonly referred to by drummers as "bombing" and is often used in conjunction with the snare drum (Brown, 1976: 463 and 482).

Aside from irregular bass drum rhythms, the consistent use of the ride cymbal also distinguished bebop from previous jazz styles. Ride cymbal rhythms created a wash of sound within the bebop ensemble and, as Clarke intimates (above) enabled the drummer to "keep the same rhythm going". Clarke is suggesting here that the timekeeping function of drumming, previously reserved for bass drum rhythms, was now transferred to cymbals. Indeed, by the mid 1940s the use of the ride cymbal or its absence was the major difference between the earlier swing era style and more modern

drumming techniques (Brown, 1976: 465). Although such swing drummers as Gene Krupa and Jo Jones occasionally made use of the ride cymbal in the late thirties, Brown (1976: 468) considers Dave Tough's drumming pioneering in regard to ride cymbal usage. Tough's tendency to prominently figure the ride cymbal can be discerned as early as 1937, particularly in his recordings with Tommy Dorsey, such as *Lookin' Around The Corner For You* and *Liebstraum*.<sup>66</sup>

Although Tough and other swing era drummers such as those previously mentioned laid a foundation for bebop drumming, many commentators agree that drummer Kenny Clarke was the first important drummer of the bebop era (Modern Drummer, 1980c: 23) and its undisputed founding father (Owens, 1995: 181; Brown, 1976: 476). Kenny Clarke's drumming on *Si Si* (Charlie Parker Quintet, New York, 1951) can be considered as a representative example of bebop drumming and, as evident in the short notated excerpt (see Figure 3.29) displays many of the previously mentioned bebop drumming characteristics.

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<sup>66</sup>Tough favoured an old cymbal, made in China that, by the forties was unavailable. It was very thin and riveted, produced a thin wash of sound and lacked the "gong" sound of similar ride or riveted cymbals of that period (Defaa, 1987:28).

The image displays a musical score for a drumming excerpt from the song "Si Si" by Charlie Parker. The score is written on six staves, numbered 6 through 18. The tempo is indicated as quarter note = 186. The music is in 4/4 time and features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and accents, characteristic of bebop drumming. The notation includes various rhythmic figures and accents, with some notes marked with a '3' indicating a triplet. The score is presented in a standard musical notation format with a treble clef and a common time signature.

Figure 3.29 Charlie Parker Quintet with Kenny Clarke (drums): *Si Si* (New York, 1951, drumming excerpt).

As evident in Figure 3.29, Clarke has shifted the timekeeping function of the bass drum to the cymbal, which mostly maintains the pulse by a consistent use of both crotchet and swing rhythms.<sup>67</sup> Here, the relationship between late 1930s swing era cymbal usage and bebop drumming is explicit. In contrast to swing era drumming, the bass drum is now utilized for single accents (bombs), sometimes functioning as terminal rhythmic events to snare rhythms and single (and usually off-pulse) snare executions, thus supporting Brown's (1976: 463 and 482) idea, as previously noted, that bass drum bombs are often used in conjunction with the snare drum. Notated excerpts of Clarke's bebop drumming appearing in published accounts display similar

<sup>67</sup>It is possible that an open hi-hat was incorporated in bars 7-17 of *Si Si*. or, alternately, the outer rim of the ride cymbal was struck.

characteristics<sup>68</sup> and other recordings by prominent bebop musicians reveal comparable drumming concepts.<sup>69</sup>

During the 1950s, bebop drumming included an additional rhythmic element: pedal-operated hi-hat rhythms that were sharply closed on the backbeat (Modern Drummer, 1980c: 23). Examples here include Max Roach drumming with Sonny Rollins' Plus Four on *Count Your Blessings*, *I Feel a Song Comin' On*, *Kiss and Run*, *Pent-up House* (all recorded in 1956 and consisting of swing rhythms on ride cymbal, comping snare drum and hi-hat executions sharply closed on backbeats). Such backbeat hi-hat rhythms, however, might have been informed by emphatic snare backbeat rhythms which, by the mid-1950s, were a characteristic feature of rock'n'roll drumming.

In contrast to the rhythmic complexity of bebop drumming as previously described, the development of cool jazz during the late 1940s and early '50s - pioneered by musicians such as Stan Getz, Lennie Tristano and Miles Davis - called for comparatively rhythmically restricted drum beats. As Owens (1995: 144) notes, cool jazz often involved "simple time-keeping with brushes" by "inconspicuous drummers" and, therefore, lacked the varied rhythm activity and reliance on coordinated independence characteristic of bebop drumming style. For example, Denzil Best, drumming with Lennie Tristano on *Marionette* (N.Y., 1949), performs a snare with brushes rhythm

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<sup>68</sup>See, for example, Owens (1995: 183) and Modern Drummer (1980c: 23).

<sup>69</sup>Other examples of swing-based cymbal rhythms and snare/bass drum bombing include the following fast tempo examples: *Koko* (Max Roach drumming with Charlie Parker's Re-Boppers, n.d.), *Shaw 'Nuff* (Sidney Catlett drumming with the Dizzy Gillespie All Star Quintette, 1945), *Dizzy Atmosphere* (Cozy Cole drumming with the Dizzy Gillespie Sextet with, N.Y., 1945), *Salt Peanuts* (Sidney Catlett drumming with the Dizzy Gillespie All Star Quintet N.Y., 1945), *Crazeology* (Max Roach drumming with the Charlie Parker Sextet, 1947), *Move* (Max Roach with the Miles Davis Band, N.Y., 1949) and also the slower number: *Boplicity* (Kenny Clarke drumming with Miles Davis and his Orchestra, 1949). In the latter, it is mostly the harmonies and irregularity of phrasing which identifies it as bebop. The drumming itself is reminiscent of previous swing styles in its use of a swing rhythm and very occasional snare punctuations.

which evenly executes all four pulses. No bass drum or cymbal rhythms can be heard in this recording.<sup>70</sup> At other times, drum beats were characterized by hi-hat or cymbal rhythms with little snare drum rhythmic activity. For example, Buddy Rich, performing with the Lester Young Trio, executes a hi-hat on all four pulses rhythm with very occasional and usually off-pulse comping snare rhythms performed with brushes on *Back To The Land* (L.A., 1946) and *Somebody Loves Me* (L.A., 1946).

#### **3.4.1 Conclusion: Backbeat in Bebop Drumming.**

It is evident from the above that bebop drumming had shed much of its reliance on both military-type rudimental drumming, evident in swing era snare roll rhythms, and drum ostinati. Rather, by the early forties drumming patterns became more oriented to an orchestral conception and heavily relied on coordinated independence to achieve varied rhythms. Consequently, the following conclusions regarding the occurrence of backbeats in bebop drumming may be drawn:

- although comping snare rhythms might occasionally fall on the backbeat, consistent snare executions on the backbeat were not characteristic of bebop drumming;
- bass drum, cymbal and hi-hat rhythms did not emphasize the backbeat.

Generally, bebop drumming involved the following general stylistic characteristics:

- bass drum rhythms executed on all four pulses, which were commonly employed by the swing band drummer, gave way to a more subtle and sporadic punctuations;
- cymbal and hi-hat rhythms, comprising executions on all four pulses or swing rhythms, provided a time-keeping function.

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<sup>70</sup>Don Lamond drumming with Woody Herman's Second Herd performs a similar drum beat on *Early Autumn* (1948).



In reference to other accompanimental activity, the liberation of drummers from their metronomic role forced the double bassist into sharing more of the timekeeping burden. As Owens (1995: 179) notes, “most early bebop bassists were time-keepers primarily” and it wasn’t until the 1950s that bebop bass playing was “pushed on to higher levels of virtuosity.” Consequently, walking bass - a characteristic of late swing era accompaniments - continued to feature in bebop beats. Contrariwise, piano accompaniments featured off-pulse rhythms perhaps reflecting the irregular rhythms included in snare and bass drum performances (see Owens, 1995: 138-166 for notated examples and discussion of bebop piano accompaniments).<sup>71</sup> Although Owens (1995: 141) notes that stride piano accompaniments were retained by some bebop pianists, such as Thelonious Monk, backbeat emphasis was not a characteristic feature of bebop piano accompanimental style.

So far our attempt to locate the rhythmic roots of rock’n’roll has involved investigating musics from the late nineteenth century to around the mid nineteen forties. We have identified some prominent accompanimental rhythms in pre-jazz styles and have notated and discussed some paradigmatic drumming styles in various jazz forms dating from around the 1910s up to and including the 1940s. In order to advance our survey of the rhythmic roots of rock’n’roll we must now investigate drumming and other accompanimental rhythms in precursory rock’n’roll musical styles. Our survey, therefore, will focus on U.S.A. musics comprising the decade beginning from around the mid-1940s.

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<sup>71</sup>Walking bass, off-pulse piano accompaniments and ride cymbal ostinati can be clearly heard in the following recordings by Charlie Parker and His Orchestra: *Au Privave* (N.Y., 1951), *Back Home Blues* (N.Y., 1951), *Blues For Alice* (N.Y., 1951), *K.C. Blues* (N.Y., 1951) *She Rote* (N.Y., 1959), *Si Si* (N.Y., 1951), *Sitar Eyes* (N.Y., 1951), *Swedish Schnapps* (N.Y., 1951), *What Is This Thing Called Love* (N.Y., 1952).

## Chapter Four

### 4.1 Rhythmic Roots of Rock'n'Roll: From the mid-1940s to the Rock'n'Roll era.

Given the propinquity of the late 1940s and early fifties to the rock'n'roll era it would be reasonable to assume that some rhythmic congruences existed between these periods. Indeed, those youngest participants of rock'n'roll - including drummers - were learning and developing their musical craft during the late forties.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, it is useful to identify some precursory musical styles that may have figured in the accrual of their musical knowledge and drumming technique. We must also remember that many rock'n'roll performers - such as Bill Haley and Fats Domino among others - were musically active during this period. What musical styles, then, are manifest in the extant recordings of such musicians and what, if any, drumming rhythms co-defining these styles were subsequently adopted, adapted or discarded during the course of rock'n'roll's rhythmic development?

A review of the existing body of knowledge concerning the musical roots of rock'n'roll can provide a starting point for our investigation. We will briefly investigate some published accounts concerning the musical roots of rock'n'roll and then determine which musical genres - according to such accounts - prominently figured in the development of rock'n'roll musical style. An account of characteristic accompanimental rhythms comprising such genres will then be undertaken.

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<sup>1</sup>The drummer Jimmy Van Eaton, for example, was around nineteen years old when he first recorded with Jerry Lee Lewis in 1956.

## 4.2 Rock'n'roll's Musical Precursors.

In his seminal book The Sound Of The City, Gillett (1983: 23) is forthright regarding the musical style that preceded and informed the development of rock'n'roll:

In the years 1954 to 1956, there were five distinctive styles [of rock'n'roll] . . . . All five styles, and the variants associated with each of them, depended for their dance beat on contemporary Negro dance rhythms.

Gillett's reference to "contemporary Negro dance rhythms" is not qualified in his subsequent discussion of rock'n'roll's "five distinctive" styles. However, later in his text, Gillett (1983: 121) clarifies for the reader the particular precursory rock'n'roll music genre which informed the development of rock'n'roll as a musical style:

the roots of rock'n'roll are mainly to be found in rhythm and blues music, a term which, like the later expression rock'n'roll, was coined to provide a convenient catch-all description for several distinct musical styles.

His subsequent discussion of rhythm and blues includes brief explication of some general musical features that, according to Gillett, were important to the development of rock'n'roll's distinctive styles. For example, Gillett locates some roots of rock'n'roll vocal style in rhythm and blues and further notes that direct contributions to the vocal style of rock'n'roll were made by singers who "cried" rather than "shouted" the blues. Here, Gillett is referring to such singers as Roy Brown who "pioneered the style" (ibid.: 130). Another example concerns Wynonie Harris' fast tempo recordings, such as *Good Rockin' Tonight*, that are deemed influential by Gillett in the development of a "northern band style" of rock'n'roll (ibid.: 129). We will later investigate some rhythmic - including drumming - characteristics comprising the "distinct musical styles" of rhythm and blues and explore relationships between such characteristics and the rock'n'roll beat.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime, it is important to note that Gillett is not conceiving rhythm and blues and rock'n'roll as stylistically synonymous. Rather, Gillett intimates

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<sup>2</sup>In particular, we will explore some early instances of backbeats in rhythm and blues recordings and focus on one particular rhythm and blues musician that Gillett considers influential to the development of rock'n'roll beat.

that rhythm and blues prefigured the development of rock'n'roll in the sense that particular stylistic attributes, such as vocal technique and fast tempo (as cited above), were subsequently adopted by rock'n'roll musicians. As will become evident below, other rock commentators locate the roots of rock'n'roll in rhythm and blues and, in keeping with Gillett's explication, differentiate between these two music genres.

In his investigation of popular music within the period 1950 to 1953, Mooney (1974: 98) notes that

rhythm and blues and rock and roll are not automatically one and the same. Rock and roll (I speak of the dancing music of 1954-1963) is strongly derived from R & B but "whitened." Played or sung by Presley, Buddy Holly, even commercially successful black rockers like Fats Domino and Chubby Checker, rock and roll subtly betrayed a white "country" approach in such ways as vocal inflection, guitar and piano techniques, and a simpler, often jerkier rhythm. Rock and roll and R & B thus tended for some time toward separate identity and separate racial markets.

It is evident from the above that Mooney considers rhythm and blues integral to the development of rock'n'roll but believes that the latter genre displays a "white country approach" which serves to differentiate it from rhythm and blues. It is important for the reader to be informed of some specific musical characteristics of such "whiteness" and how these characteristics are "subtly betrayed" in rock'n'roll as opposed to rhythm and blues. Surely, such information is necessary before the reader can accept Mooney's notion that "rhythm and blues and rock and roll are not automatically one and the same"? From a musical-structural standpoint, Mooney's reference to rock'n'roll's "simpler, jerkier rhythm" does not advance our understanding of rock'n'roll's "white country approach". Let us explore some other accounts in the hope that they might clarify matters concerning the roots of rock and roll.

Wicke (1991:35) locates the roots of rock'n'roll in rhythm and blues but, in contrast to Gillett (1983) and Mooney (1974), suggests that rhythm and blues and rock'n'roll are identical styles:

what teenagers considered to be “their” music was already in existence and hardly changed: Afro-American rhythm and blues, a post-war development of the city blues idiom and country music from the rural south. The only thing that was different about it was its description - rock’n’roll.

Such a notion is also supported by Redd. Writing in 1974, Redd considered that the only difference between rhythm and blues and rock’n’roll lay in the colour (“black” or “white”) of the musicians who performed and subsequently became associated with each descriptor:

America has long separated rhythm and blues, a single musical idiom, into rock and roll as a euphemism for white, with rhythm and blues indicating black. And for far too long America has, for the most part, credited young white America with creating rock and roll (Redd, 1974: xi).<sup>3</sup>

More recent accounts affirm Redd’s notion that rhythm and blues and rock’n’roll are stylistically identical. Hoffman (1983: 13), for instance, states that

The preexistence of certain styles - particularly rhythm and blues styles - forms the basis for an opinion that, rather than a fusion of rural black and white musics, rock’n’roll is a simple white co-optation of the blues. After all, archetypical rock’n’roll records by Fats Domino, Little Richard and Chuck Berry were released in the rhythm and blues market well before the entrance of white musicians, and Domino himself appears in documentary film footage from the fifties explaining that he has always played “this kind of music” but he always knew it as rhythm and blues, and “now they’re calling it rock’n’roll”.

Here, Hoffman’s statement that “rock’n’roll is a simple white co-optation of the blues” requires qualification. Presumably, by referring to “blues” Hoffman is intimating “rhythm and blues”. Indeed, Hoffman’s citing of Fats Domino, Little Richard and Chuck Berry as representative rock’n’roll artists whose recordings were initially released in the “rhythm and blues” market qualifies his earlier reference to “blues”.<sup>4</sup> By positing that “archetypical” rock’n’roll recordings by “black” musicians were released

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<sup>3</sup>Redd subsequently attributes the mass media as having a central role in the appropriation and re-naming of rhythm and blues as “rock’n’roll” and, further, charges the mass media as having distorted the history of “black” music in America. He states, for example, that

Mass media have not only brainwashed white America into thinking that their youngsters of the 1950s developed a new musical culture, they have left a desolate imprint upon the lives of Africans in America (1974: 77).

<sup>4</sup>The inclusion of Fats Domino’s remark regarding rhythm and blues (as previously cited by Hoffman, 1983: 13 above) also positions Hoffman’s earlier reference to “blues” within its proper generic context.

in the rhythm and blues market well before the entrance of “white” musicians, Hoffman is suggesting, therefore, that Domino, Richard and Berry were recording rock’n’roll well before the term “rock’n’roll” had been coined to describe such music.

Unfortunately, the reader is not informed of the “archetypical” rock’n’roll recordings that Hoffman has in mind. Similarly, Hoffman’s citing of Fats Domino lacks any musical-structural basis for further analytic inquiry. Domino’s remark, as quoted by Hoffman above, is nonetheless revealing in its inference that rhythm and blues and rock’n’roll are identical styles.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps other prominent musicians from the late 1940s can assist us in locating some direct musical influences on the development of rock’n’roll.

In considering the roots of rock’n’roll, the tenor saxophonist and band leader Louis Jordan - a popular musical figure of the 1940s<sup>6</sup> - noted that

Rock’n’roll was not a marriage of rhythm and blues and country and western. That’s white publicity. Rock’n’roll was just a white imitation, a white adaptation of Negro rhythm and blues (Louis Jordan as quoted in Shaw 1978: 73).

Jordan does not explicate the reasons underpinning his point of view, nor present the reader with any musical features that support his conclusion. However, some musical specificity is offered by Johnny Otis - referred to as “the grandfather of rhythm and

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<sup>5</sup>Some rhythm and blues commentators agree with this notion. For example, George (1988: 68) considers that the early recorded repertoire of Fats Domino and Little Richard, recorded before the term “rock’n’roll” gained national coverage, “don’t differ radically from what they made later.” Byrnside (1975: 177) similarly notes that “the stylistic terms rhythm and blues and rock’n’roll have on occasion been used interchangeably; in fact, to a considerable extent the former term overlaps the latter both chronologically and stylistically. In the case of some songs from the period around 1953 to 1956, it becomes somewhat academic to argue which of the two terms is more appropriate.”

<sup>6</sup>Louis Jordan’s recordings sold around five million copies between 1938 and 1946. Such commercial popularity is reflected by the production of a series of motion picture shorts, subsidized by BMI, featuring Jordan performing newly recorded material.

blues” by Hardy and Laing (1990: 606)<sup>7</sup> - who, in contrast to Jordan’s opinion, states that rock’n’roll is a “direct *outgrowth* of R & B” and subsequently notes that

It took over all the things that made R & B different from big band swing: the after-beat on a steady four; the influence of boogie; the triplets on piano; eight-to-the-bar on the top-hat cymbal; and the shuffle pattern of dotted eighth and sixteenth notes (Johnny Otis as quoted in Shaw, 1978: 165).

Here we have slightly differing points of view from two prominent musicians active during the 1940s concerning the influence of rhythm and blues to the development of rock’n’roll. Jordan considers rock’n’roll as a “white imitation” of rhythm and blues while Otis considers rock’n’roll as a “direct outgrowth” of rhythm and blues style.

Otis’s account is comparatively musically instructive and, given that Otis was a drummer, pianist and vibraphonist, there is little reason to doubt his musical judgement concerning those rhythmic characteristics that were taken over by rock’n’roll, even though some descriptors - such as “after-beat” - suffer from a lack of precise musical explication.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, one must not ignore the opinion of Louis Jordan, also an experienced and contemporaneous musician.

It is clear even from this brief survey of published accounts that a relationship exists between rock’n’roll and rhythm and blues and that some commentators even go as far to suggest that rhythm and blues and rock’n’roll are stylistically synonymous. If we consider, then, that rhythm and blues is an important precursor to rock’n’roll and rock’n’roll’s defining characteristic is its backbeat - as previously discussed in chapters one and two - then it would be reasonable to assume that the backbeat can be found in rhythm and blues. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of writings discussing rhythm and

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<sup>7</sup>Such a title was possibly influenced by Otis’ succession of eight rhythm and blues hits recorded for Savoy records in 1950 and also his consistent involvement with performing and recording rhythm and blues throughout the 1940s and ‘50s.

<sup>8</sup>Also, the difference between “eight-to-the-bar” and “shuffle” rhythms is not made entirely clear by Otis. It is possible that Otis is referring to even quaver rhythms as “eight-to-the-bar” and thereby attempting to delineate such rhythms from long-short or “shuffle” type rhythms. We will later discuss the frequency of occurrence of even quaver and shuffle rhythms in rhythm and blues drumming.

blues as musical style. It is therefore necessary to undertake a broad sampling of rhythm and blues recordings in order to establish the occurrence of such stylistic attributes as the backbeat. This will be undertaken subsequent to our current investigation of other published accounts concerning the musical roots of rock and roll.

We can notice from some previously cited accounts that commentators have, albeit obliquely, referenced country music in their discussion of the roots of rock'n'roll. Mooney (1974: 98), for instance, suggests that a "white country approach" is inherent in the style of particular rock'n'roll musicians and Jordan (as quoted in Shaw, 1978: 73) mentions country and western music in his discussion of rock'n'roll as a "white" rhythm and blues imitation.<sup>9</sup> Other accounts located are comparatively more direct regarding the influence of country music on the development of rock'n'roll. Byrnside (1975: 175), for example, after noting that the roots of rock'n'roll can be found in rhythm and blues, states that

Less closely related, but nevertheless very important in the formation of rock'n'roll, are certain elements from a broad style once known as hillbilly music, but now called country and western music.

The "hillbilly" or "country and western music" influence is noted by many other commentators and also in conjunction with discussions concerning the importance of rhythm and blues to the development of rock'n'roll.<sup>10</sup> Other accounts go as far to

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<sup>9</sup>See page 215.

<sup>10</sup>Other accounts not previously mentioned include Belz (1969: 16-25) who discusses the beginnings of rock by briefly reviewing three "fields" of popular music that informed rock'n'roll's development: the pop field, rhythm and blues field and country and western field. Malone (1974: 241) considers the formation of rock'n'roll involved a marriage between country music and rhythm and blues and further notes that such a conflation of genres was "perhaps inevitable" given the "vigorous musical interchange" between "southern Negroes and whites". Fish (1982b) discusses at length the "country influence" in his history of rock drumming, noting at the outset that "country music was the second source of inspiration for rock music" (ibid.: 16). Fish's "first source" of inspiration was rhythm and blues, as discussed in Fish (1982a). Charleton (1990), who devotes one chapter of her book to the country roots of rock, also includes a chapter focussing on blues, including rhythm and blues (Charleton, 1990: 14-36). Brown (1992) notes that "too little is made of country music's influence on rock'n'roll, probably because of an unwillingness on the part of 'hip' writers to accept the significance of white influence on early rock musicians" (ibid.: 37). Ironically, Brown devotes most of his chapter



declare a stylistic bifurcation of rock'n'roll based upon notions concerning the influence of precursory styles. For example, the Penguin Encyclopedia of Popular Music declares that

Rock'n'roll began with white people playing rhythm'n'blues in the mid-50s; the part of it influenced by country music was called rockabilly (Clarke [ed.], 1989: 994).

What criteria, then, inform such bifurcation of rock'n'roll into, firstly, rock'n'roll as developed from rhythm and blues; and secondly, early rockabilly, which is largely informed by a country and western influence?

Clarke (1995: 374-380) discusses the recorded repertoire of Chuck Berry, Fats Domino and Little Richard in relation to rhythm and blues derived rock'n'roll style and notes that rock'n'roll was also coming from another direction, the "hillbilly cats who invented rockabilly" (Clarke, 1995: 380). A discussion of selected recordings by Bill Haley, Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis and Buddy Holly ensues in Clarke's account. Such recordings are presumably presented as representative of rockabilly style but any stylistic delineation amongst rockabilly, rock'n'roll and rhythm and blues is not forthcoming.<sup>11</sup> Gillett (1983: 29) posits Presley's *You're A Heartbreaker* and Carl Perkins' *Blue Suede Shoes* as exemplars of rockabilly style,<sup>12</sup> but his notion is at odds with Malone (1974: 146) who states that both Presley and Perkins "performed

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titled "the sources of rock" (22-36) to Afro-American musical styles and only briefly discusses the influence of country music - his "white influence" - to the formation of rock'n'roll.

<sup>11</sup>For example, Clarke (1995: 380) notes that country music had been directly influenced by "black music." A brief reference to western swing and "country boogie" follows, thereby qualifying to some extent what is meant by "black music", however, the relationship between such styles and subsequent rock'n'roll or rockabilly styles remains unclear in Clarke's account.

<sup>12</sup>Similarly, Hopkins (1972: 62) discusses Presley's early Memphis recordings - such as *All Right Mama* and *Blue Moon of Kentucky* - within the context of rockabilly style.

rock and roll extensively”.<sup>13</sup> The stylistic features underpinning Gillett’s classification of musicians as rockabilly - “much looser rhythms, no saxophones, nor any chorus singing” (Gillett, 1983: 29) - are applied to Chicago rhythm and blues, exemplified by Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley, the latter musicians of which Gillett (ibid.: 30) notes are the “nearest equivalent to rockabilly among black styles”. In making such a statement, Gillett is excluding as “near to rockabilly” such recordings as Bo Diddley’s *Diddley Daddy* (Chicago, 1955), *Hey! Bo Diddley* (Chicago, 1957) and *Oh Yea* (Chicago, 1958), among many others, all of which include chorus singing. This raises some doubt about Gillett’s idea of rockabilly “equivalences” to Chicago rhythm and blues style. Further, Gillett’s reference to the “loose rhythms” of rockabilly is musically-structurally unclear and questions regarding his opinion of the rockabilly influence on Chicago rhythm and blues musical style logically arise. For instance, how are Chuck Berry’s rhythms much “looser” than those of other Chicago rhythm and blues musicians, such as Muddy Waters?

We have noted so far that some commentators consider country and western music influential to the development of rockabilly - presumably a country and western music informed stylistic offshoot of rock’n’roll - while others regard country and western music as precursory to rock’n’roll’s development but intrinsic to rock’n’roll as musical style. It is also evident from our brief investigation that the descriptor “rockabilly” suffers from, firstly, a lack of precise musical-structural explication and, secondly, inconsistency among commentators concerning which particular musicians and their recordings exemplify the style. Leaving aside the confusion resulting from commentators’ disparate notions of rockabilly, it is nonetheless evident that country and western music somehow figured in the development of rock’n’roll. Although

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<sup>13</sup>Malone (1974: 246) cites the Everly Brothers and Sonny James (James Loden) as exemplars of rockabilly style. Laing (1971: 23), in discussing the early recordings of Buddy Holly and Bob Montgomery, prefers to avoid clear distinction between rock’n’roll and rockabilly styles by noting that such recordings have “become clearly rock’n’roll or rockabilly in style.”

commentators differ in their opinion regarding the extent to which country and western, rockabilly and rock'n'roll are stylistically related, we will proceed from the assumption that musical-structural relationships exist amongst these genres.

Having identified two main precursory musical genres - rhythm and blues, and country and western - as important to the development of rock'n'roll, we will now investigate the rhythmic characteristics of each in order to locate and subsequently discuss rhythmic congruences relating to the development of the rock'n'roll backbeat. Our investigation will include brief reference to the development of rhythm and blues and country and western music in order to make clear the musical style to which we are referring.

### **4.3 Rhythmic Roots of Rock'n'Roll: Rhythm and Blues**

The decade following the end of the Second World War and immediately preceding the rock'n'roll era saw the rise of a popular music form that was mostly characterized by its performance by Afro-American musicians. Unable to settle on one music descriptor to classify this music, popular music writers of the period, and particularly those associated with record companies and Billboard magazine, variously labelled black music as "race", "sepia" or "ebony" music.<sup>14</sup> Such racially loaded descriptors were discarded in 1949 by Billboard magazine and replaced without editorial comment by a "rhythm and blues" hit list.<sup>15</sup> The descriptor "rhythm and blues" was still applied to a

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<sup>14</sup>MGM records promoted black music as "ebony" while Decca and Capitol records preferred the term "sepia". Billboard magazine included a "race" music chart in their publication prior to adopting the term "rhythm and blues".

<sup>15</sup>Guralnick (1986: 22) states that Jerry Wexler, a reporter for Billboard magazine, came up with the "more dignified - and descriptive - term".

wide variety of predominantly “black musics”<sup>16</sup> from the period but, unlike the former terms, it lacked explicit racial connotation. It was also a suitable term in the sense that its usage covered a music market that by the mid 1940s was becoming increasingly popular with white audiences.

As we shall see, “rhythm and blues” - in its contemporary usage - is applied to particular black music styles dating from the 1940s previously known as “race” “sepia” or “ebony” music. But what features of this music serve as criteria for its classification as rhythm and blues? Surely, the fact that the music was largely performed by black musicians was not the only factor in its classification? If such was the case, then bebop, for example, - initially a black music style as performed by artists such as Charlie Parker and Miles Davis - should more correctly be classified as rhythm and blues. As evident from our previous discussion of jazz rhythm however, the term “bebop” infers some distinctive musical characteristics. It would stand to reason that the classification of black popular musics from the 1940s as “rhythm and blues” - previously classified as “race”, “sepia” or “ebony” music - similarly involves a set of general stylistic traits. What, then, are some general stylistic characteristics of rhythm and blues?

Many English language accounts of rhythm and blues are devoted to explicating generic rather than stylistic attributes. Broven (1983) and Hannusch (1987), for example, concern themselves with biographic details of selected New Orleans rhythm and blues musicians and outline the development of independent record labels that marketed rhythm and blues recordings. Stylistic traits of rhythm and blues are not forthcoming in such texts. Similarly, Guralnick (1986) mostly focuses on the careers of prominent musicians, including those associated with “soul music” which, according to

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<sup>16</sup>For purposes of brevity, I shall use this term to denote music produced mainly by Afro-American residents in the U.S.A..

Guralnick, represents a later stage of rhythm and blues' development. Although some references to musical characteristics are sprinkled throughout Guralnick's text, they are generally brief, cursory and not musically substantiated. However, one cursory musical reference directly relates to our study of rhythm and blues and rock'n'roll rhythms. In discussing the development of rhythm and blues during the early fifties, Guralnick (1986: 22) notes that

Rhythm and blues up until this point had been pretty much what the term suggests: an uptempo, or at least rhythmically modernized (the introduction of the heavy backbeat was a direct precursor of rock'n'roll), variation on the bedrock of the blues.

Guralnick's reference to a "heavy backbeat" is significant in that it locates the roots of one prominent characteristic of rock'n'roll beat in early 1950s rhythm and blues. In keeping with his other cursory references to musical features, however, Guralnick's reference lacks musical specificity. For instance, what instrument executes the heavy backbeat and precisely when was the backbeat introduced in rhythm and blues?<sup>17</sup> In order to answer these and other questions regarding rhythm and beat in rhythm and blues, it is clear that we need to locate published accounts that approach the subject from a stylistic perspective.

Two authors, in particular, discuss rhythm and blues in some detail. Shaw (1970, 1975, 1978 and 1986) has written extensively on the subject and with some musical depth while Gillett (1983) offers a detailed account of the different "kinds" of rhythm and blues as they existed and developed during the 1940s and '50s. In order to better understand some stylistic traits of rhythm and blues, we will firstly examine Shaw's conception of the genre and then investigate other accounts - including Gillett's (1983) classification of musics within rhythm and blues style - that include stylistic

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<sup>17</sup>Marshall and Jean Stearns (1994: 2) similarly note that rhythm and blues was characterized by a "big (and often mushy and monotonous) off-beat" in their discussion of the roots of rock and roll. Such descriptors similarly lack musical-structural depth. For example, what instrument performed an "off-beat" and what musical-structural constituents made this "off-beat" "big", "mushy" and "monotonous"?

considerations.<sup>18</sup>

Shaw (1986: 166) defines rhythm and blues

as an indigenous black music played by small combos in which the downbeat accents of popular music (1 2 3 4) are superseded by strongly accented upbeats or afterbeats (1 2 3 4) and in which singers abandoned the resonant vibrato of Pop singing for a raw, shouting style.<sup>19</sup>

In regard to locating the rhythmic roots of rock'n'roll, Shaw's reference to backbeats ("upbeats or afterbeats") is of particular importance to our investigation. Is it the drummer? If so, on which percussion instruments (drums or cymbals) are backbeats executed? If not, then on what instruments are these "strongly accented upbeats" performed? Alternately, we might be misconstruing Shaw's conception of rhythm and blues beat. Shaw's discussion of accented backbeats might not relate to one specific rhythmic feature but rather, refer to a general rhythmic proclivity evident in the arrangements or improvisations of accompanying instruments. Perhaps Shaw offers some musical-structural detail regarding the orchestration of backbeats elsewhere.

Shaw's positing of "accented upbeats or afterbeats" as one dominant characteristic of rhythm and blues comprises his earlier discussions of the genre, including Shaw (1970) and also Shaw (1975). In reference to the latter, Shaw locates backbeats in "dance combo" accompanied blues styles of such singers as Muddy Waters and also rhythm and blues recordings previously known as "sepia, race and harlem" (Shaw, 1975: 87). His subsequent discussion of the backbeat accords with that presented in Shaw (1986) but affords some reference to instrumentation:

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<sup>18</sup>Another detailed account of rhythm and blues is offered by Fish (1982a) who discusses "blues" drumming - by which he infers "rhythm and blues" drumming - as it existed during the fifties. We will refer to Fish's work later in this chapter. Firstly, however, it is necessary to examine 1940s rhythm and blues beats - a topic that is neglected by Fish in his explication of the history of rock drumming.

<sup>19</sup>Byrnside (1975: 177) also considers the backbeat as central to rhythm and blues style. In his diagram illustrating the "pattern of accents" that became a "trademark of the style", pulses two and four are highlighted and, according to Byrnside, are "sharply accented" in performance.

[Rhythm and blues] was sensual, good-time music for dancing and revelry. Even the ballads of frustrated and embittered love bounced with a resounding backbeat. It is strange that this most patent departure from pop has not been given more attention by historians. For fifty years of popular song, piano, bass, and drums played *OOM-pa, OOM-pa*, stressing the first and third beats of a measure. R & B was *oom-PAH, oom-PAH*, reviving the afterbeat stress of New Orleans and Dixieland jazz heard today on rock records. Rhythmically, R & B also brought back boogie and shuffle - the rolling eight-note figuration in the bass and the wailing blue notes in the melody - a sound absent from white pop since the 1930s (Shaw, 1975: 87).

The rhythmic characteristics of rhythm and blues expressed by Shaw above - an afterbeat stress (projected by the piano, bass and drums), boogie and shuffle rhythms - are summations of his 1970 account.<sup>20</sup> Here, Shaw (1970: 97-98) also includes some albeit musically discursive discussion of “boogie” and “shuffle” rhythms<sup>21</sup> but offers

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<sup>20</sup>Shaw (1970: 97) also includes some historical discussion of the backbeat when comparing the “beat” of rhythm and blues to the “swing beat” of swing era jazz:

R & B took off where swing left the beat. Technically, the swing beat is a four-to-the-bar pattern, with accents being rather evenly distributed on the four: 1, 2, 3, 4. That’s what one hears in Benny Goodman’s *Stompin’ At The Savoy*, Glenn Miller’s *In The Mood* and *Little Brown Jug*, Tommy Dorsey’s swinging *Marie* and all the hit numbers, slow or fast, of the 1936-to-1945 era. It is heard also in the music of the men who originated swing - the black bands of Fletcher Henderson, Count Basie, Jimmie Lunceford, and the hundreds of territorial aggregations that played in the shadows of the white name bands. Black swing tended to embody an additional rhythmic factor. Extra stress on the second and fourth beats of a measure superimposed a two-beat feel on the chugging four. It was this afterbeat stress, previously heard in New Orleans and Dixieland jazz, that R & B took over.

We have noted in chapter three that drumming in New Orleans and Dixieland jazz rarely included any consistent execution on the snare backbeat but, rather, featured texturally dense and generally syncopated rhythmic activity. Presumably, then, by referring to an “afterbeat stress” in New Orleans and Dixieland jazz, Shaw is referring to the tendency of the early jazz pianist, guitarist or banjo player to vamp chords on pulses two and four while tonic bass notes were performed on pulses one and three, either by the left-hand of the pianist, tubist or double bassist. Perhaps Shaw is suggesting that such an “afterbeat stress” was adopted by rhythm and blues drummers? If this is so, then the lineage of the “afterbeat” - from Dixieland jazz to rhythm and blues - was, according to Shaw “Black swing” that “tended to embody an additional rhythmic factor. Extra stress on the second and fourth beats of a measure.” Shaw provides the reader with no evidence of this rhythmic occurrence in “Black swing” nor clearly states which instrument provides the backbeat.

We have previously noted in our discussion of jazz drumming during the swing era that many commentators credit Krupa with propagating accented snare backbeats. In the light of such accounts, it would seem that Shaw’s remark regarding backbeats in “Black swing” relates to other accompanying instruments. However, whether Shaw intends the reader to draw such conclusions is uncertain.

<sup>21</sup>Shaw (1970: 97-98) expounds the rhythmic quality of boogie and shuffle rhythms in written prose rather than musical notation. He does, however, clarify for the reader aspects of instrumentation and the relationship of such rhythms to rock’n’roll:

Metrically, R & B owes an even greater debt to boogie-woogie, the black ghetto piano style that enjoyed a great vogue in the twenties .... Boogie-woogie is, of course, an eight-to-the-bar pattern, as swing was metrically four to the bar: 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and. By the mid-fifties a

one other example of a common rhythm and blues rhythm:

R & B also brought to the rise of a twelve-to-the-bar sound: 1 2 3, 1 2 3, 1 2 3, 1 2 3, in which the “1’s” are accented. *Whether you recognize the notation or not, you know the sound as the omnipresent, hammering, high-register piano triplets of early rock’n’roll (Shaw, 1970: 98).*

It is evident from the above that Shaw has neglected a detailed account of rhythm and blues drumming. For example, what cymbal rhythms did the drummer perform and upon which item of percussive hardware were backbeats executed? Shaw does, however, mention some paradigmatic accompanimental rhythm and blues rhythms, namely 1) accenting of the backbeat, 2) shuffle and 3) triplet rhythms, the latter two of which are mostly discussed within the context of piano accompaniments. Although Shaw does not examine thoroughly the characteristics he enumerates, these nonetheless provide a starting point for an examination of rhythm and blues drumming.

Relationships between Shaw’s rhythmic paradigms and rhythm and blues drumming will be discussed later in this chapter. In the meantime, we will briefly investigate Gillett’s account of rhythm and blues styles.

We have previously noted that Gillett considers rhythm and blues as a catch-all description for several distinct musical styles. According to Gillett (1983: 123), the decade after the Second World War comprised five main “kinds” of rhythm and blues:

1. dancehall blues;
2. club blues;
3. bar blues; and

“two kinds of music that developed which were not strictly blues”:

4. “various kinds of singing”; and

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syncopated variant of 8/8, also used in boogie, took possession of R & B - and incidently of early rock’n’roll. Instead of spacing the eight notes evenly, the stress on the ‘ands’ was lightened and their duration shortened: 1 ... and 2 ... and 3 ... and 4 ... and . Here we have a shuffle or stomp style, a rhythm audible in virtually all the early hits of Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Fats Domino.



5. “gospel-based styles” (ibid.).

The categories referred to as “various kinds of singing” and “gospel-based styles” are discussed by Gillett in relation to 1960s popular musics. Because we are concerned with pre-rock’n’roll rhythm and blues styles, a consideration of these musics need not concern us here. Dancehall blues - noted by Gillett as the “most various” of these “blues styles” - is further subdivided into three categories:

1. “big band blues”;
2. “combo blues”; and
3. “shout, scream and cry blues” (ibid.: 124).

the first category of which - “big band blues” - provides a stylistic link from swing to early rhythm and blues.<sup>22</sup> Gillett (1983: 122-3) explains as follows:

The most distinctive characteristic of all rhythm and blues styles was the presence of a dance rhythm, and it is primarily this characteristic that distinguished rhythm and blues from post-war jazz, which was rarely recorded as dance music and which could therefore dispense with the convention of maintaining a particular beat throughout a song.

After World War II, therefore, big band leaders found that they could choose to play to either jazz or dance (rhythm and blues) audiences. According to Gillett (1983: 125-7), those who chose dance music included such artists as Lucky Millinder, Tiny Bradshaw, Todd Rhodes, and Buddy Johnson and later, Cootie Williams, Milton

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<sup>22</sup>In discussing the “sound of rhythm and blues”, Kamin (1976: 58-66) identifies four rhythm and blues “styles”:

1. big band styles;
2. club blues;
3. “a modified version of the prewar country blues” found “chiefly in the South and around Chicago” (ibid.: 60-61); and
4. jump blues.

The latter three “styles” are discussed under the subheading “combo blues”, marking a delineation between rhythm and blues musics comprising big band instrumentation and those utilizing smaller ensembles (presumably the number of musicians comprising the horn section is a main delineating factor here). Aside from Kamin’s aforementioned approach to categorizing rhythm and blues styles, his subsequent discussion of musical and generic aspects closely accords with that presented in Gillett (1983) and, therefore, will not be discussed here.

Larkins, Lionel Hampton, Billy Eckstine and Johnny Otis.<sup>23</sup> But what were some stylistic differences that existed in the musical output of these early rhythm and blues musicians and swing era big bands? Gillett (ibid.: 125) cites “less imaginative arrangements” as one characteristic feature of the former, suggesting that early rhythm and blues ensembles employed more riff-based arrangements and adopted, in general, a simpler approach to musical structure. Perhaps “less imaginative arrangements” enabled new band members to easily fit in with minimal rehearsal time, thereby liberalizing a rhythm and blues ensemble’s capacity for touring. Arrangements informed by structural and harmonic simplicity might also have been conducive to improvisation, particularly in the form of saxophone solos which, as Gillett (1983: 125-26) notes below, co-defined some rhythm and blues styles:

bands were judged partly on their ability to generate intense excitement at the end of a dance. For this, they needed at least one saxophonist who could blow hard and long at fast rocking tempos, and at least one singer who could match him .... Through the forties, the tendency was for increasing attention to be focused on the saxophone solos and decreasing care to be taken with the orchestral backdrop.

Concomitant with “less imaginative arrangements” and the increasing attention given to saxophone solos was a gradual decrease in the number of musicians employed in rhythm and blues ensembles. “Combo blues” ensembles, for example, generally featured a rhythm section of piano, guitar, bass and drums alongside a singer and

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<sup>23</sup>Schuller (1989: 390) similarly notes a “drift towards R & B in the early forties” from swing era jazz and there is some degree of consistency with Gillett’s list of prominent transitional rhythm and blues musicians. For example, according to Schuller (1989: 391), Lucky Millinder “went completely into the R & B field” during the early 1940s and Tiny Bradshaw, after leading a swing band through the 1930s, formed a smaller group in 1944 that, according to Schuller (1989: 424) was one of a host of bands that moved into the boogie-woogie and “jump” idioms due to the huge popular success of Louis Jordan. Further, Lionel Hampton “promptly retreated to a safer fold: boogie-woogie, a sizable leap in the direction of rhythm and blues” (Schuller, 1989: 401) while Cootie Williams, after forming his own band in late 1941, “played an important role as a transitional ensemble halfway between swing and bop” (Schuller, 1989: 403). Williams’ mid-1940s big band, however, is described by Schuller as a forerunner of the rhythm and blues bands and that “when his big band collapsed in 1948, Cootie, too, turned to rhythm and blues and led a small r & b group from 1950 to the mid-1960s” (Schuller, 1989: 405). Todd Rhodes (see Schuller, 1989: 305-6 for a discussion of Rhodes composition, *Put It There*), Buddy Johnson (if Gillett is referring to Budd Johnson, then see Schuller, 1989: 284-91 for a discussion of Johnson’s swing style) and Billy Eckstine (vocalist with the Earl Hines swing band during the from 1939 to the early ‘40s) are not discussed in terms of early rhythm and blues style. Milton Larkins and Johnny Otis are not mentioned in Schuller’s text.

saxophonist (Gillett, 1983: 133).<sup>24</sup> Smaller rhythm and blues ensembles were nonetheless able to create “intense excitement”, largely generated by the saxophonist who would blow “long and hard” and at “fast rocking tempos”. Such excitement, as further noted by Gillett (1983: 125) above, was generated at the “end of a dance”, by which Gillett is presumably referring to the final structural sections of a rhythm and blues performance or recording. Within the context of our current investigation concerning accompanimental rhythmic characteristics of rhythm and blues, it would be useful to identify rhythms that accompanied the “excitement” generated at the end of a rhythm and blues performance. Perhaps such “excitement” is musically co-defined by snare backbeat executions performed alongside saxophone solos?

Gillett’s reference to “fast rocking tempos” intimates a correlation between the excitement generated by saxophone solos comprising the final structural sections of a performance and the accompanimental rhythms supporting such solos. In reference to Gillett’s distinct rhythm and blues styles, however, it appears that not all rhythm and blues styles comprised “fast rocking tempos”. For instance, Gillett notes that “bar blues” singers sang to a “heavy, often irregular rhythm” (ibid.: 147) while “club blues” comprised “cocktail piano playing” alongside a “light rhythm from bass and brushed drums” (ibid.: 143). Presumably, the social atmosphere of clubs, promoting

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<sup>24</sup>Of course, the adoption of smaller personnel formats and less complex arrangements by rhythm and blues combo leaders was not immediate. Indeed, many of the aforementioned musicians began their careers as big band leaders and therefore, gradually, adopted a dance blues band format. For example, Johnny Otis began his early recording career as a big band leader, a role that he aspired to in his youth after becoming familiar with the music of such big band musicians as Count Basie and Benny Goodman. Consequently, Otis’ earliest recordings, dating from around 1946 and recorded in Los Angeles, employ similar instrumentation to that of late ‘30s and early ‘40s swing bands. For example, Otis’s arrangement of Count Basie’s *Jeff Hi Stomp* (Los Angeles, 1946) included a complement of four trumpets, four trombones, two alto saxophones and two tenor saxophones, baritone sax and a rhythm section comprising piano, guitar, bass and drums. The arrangement was much in the style of early forties big bands, particularly that of Count Basie. Later recordings display a reduced number of horns but, in comparison with other rhythm and blues bands (which will be discussed below) were still comparatively large. Otis’ 1952 recordings, for instance, generally included one trumpet, one trombone, alto and tenor saxophone, baritone sax and rhythm section, although Otis’s early rhythm and blues ensembles varied the instrumentation of the horn section (see Otis as quoted in Shaw, 1978: 160-1 for a discussion of early rhythm and blues ensemble instrumentation).

conversation rather than dancing, influenced the style of rhythm and blues that was performed. “Shout, scream and cry blues” is mostly discussed by Gillett (1983: 127-133) in terms of the vocal quality of its main practitioners.<sup>25</sup> When referring to “combo blues” (sometimes referred to as “jump blues” or “jump combos” throughout Gillett’s discussion), Gillett (1983: 135) identifies a “rougher” variation of rhythm and blues style that was pioneered by Roy Milton and Amos Milburn. Such combo blues musicians broke away from the comparatively sophisticated arrangements of swing era jazz, the “light rhythm” of club blues and also the vocal quality of Shout, Scream and Cry blues singers. Rather, Gillett (1983: 135) notes that

In the music of Milton and Milburn, emphasis was invariably placed on the rhythm, and instrumental technique or vocal quality was of secondary importance. Roy Milton, who played drums and sang, has one of the strongest claims to be called “the inventor of the rock’n’roll beat”, as his “R.M.Blues”, issued in 1945, was among the first records to reorganize the boogie rhythm and present it with an accented offbeat.

According to Gillett, combo blues, and particularly Milton’s recording of *R.M. Blues*, exemplified at least one characteristic of a rock’n’roll drum beat. His positing of Milton’s *R.M. Blues* as a precursor to the rock’n’roll beat is supported by Shaw (1978: 103) who qualifies Milton’s reference to an “offbeat” in his discussion:

R.M. Blues reportedly sold over a million records, “the first to do so in the Negro market”, according to Charlie Gillett, who also contends that the record gives Milton the right to make “one of the strongest claims as the inventor of the rock’n’roll beat.” Grounds for the claim also can be found in Milton’s superimposition of an accented backbeat on the typical boogie rhythm of dotted eighth and sixteenth notes.

I have shown that both Gillett’s (1983: 135) and Shaw’s (1978: 103) notion of the backbeat in *R.M. Blues* is the first point displaying any sort of clarity and agreement concerning a musical structure in rhythm and blues. As Roy Milton was drumming on

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<sup>25</sup>Gillett mostly refers to the vocal style of Joe Turner, Wynonie Harris and Roy Brown. These singers employ a glottal stroke (banging together or constricting the vocal chords when singing) in their vocal delivery, producing a “raspiness” or “husky” quality to their voice. Such “raspiness” might be the result of a damaged vocal mechanism usually indicated when excess air is heard escaping through the vocal chords. The “airiness” of Harris’ vocal quality in *Night Train* (N.Y., 1952) or Brown’s vocal quality in *Cryin’ and Singin’ The Blues* (New Orleans, 1949) leads this listener to suspect such a condition.

*R.M. Blues*, the reader is led to suspect that the backbeat derived from drumming rather than from other instrumental accompaniments. Indeed, the notion of a drum-based backbeat characterizing rhythm and blues is supported many commentators in their brief account of the style.<sup>26</sup> In order to determine the extent to which rhythm and blues and rock'n'roll drum beats are related, we will investigate the occurrence of snare backbeats in rhythm and blues recordings, including Milton's *R.M. Blues*.

#### 4.3.1 Rhythm and Blues Recordings Sample.

A list of musicians designated as pre-1955 rhythm and blues performers and subsequently included in the rhythm and blues recordings sample was mostly drawn from published accounts of rhythm and blues. Various commentators, including Clarke (1995: 272-276), Floyd (1995: 143-4, 176-7), Whitcomb (1985: 54-79), Gillett (1983: 121-151), Broven, (1983), McCourt (1983), Santelli (1994), Shaw (1978 and 1986: 169-192) and Tosches (1991), among others,<sup>27</sup> attributed particular

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<sup>26</sup>Middleton (1990: 281) briefly compares the rhythm of music hall and Tin Pan Alley to later musical styles and subsequently notes that

rhythm ... emerges as a distinct layer in jazz and rhythm and blues, notably through the use of identifiable (repeated, musematic) syntactic units by drummers: backbeat and eight-to-the-bar pattern among them.

Sykes (1992: 45) also notes that rhythm and blues is supported by the constant sounding of backbeats that are "usually played on the snare drum or other percussion instrument" and Aquila (1989: 12), in his description of "R & B rock" (that includes Fats Domino, Lloyd Price, Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry, the Drifters, and the Coasters), states that "R & B rock, like rhythm and blues, featured blues progressions, loud drums accenting a 2-4 beat". Reference to snare backbeats can be found in some commentators discussions of particular rhythm and blues tracks. For example, Floyd (1995: 144) when describing Williams's recording of *The Hucklebuck* (1948), notes that it was accompanied by a "strong R & B backbeat". Further, he notes that "throughout the performance, the [swing] cymbal rhythm, together with the usual accompanying backbeat on the snare drum and the saxophone riffs, reveal the swing side of the piece's origins ..." (ibid.). Similarly, when comparing Domino's post-1949 rhythm and blues recordings, Gillett (1983: 139) notes that the "backbeat of the drummer became more pronounced".

<sup>27</sup>For example, Collins (1995), Dawson and Propes (1992), George (1988), Guralnick (1986), Hannusch (1987), Kamin (1976) and Sykes (1992).

musicians with pre-rock'n'roll rhythm and blues musical style and some consensus regarding such classification was generally displayed. For example, there is some general agreement within many published accounts that those musicians listed in Table 4.1 recorded rhythm and blues during the late 1940 and early '50s (I use Santelli, 1994, as a reference point here, given that Santelli's text has the greatest qualification regarding the generic habitat of such musicians). However, inconsistencies regarding the classification of particular musicians as rhythm and blues performers were located in many published accounts. Such inconsistency mostly stems from use of the descriptor "blues" to describe the recorded output of some musicians otherwise designated as "rhythm and blues" performers by other commentators. For example, Roy Brown is described as a "rhythm and blues singer" by Santelli (1994: 65) but a "blues shouter" by Cohn (1993: 172), and Wynonie Harris is considered a "blues shouter" by Santelli (1994: 169) but a "rhythm and blues singer" according to Cohn (1993: 326). It would be reasonable to speculate that, in reference to Roy Brown and Wynonie Harris, the descriptor "blues shouter" relates to aspects of musical technique, and particularly vocal production, rather than to broader musical concerns informing generic classification of such musicians as "rhythm and blues". Consequently, Brown, Harris and other musicians similarly disposed to such dual epithets in published accounts, have been included in the rhythm and blues recordings sample.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>In reference to those musicians included in Appendix Three, similar such inconsistency concerning generic designation was noted in descriptions of the following musicians. Lowell Fulson ("blues" performer [Santelli, 1994: 148], rhythm and blues jump combo singer [Gillett, 1983: 135]); Helen Humes ("blues and pop singer" [Santelli, 1994: 194], jazz balladry and rhythm and blues singer [Clarke, 1989: 229]); Johnny Moore ("blues guitarist" [Santelli, 1994: 301], rhythm and blues club blues singer [Gillett, 1983: 143]); and T-Bone Walker ("blues guitarist" [Santelli, 1994: 423], rhythm and blues jump combo singer [Gillett, 1983: 134]).

Roy Brown	“rhythm & blues singer and piano player” (Santelli, 1994: 65)
Ruth Brown	“rhythm & blues singer” (Santelli, 1994: 66)
Floyd Dixon	“Texas blues and R & B artist” (Santelli, 1994: 121)
Antoine Domino	“rhythm and blues” performer (Santelli, 1994: 124)
Paul Gayten	“rhythm and blues bandleader and pianist” (Santelli, 1994: 154)
Peppermint Harris	“rhythm and blues singer and guitarist” (Santelli, 1994: 169)
Ivory Joe Hunter	rhythm and blues singer (Santelli, 1994: 196)
Louis Jordan	“rhythm and blues” performer (Santelli, 1994: 227)
Jimmy Liggins	“R & B singer and bandleader” (Santelli, 1994: 256)
Joe Liggins	“rhythm and blues” performer (Santelli, 1994: 257)
Big Jay McNeely	“rhythm and blues ... tenor saxophone stylist” (Santelli, 1994: 288)
Amos Milburn	“rhythm & blues pianist, singer, and bandleader” (Santelli, 1994: 294)
Roy Milton	“rhythm & blues pioneer” (Santelli, 1994: 297)
Johnny Otis	rhythm and blues artist (Santelli, 1994: 318)
Lloyd Price	rhythm & blues performer (Santelli, 1994: 333)
Little Richard	rhythm & blues and rock’n’roll performer (Santelli, 1994: 262-3)
Joe Turner	blues shouter and rhythm & blues performer (Santelli, 1994: 408)
Jimmy Witherspoon	rhythm and blues performer (Santelli, 1994: 464)

Table 4.1 Santelli (1994): List of Blues and Rhythm and Blues Musicians.

Aside from the previously discussed instances, use of the descriptor “blues” relates more generally (and perhaps generically) to the vocal style, harmonic practices and instrumentation evident on the recorded output of particular musicians who were musically active in mid-U.S.A. locations such as Chicago during the 1940s.<sup>29</sup> It is important to note that blues performances throughout the 1940s were increasingly accompanied by dance combos (including drums) instead of guitar and harmonica only. As Shaw (1975: 87) notes, with the gradual adoption of instrumentation associated

<sup>29</sup>For example, Santelli (1994) describes the following musicians as blues performers: Eddie Boyd (ibid.: 52), Clarence Brown (ibid.: 62), Arthur Crudup (ibid.: 109), Little Walter (ibid.: 263), Muddy Waters (ibid.: 434), and Howlin’ Wolf (ibid.: 191-3).

with rhythm and blues dance combos, “the blues turned into rhythm and blues”.<sup>30</sup>

Given that investigating drum beats is the primary focus of this thesis, it would therefore be unwise to exclude from my sampling Chicago urban blues musicians who recorded with drums during the rhythm and blues era. Consequently, recordings by bluesmen such as Arthur Crudup and Muddy Waters (for example) that involve drumming are included in the rhythm and blues recordings sample. Blues, and also rhythm and blues recordings that exclude drums from their instrumentation, such as the 1940s recordings by Charles Brown<sup>31</sup> and Muddy Waters’ mid-1940s recordings, are not included in Appendix Three.

In our previous discussion concerning the musical roots of rock’n’roll, we identified some commentators who consider the early recordings of Fats Domino and Little Richard as representative of rhythm and blues musical style.<sup>32</sup> Other located accounts support this notion. For example, drummer Earl Palmer (as quoted in Weinberg, 1991: 91), in his brief discussion of late 1940s and early ‘50s musical style, refers to Fats Domino and Little Richard as “New Orleans rhythm and blues” musicians. Gillett (1983: 88) notes that Imperial records carried Domino from rhythm and blues to rock’n’roll “without drastically changing his style”, and White (1985: 224-5) states that

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<sup>30</sup>George (1988: xii) also considers rhythmicized blues as rhythm and blues, noted that the term “originated in the 1940s as a description of a synthesis of black musical genres - gospel, big-band swing, blues - that, along with new technology, specifically the popularization of the electric bass, produced a propulsive, spirited brand of popular music”. Gillett (1983: 121) also notes that rhythm and blues developed from pre-war blues and that “the most distinctive new element in this music was the addition of a dance rhythm”.

<sup>31</sup>Both Shaw (1986: 177-8) and Gillett (1983: 143-4) consider Charles Brown’s 1940s recordings rhythm and blues in style. However, Brown’s recordings with Johnny Moore’s 3 Blazers - which do not include drums - are not included in Appendix Three. I am particularly referring here to Brown’s 38 recordings dating from 1945 to 1948 as included on Walkin’ in Circles: Charles Brown with Johnny Moore’s 3 Blazers, Night Train compact disc: NTICD 7024, 1995, and Snuff Dippin’ Mama: Charles Brown with Johnny Moore’s 3 Blazers, Night Train compact disc: NTICD 7017, 1995.

<sup>32</sup>I am referring here to Hoffman (1983: 13) and George (1988: 68). See page 214 and footnote 5 respectively.



Little Richard's early 1950s recordings for the Peacock record label "leaned more toward rhythm 'n' blues than outright rock 'n' roll".<sup>33</sup> We will therefore include the early recorded output of Domino and Richard in the following account of rhythm and blues drumming. In doing so, however, it is firstly necessary to delineate the rhythm and blues recordings of Domino and Richard from their subsequent rock 'n' roll recorded output.

No commercial recordings were undertaken by Richard during 1954, and this enables 1954 to serve as a chronological delimiting device separating Richard's early 1950s recordings from those produced for the Specialty record label in 1955, the latter of which have been classified as rock 'n' roll in Chapter Two. Domino, however, consistently recorded from 1949 onwards and, consequently, his recorded output seamlessly spans between rhythm and blues and rock 'n' roll generic periods. Further, given Gillett's notion that Domino did not "drastically" change his style from 1949, it is therefore difficult to identify one particular year which can mark the closure of Domino's rhythm and blues stylistic period. For consistency, our rhythm and blues recordings sample dating from 1944 to 1955 will include Domino's recorded output produced during that period. However, Domino's recorded output produced in 1954 and 1955 has been included in our rock 'n' roll recordings sample (Chapter Two), alongside Bill Haley's recordings for the Decca record label and Carl Perkin's first recordings and, consequently, it is necessary to account for such inclusion in our investigation below in order to obtain clear statistically informed results concerning the existence of snare backbeats in rhythm and blues. We will therefore test for significant

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<sup>33</sup>Such a notion might have been influenced by the fact that Little Richard's Peacock sessions, recorded at the beginning of 1953, were produced with the Johnny Otis band - a prominent rhythm and blues ensemble. In late 1953, Little Richard teamed up with Charles (Chuck) Connors (drums) and Wilbert "Lee Diamond" Smith (piano/sax) and, with some additional members, formed "Little Richard and the Upsetters". Richard (as quoted in White, 1985: 49) states that this band performed "some of Roy Brown's tunes, a lot of Fats Domino tunes, some B.B. King tunes, and I believe a couple of Little Walter's and a few things by Billy Wright" consequently attesting to the rhythm and blues repertoire of Little Richard's pre-1955 musical activities.

deviations to our results below by omitting Domino's 1954 and 1955 recordings from our rhythm and blues recordings sample.

Whenever possible, the complete recorded output of rhythm and blues musicians was sought for subsequent inclusion in Appendix Three. The sample mostly relied upon recordings that were commercially available at the time of writing this thesis and, subsequently, the extant recorded output of many rhythm and blues musicians could not be investigated. In this respect, the commercial availability of recordings imposed a delimiting factor on the number of rhythm and blues recordings included in my sampling. It would have been ideal to have had access to every single rhythm and blues recording. However, I have had to content myself with 1 577 rhythm and blues recordings from the period 1944 to around 1955 that were available on reissue.

A subsequent scan and mini-analysis of the rhythm and blues sample, located in Appendix Three, was primarily undertaken in order to, firstly, determine the frequency of occurrence of snare backbeats in rhythm and blues recordings, secondly, investigate the range of cymbal rhythms employed, and thirdly, to establish any concurrence between saxophone solos and backbeats, particularly in the final structural sections of rhythms and blues recordings.

Results of the scan for snare backbeats in rhythm and blues recordings (as sampled) are detailed below. Also included in the sampling are those few recordings that feature handclaps on the backbeat but these recordings do not figure in conclusions regarding the frequency of occurrence of snare backbeats in rhythm and blues. Results of the scan for backbeats in rhythm and blues derives from the mini-analyses located in Appendix Three. Information deriving from the mini-analyses is presented here through two levels of abstraction. Firstly, Table 4.2, Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 accommodate information in a yearly format and according to the output of selected

rhythm and blues musicians. Referring to Floyd Dixon's 1947 recordings, for example, we can note from Table 4.2 (page 238) that one recording includes snare backbeat throughout all structural sections, two recordings include either sectional or sporadic use of snare backbeat, and one recording does not include snare backbeat. At the end of Table 4.2, Table 4.3 and Table 4.4, the total number of recordings are listed that include a) snare backbeats ; b) sectional or sporadic use of backbeats ; and c) no backbeats at all. The results here are also presented as a percentage of the total number of recordings sampled for a particular year. In reference to rhythm and blues recordings produced in 1947, for example, we can note at the end of Table 4.2 that 13 recordings (13% of the total recordings sampled) contain snare backbeat; 34 recordings (34% of the total recordings sampled) include sectional or sporadic use of snare backbeat; and 204 recordings (81% of the total recordings sampled) do not include snare backbeat. There is, consequently, no need for the reader to refer to Appendix Three in order to gain information regarding the existence of snare backbeat in the recorded output of a particular rhythm and blues musician or the occurrence of backbeats within a given year.

The second level of abstraction, manifest in Table 4.5 and Table 4.6, provides a graphic representation of results detailed in Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4. These graphs therefore are a visual conclusion to the scan and subsequent mini-analyses of rhythm and blues recordings listed in Appendix Three. Table 4.5 details in graphic form the existence of snare backbeat against "other beats" in those rhythm and blues recordings scanned in Appendix Three.<sup>34</sup> Table 4.6 provides a further breakdown of results by indicating in graphic form the percentage of rhythm and blues recordings that contain snare backbeat utilized throughout the recording, snare backbeats that are featured in structural sections or are sporadically used in a recording, and finally, "other beats"

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<sup>34</sup>"Other beats" describes drum beats that do not contain snare backbeat, such as Bo Diddley beats and Latin drum beats (see Chapter 2.4 for further examples of "other beats").

which do not include snare backbeats.

Following the aforementioned tables, the remainder of Chapter Four will be structured around discussions relating to:

- snare backbeat in rhythm and blues recordings. Attention will be given to particular recordings or a set of recordings and will include discussion of a) sectional or sporadic use of snare backbeats, b) the force of execution of snare backbeats (“weak”, “strong” or “emphatic”, as defined in Terms and Recordings Descriptors for Appendices Two and Three) and, c) Roy Milton’s *R.M. Blues* (relating to Gillett and Shaw’s notion that this recording contained the rock and roll beat and was, therefore, important to the development of rock’n’roll drumming);
- Fat’s Domino’s rhythm and blues recordings;
- Little Richard’s rhythm and blues recordings;
- other drum beats in rhythm and blues;
- Chicago rhythm and blues recordings with Judge Riley drumming. The need to include this section will become apparent from the following investigation.

One objective of this chapter is to provide a reasonable overview regarding the variety of degree with which the snare backbeat was used by rhythm and blues musicians recording from around 1944 up to and including 1955. Where information regarding drummers employed on recording sessions is available then such will be discussed. The investigation will also provide a basis to examine other precursory rock’n’roll musical styles relevant to our search for the roots of the snare backbeat.

## 4.3.2 Snare Backbeat in Rhythm and Blues: Overview

<b><u>Rhythm and Blues recordings, 1944-47: backbeats.</u></b>												
[1] Backbeats (throughout the recording); [2] backbeats (sectional and/or sporadic); [3] other beats.												
Year →	1944			1945			1946			1947		
Musician ↓ Beat →	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]
Eddie Boyd										1		2
Hadda Brooks						1			5			4
Clarence Brown												2
Roy Brown												8
Ruth Brown												
Goree Carter												
Savannah Churchill									1			4
Arthur Crudup			4			4			10		11	1
Floyd Dixon										1	2	1
Antoine Domino												
Lowell Fulson									4			9
Paul Gayten												6
Lloyd Glenn									1			6
Peppermint Harris												
Wynonie Harris						10			2		2	6
Chuck Higgins												
Joe Houston												
Camille Howard										2		1
Helen Humes			1		2	10			2			
Ivory Joe Hunter						1			4		3	19
Louis Jordan		2	8			9			16			22
Saunders King									1	4		

Table 4.2 Rhythm and Blues recordings, 1944-47: backbeats.

**Rhythm and Blues recordings, 1944-47: backbeats.**

[1] Backbeats (throughout the recording);  
 [2] backbeats (sectional and/or sporadic);  
 [3] other beats.

Year →	1944			1945			1946			1947		
Musician ↓ Beat →	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]
Jimmy Liggins												17
Joe Liggins						11			8			9
Big Jay McNeely											1	
Jack McVea			2	1	3	10	1	2	10	1	1	16
Amos Milburn									2			7
Roy Milton					1	5			3	5	10	15
Johnny Moore						7			2			2
Johnny Otis									6			7
Jesse Price								1	7			8
Lloyd Price												
Little Richard												
Arbee Stidham											2	
The Treniers											2	12
Big Joe Turner					1	6		3	13			8
T-Bone Walker						6			1			2
Little Walter												
Muddy Waters							1	6	2			1
Paul Williams										3		3
Jimmy Witherspoon						3			1			6
Howlin' Wolf												
<b>Total →</b>	0	2	15	1	7	83	2	13	104	13	34	204
<b>Percentage →</b>	0%	12%	88%	1%	8%	91%	2%	11%	87%	5%	14%	81%

Table 4.2 Rhythm and Blues recordings, 1944-47: backbeats (cont'd).

**Rhythm and Blues recordings, 1948-51: backbeats.**

[1] Backbeats (throughout the recording);  
 [2] backbeats (sectional and/or sporadic);  
 [3] other beats.

Year →	1948			1949			1950			1951		
Musician ↓ Beat →	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]
Eddie Boyd		2	2									
Hadda Brooks						2						
Clarence Brown						6			2			2
Roy Brown			5	5	3	4	1	2	2			2
Ruth Brown						3			4			1
Goree Carter						12	1		2			2
Savannah Churchill			3						3			2
Arthur Crudup					8			8		1	4	2
Floyd Dixon			1	1	1	13	3	1	8			2
Antoine Domino				2	1	1	3		5	1	1	12
Lowell Fulson			20			2		2	5	4	1	6
Paul Gayten					1	5			3			
Lloyd Glenn						1			4			1
Peppermint Harris									1			9
Wynonie Harris					1		1	2	4			3
Chuck Higgins												
Joe Houston					1		1			1		
Camille Howard	1	1			2	2	2	3	3	1	4	1
Helen Humes							1	1	3	1		1
Ivory Joe Hunter					1	7			7			3
Louis Jordan				4	2	9	4	3	8	4	8	13
Saunders King						6			2			

Table 4.3 Rhythm and Blues recordings, 1948-51: backbeats.

### Rhythm and Blues recordings, 1948-51: backbeats.

[1] Backbeats (throughout the recording);  
 [2] backbeats (sectional and/or sporadic);  
 [3] other beats.

Year →	1948			1949			1950			1951		
Musician ↓ Beat →	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]
Jimmy Liggins			6						8	6	3	1
Joe Liggins			2			1	1	5	9	4	4	4
Big Jay McNeely	1			4	3	3	4		1	2		2
Jack McVea			1									
Amos Milburn				1	1	5	3	1	7			4
Roy Milton			3	2	5	3	3	7	4	3	5	1
Johnny Moore						6						
Johnny Otis	1	1	3			1			1			7
Jesse Price			1									
Lloyd Price												
Little Richard											4	
Arbee Stidham	1				3	1			3			2
The Treniers							1		1			1
Big Joe Turner			6			4						
T-Bone Walker								1	11	5	1	3
Little Walter												
Muddy Waters						3			3		1	7
Paul Williams	2		1	2		2				2		1
Jimmy Witherspoon		6	15						1			
Howlin' Wolf										7		1
<b>Total →</b>	5	11	69	21	33	102	29	36	115	42	36	96
<b>Percentage →</b>	7%	12%	81%	14%	21%	65%	16%	20%	64%	24%	21%	55%

Table 4.3 Rhythm and Blues recordings, 1948-51: backbeats (cont'd).



**Rhythm and Blues recordings, 1952-55: backbeats.**

[1] Backbeats (throughout the recording);  
[2] backbeats (sectional and/or sporadic);  
[3] other beats.

Year →	1952			1953			1954			1955		
Musician ↓ Beat →	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]
Eddie Boyd			1		1	2	2		1			
Hadda Brooks	1		4									
Clarence Brown						3						
Roy Brown	5		1	5		3	10		2	2		
Ruth Brown			1			4			1			1
Goree Carter												
Savannah Churchill			2			1						
Arthur Crudup	12		2			4			4			
Floyd Dixon	3	1	1	10	3		4					
Antoine Domino	5		6	18		5	4		4	18		2
Lowell Fulson						2			1			
Paul Gayten				1								
Lloyd Glenn			2									
Peppermint Harris			5	1		1						
Wynonie Harris	4		2	3	1	1	15					
Chuck Higgins				3	1	1	7		1	4		
Joe Houston	4		1	1		1	3			3		
Camille Howard		2										
Helen Humes			8							2		
Ivory Joe Hunter		1	2									
Louis Jordan	2	2	11		1	3	12	1	15			
Saunders King									1			

Table 4.4 Rhythm and Blues recordings, 1952-55: backbeats.

**Rhythm and Blues recordings, 1952-55: backbeats.**

[1] Backbeats (throughout the recording);  
[2] backbeats (sectional and/or sporadic);  
[3] other beats.

Year →	1952			1953			1954			1955		
Musician ↓ Beat →	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]
Jimmy Liggins			1	2		6						
Joe Liggins	2	1	5	4			3		1			
Big Jay McNeely	3		1	2			3					
Jack McVea												
Amos Milburn	3		5	1			4		1			1
Roy Milton	1		1	1		3			1			
Johnny Moore												
Johnny Otis			6									
Jesse Price												
Lloyd Price	13	1	2	9	1	1	4					
Little Richard	4			7	1							
Arbee Stidham					1	1						
The Treniers			1	4	4	2	4		1			
Big Joe Turner												
T-Bone Walker	1	2	12	5		7	2	1	1			
Little Walter		1	2			4	2		1	3		
Muddy Waters		1	4			9	3	1	6	5	2	2
Paul Williams												
Jimmy Witherspoon				1					1	1		
Howlin' Wolf	8	1	1									
<b>Total →</b>	71	13	90	78	14	64	79	3	43	38	2	6
<b>Percentage →</b>	41%	7%	52%	50%	9%	41%	64%	2%	34%	83%	4%	13%
<b>Total Rhythm and Blues recordings sampled: 1 577</b>												

Table 4.4 Rhythm and Blues recordings, 1952-55: backbeats (cont'd).

It is evident from results contained in the above tables and Table 4.5 below that the accented snare backbeat did not characterize rhythm and blues recordings until the period 1953 to 1955, that is, the same period that generally marks the beginning of the rock'n'roll era.

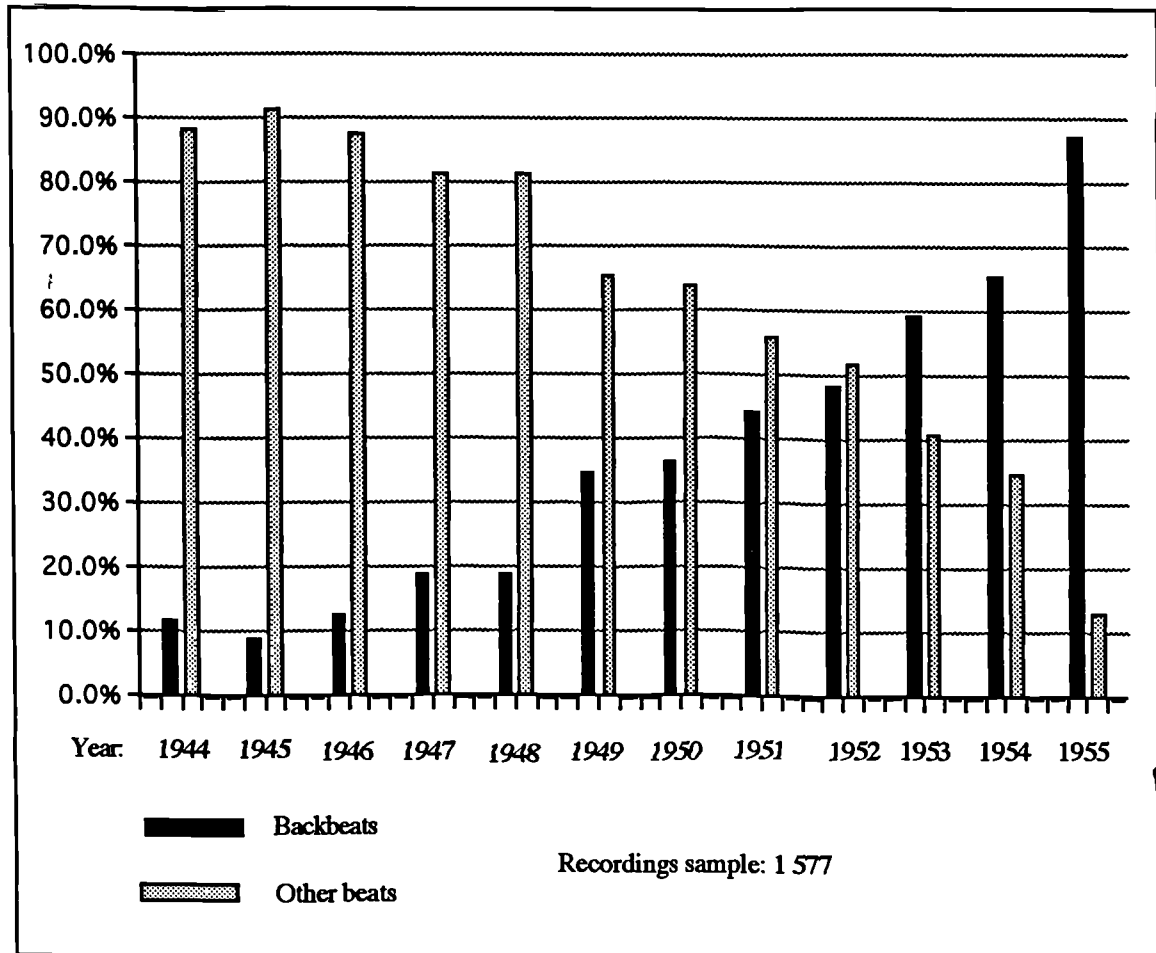


Table 4.5 Rhythm and blues recordings, 1944-55: backbeats and other beats.

If we designate Little Richard's 1955 recordings as rhythm and blues (as we have done with Fats Domino's 1955 recordings), then 93% of the total recordings sampled contained backbeats and only 7% utilized other drum beats; all of Richard's 37 extant recordings that include drums and recorded during 1955 contain snare backbeats (as previously observed in Chapter Two). If we exclude Fats Domino's recordings from

the period 1953 to 1955 - that period which displays a dominance of snare backbeats over other beats -, then the following statistics result:

- 1953 total recordings sampled: 56% with backbeats, 44% without;
- 1954 total recordings sampled: 67% with backbeats, 33% without;
- 1955 total recordings sampled: 85% with backbeats, 15% without.

The exclusion of Domino's recordings from 1953 to 1955 from our sample does not significantly effect the balance between rhythm and blues recordings that include snare backbeats and those that do not. We will therefore not account for such slight deviation in our subsequent discussion of snare backbeat usage as evident in our rhythm and blues recordings sample.

A more accurate account regarding the development of the snare backbeat was achieved by noting the difference between those recordings which utilized a snare backbeat throughout and those in which the backbeat was incorporated only in particular structural sections or otherwise used sporadically. Such information is detailed in graph form in Table 4.6 below.

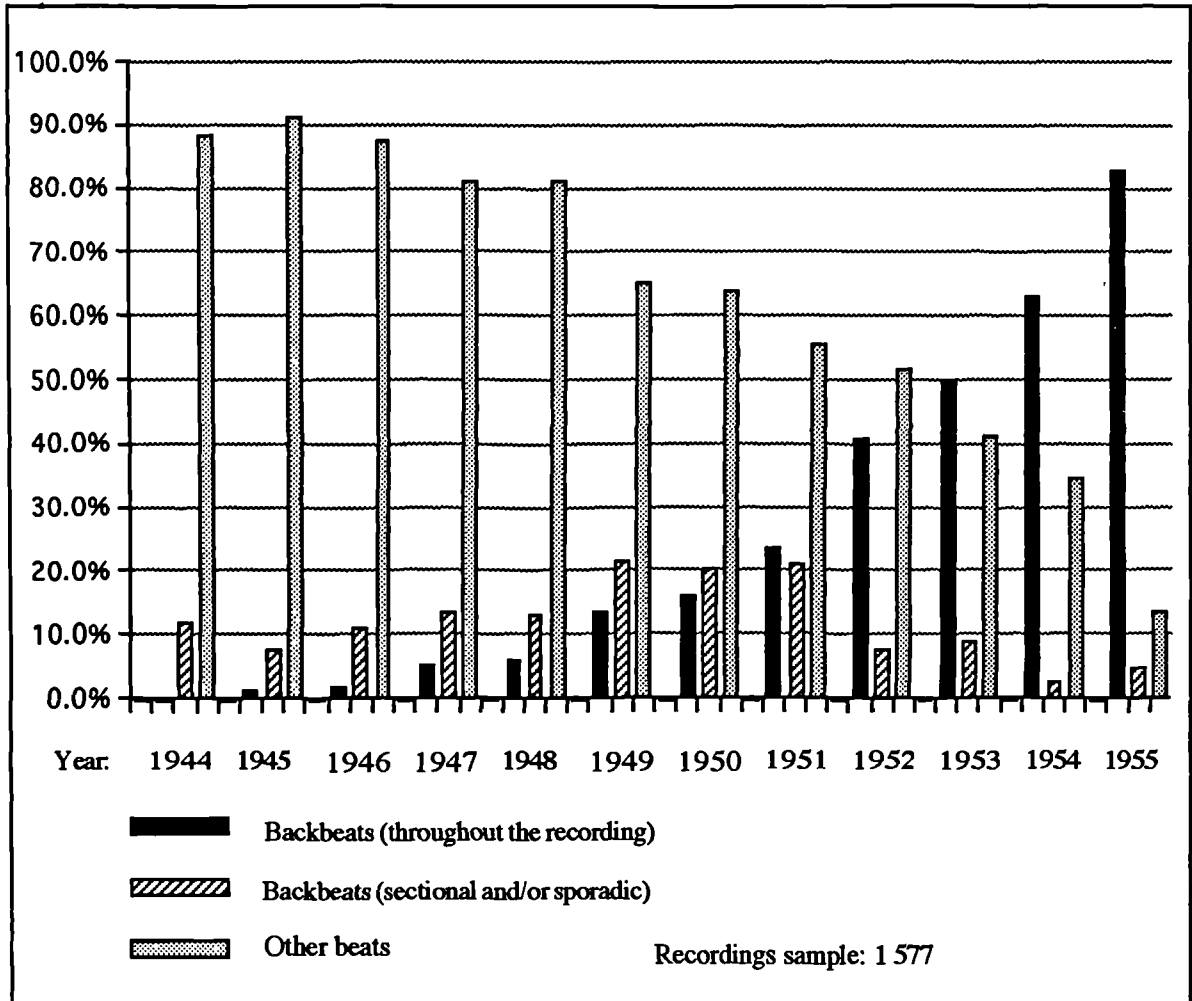


Table 4.6 Rhythm and blues recordings, 1944-55: backbeats (throughout the recording, or sectional and/or sporadic) and other beats.

Results of the mini-analyses located in Appendix Three, which are partially represented in the above tables, will be discussed below within the context of a chronologically based investigation. Particular concern will be given to locating and noting those rhythm and blues recordings which contain strong or emphatic snare backbeats which, as we have observed in Chapter Two, are characteristically employed in rock'n'roll drumming.

### 4.3.3 Snare Backbeat in Rhythm and Blues.

As evident in Table 4.2 (page 238), only 2 of 17 recordings produced in 1944 contain some use of snare backbeat: Louis Jordan's *I Like 'Em Like That* includes weak snare backbeats in vocal sections (a comping snare is used in solo sections) and *You Can't Get That No More* features shuffle rhythms on snare throughout the recording and some sporadic strong accenting of the backbeat. 7 of 91 recordings produced in 1945 contain snare backbeat:<sup>35</sup> McVea's *Bartender Boogie* includes both weak and emphatic snare backbeats in various instrumental solos, *New Deal* includes a weak snare backbeat in instrumental solos, and *Scrub, Sweep and Mop* includes an emphatic snare backbeat in the saxophone solo; Roy Milton's *Milton's Boogie* and Big Joe Turner's *Watch That Jive* both include strong snare backbeats in instrumental solos and Helen Humes' *Be-baba-leba* contains a very weak snare backbeat in verses. Only one recording - Jack McVea's *Ooh Mop* - features a consistent use of snare backbeat throughout all structural sections of the recording (weak snare backbeats in the verses and choruses and a strong snare backbeat in saxophone and trumpet solos).

So far, our survey has revealed that no rhythm and blues recordings produced in 1944 and 1945 contain snare performances characteristic of rock'n'roll drum beat (that is, strong or emphatic use of snare backbeat throughout all structural sections of a recording). However, as we have previously noted on page 229, both Gillett (1983: 135) and Shaw (1978: 103) consider that the drumming contained in Roy Milton's *R.M. Blues*, recorded in 1945, exemplifies rock'n'roll beat. We will briefly explore this claim below.

*R.M. Blues* (Hollywood, 1945) was probably the first successful crossover record of

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<sup>35</sup>Helen Humes' *It's Better To Give Than To Receive* comprises backbeat handclaps in the saxophone solo and is counted in the backbeat sampling.

urban black music, staying a national hit on the race records chart for over twenty six weeks. It established the Juke Box record company, owned by Art Rupe, which later became Specialty Records. In this sense, the recording holds a special place in the history of rhythm and blues. Upon listening to Milton's *R.M. Blues*, however, it is bemusing as to what musical-structural elements motivated Gillett - and, subsequently, Shaw - to acknowledge *R.M. Blues* as a precursor to the "rock'n'roll beat". A brief analysis of *R.M. Blues* will illustrate that its prominent rhythmic characteristics vary to those apparently heard by Gillett and Shaw.

*R.M. Blues* proceeds at a tempo of around 100 pulses per minute. Rhythmic activity on the drums is confined to snare executions on all four pulses of the 4/4 bar and no cymbal work can be discerned in the recording.<sup>36</sup> Bass drum rhythms are disguised by the recording quality. The double bass is walking on all four pulses within the harmonic framework of a 12 bar blues form. Improvised piano rhythms, mostly in quaver triplet figures, recur and a boogie piano accompaniment (as notated in Terms and Recordings Descriptors for Appendices Two and Three) occurs during the middle of the first trumpet solo for around two bars, at the beginning of the tenor sax solo for around two bars and intermittently throughout this solo (generally lasting no more than one bar in length). Riffing horns (trumpet, alto and tenor sax) are utilized throughout the recording and perform the riff notated in Figure 4. 1.<sup>37</sup> As evident in this notation, the horn riff to *R.M. Blues* does not emphasize the backbeat.

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<sup>36</sup>Milton subsequently employed this beat when performing with other rhythm and blues musicians. For example, his drumming with Camille Howard, evident on Howard's recordings dating from 1947 to 1949 and 1951 (included in Appendix Three) mostly contain snare executions on all four pulses. No cymbal work can be heard in the recordings.

<sup>37</sup>A very similar horn riff is contained in Milton's *True Blues* (Hollywood, 1947), *The Numbers Blues* (Hollywood, 1950), and *Have I News For You* (Hollywood, 1951).

♩ = 100    ♩ = ♩<sub>3</sub> ♩

Trumpet

Saxophone

Figure 4.1 Milton: *R.M. Blues* (horn riff).

It is clear from the previous discussion that *R.M. Blues* contains none of the snare drum or cymbal rhythms that co-define a rock'n'roll drumming beat (as previously noted in Chapter Two). Gillett (1983: 135) and Shaw's (1978: 103) notion that Milton was the "inventor of the rock'n'roll beat" is therefore not correct. Their subsequent idea that Milton superimposed an "accented backbeat on the typical boogie rhythm of dotted eighth and sixteenth notes" is also wrong. Rather, boogie rhythms are restricted to sporadic occurrences in the piano accompaniment. Further, backbeat accentuation does not occur in the trumpet and saxophone riff nor do any other accompaniments accentuate the backbeat. Perhaps backbeat emphasis in rhythm and blues featured in later recordings.

A scan of one hundred and nineteen rhythm and blues recordings from 1946 revealed



one recording containing handclaps on the backbeat,<sup>38</sup> twelve recordings containing sectional or sporadic use of backbeats and only two recordings featuring consistent use of snare backbeat throughout all structural sections.<sup>39</sup> Generally, snare backbeats were weakly executed, located in instrumental solo sections and accompanied by swing rhythms on cymbal or hi-hat. Exceptionally, of the seven recordings produced by Muddy Waters in Chicago that contain either sectional or sporadic use of snare backbeat, four recordings feature strong snare backbeat executions (according to discographical information, Judge Riley was drumming on these recordings).<sup>40</sup>

Although Saunter King's *Swingin'* (San Francisco, 1946) and Big Joe Turner's *I Got My Discharge Papers* (L.A., 1946) also contain sectional use of strong snare backbeat, we shall see that the tendency to strongly or emphatically accent a snare backbeat was peculiar to most Chicago rhythm and blues recordings dating from the late 1940s (as included in Appendix Three).<sup>41</sup>

Two hundred and fifty-one rhythm and blues recordings produced in 1947 were located and subsequently scanned for snare backbeat. Results of this scan are as follows:

- thirteen recordings contain snare backbeat throughout all formal-structural sections. Snare executions were mostly weak and sometimes performed with

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<sup>38</sup>Jesse Price's *Just Another Day Wasted Away* includes backbeat handclaps in the first verse and chorus and is counted in the backbeat sampling.

<sup>39</sup>Jack McVea's *My Business Is C.O.D.* comprises a weak snare backbeat throughout. Muddy Waters' *Hard Day Blues* includes an emphatic snare backbeat in the piano solo and weak snare backbeats throughout other structural sections.

<sup>40</sup>Discographical information is included in the sleeve notes to Muddy Waters: First Recording Sessions 1941-1946 In Chronological Order (Document Records compact disc: DOCD-5146, n.d.).

<sup>41</sup>In reference to the rhythm and blues recordings listed in Appendix Three, this notion excludes the 1947 Chicago recordings of Big Joe Turner all of which do not include snare backbeats.

- brushes;<sup>42</sup>
- thirty-four recordings include either sectional or sporadic use of weak, strong or emphatically executed snare backbeats. Sectional use of snare backbeats are included in instrumental solo sections (mostly saxophone solos) or final choruses and verses. Excluding rhythm and blues recordings produced in Chicago, which will be discussed subsequently, sectional use of emphatic or strong backbeats were located in twelve recordings produced in other geographic locations;<sup>43</sup>
- emphatic snare backbeats, sporadically used and occasionally consistently incorporated in instrumental solos, characterize the output of two rhythm and blues musicians recording in Chicago: Arthur Crudup and Arbee Stidham. According to Leadbitter and Slaven (1987: 303) and discographical information provided on compact discs,<sup>44</sup> the drummer for Crudup's 1947 recording sessions was Judge Riley. Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier (1994: 538) also name Judge Riley as the drummer on Stidham's 1947 Chicago recordings.<sup>45</sup>

In reference to the mini-analyses of rhythm and blues recordings produced in 1947

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<sup>42</sup>Exceptions here include Roy Milton's *Train Blues* which contains a shuffle on snare with brushes and some strong accenting of the backbeat and Camille Howard's *You Don't Love Me* and *You Used To Be Mine*, both of which feature snare on all four pulses with weak to strong snare backbeats.

<sup>43</sup>These recordings are as follows: Wynonie Harris' *Big City Blues* and *Hard Ridin' Mama*; Ivory Joe Hunter's *She's Gone Blues*, *We're Gonna Boogie*, and *Woo Wee Blues*; Big Jay McNeely's *Barrelhouse Stomp*; and Roy Milton's *Big Fat Mama*, *If You Don't Know*, *Old Man River*, *On The Sunny Side of the Street*, *Roy Rides*, and *'Taint Me*.

<sup>44</sup>Discographical information is included in the sleeve notes accompanying Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup: Complete Recorded Works, 1941-1954, In Chronological Order, (Document compact discs: DOCD-5201, 5202, 5203, 5204, n.d.).

<sup>45</sup>Another Chicago rhythm and blues musician included in our sample, Eddie Boyd, recorded eight tracks in Chicago during 1947 of which three were located and included in Appendix Three. Only one track, *You Got To Love That Gal*, includes snare backbeat (weakly executed). Leadbitter and Slaven (1987: 134) list Booker T. Washington as the drummer for Boyd's 1947 recording sessions. Boyd later recorded with Judge Riley drumming and, as we shall see, significant differences in drumming style occur.

(located in Appendix Three), the following conclusions regarding strong or emphatic snare backbeat occurrences apply:

- twenty-five (around 10%) of two hundred and fifty-one rhythm and blues recordings contain either emphatic or strong backbeats;
- thirteen (around 52%) of the twenty-five recordings containing either emphatic or strong backbeats were located in the recorded output of Crudup and Stidham with Judge Riley drumming.<sup>46</sup>

It is clear from the above discussion of rhythm and blues recordings produced between 1944-47 that only 39 (around 8%) of 478 recordings contain either emphatic or strong snare backbeats. Mini-analyses of rhythm and blues recordings containing snare backbeat (located in Appendix Three) reveal that most recordings include a small horn section as part of the instrumentation and that snare backbeats occur during instrumental solos or during final “shout” choruses. Exceptionally, however, the recorded output of Arthur Crudup, Arbee Stidham and Muddy Waters, produced in Chicago with Judge Riley drumming, includes an instrumentation comprising guitar, bass and drums and features sporadic use of emphatically executed snare backbeats. Although emphatic snare backbeat executed within the context of a comparatively small rhythm and blues ensemble prefigures rock’n’roll performance practice, none of Riley’s recordings feature a consistent use of emphatic snare backbeat executed throughout all structural sections. In fact, only 3 (around 0.6%) of 478 rhythm and blues recordings produced between 1944-47 - Milton’s *Train Blues* and Howard’s *You Don’t Love Me* and *You Used To Be Mine* - include consistent use of snare backbeat throughout the recording. It is important to note that snare backbeat executions in the three aforementioned recordings are contained in shuffle or snare on all four pulses rhythms which, as we

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<sup>46</sup>Ten of Crudup’s eleven extant recordings from this period contain sporadic use of emphatic snare backbeats. The remaining recording, Crudup’s *Hey Mama, Everything’s All Right*, includes strongly executed snare backbeats sporadically used throughout the recording.

have observed in Chapter Two, are not characteristic of rock'n'roll drumming. We will continue our search for snare backbeat in rhythm and blues by focusing on recordings produced from 1948.

As noted in Table 4.3 (page 240), 6 of 85 rhythm and blues recordings produced in 1948 feature snare backbeats executed throughout all structural sections of a recording. These recordings are as follows: Stidham's *Stidham Jumps* includes an emphatic snare backbeat in the saxophone solo section and a strong snare backbeat throughout other structural sections;<sup>47</sup> McNeely's *Deacon's Hop* and Otis' *That's Your Last Boogie* feature emphatic snare backbeats; Paul Williams' *Free Dice* and *Waxey Maxie* include strong snare backbeats; and Camille Howard's *Has Your Love Grown Cold?* features weakly executed snare backbeats contained in snare on all four pulses rhythms. As evident from the above results, only 5 (around 6%) of 85 recordings feature snare usage similar to that employed by rock'n'roll drummers.

10 (around 12%) of 85 rhythm and blues recordings produced in 1948 contain either sectional or sporadic use of snare backbeat, mostly featuring in instrumental (and particularly saxophone) solos:<sup>48</sup> six recordings by Jimmy Witherspoon, possibly produced in Los Angeles, feature strongly executed snare backbeats in instrumental solo structural sections;<sup>49</sup> *Unidentified Boogie No.1* by Camille Howard, features sporadic use of strong snare backbeat; *Right Now Baby* by Johnny Otis includes

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<sup>47</sup>According to Leadbitter, Fancourt and Slaven (1994: 538), Stidham - who previously recorded in Chicago with Judge Riley drumming - recorded in New York with Lucky Millinder's Orchestra during 1948. Judge Riley was not included in Stidham's New York recording sessions.

<sup>48</sup>Crudup did not record during 1948 so it is impossible to ascertain whether or not sporadic or sectional use of emphatic snare backbeats continued to feature in his performance repertoire.

<sup>49</sup>The six recordings are as follows: *Call Me Baby*, *Lush Head Woman*, *Miss Clawdy*, *Mr. Hootie*, *Skid Row Blues*, and *The New Look*. Witherspoon's fifteen other located recordings from 1948 exclude snare backbeats, suggesting that accenting snare backbeats was not a prominent style characteristic of Witherspoon's recorded output.

sectional use of strong snare backbeat; and 2 of 4 recordings produced in Chicago by Eddie Boyd, *Baby What's Wrong With You* and *Chicago Just That Way*, include sporadic use of strong snare backbeats generally executed on pulse 4 of a 4/4 bar.<sup>50</sup>

As evident in Table 4.3 (page 240), most rhythm and blues recordings produced in 1949 contain other drum beats. However, in order to better our understanding of the use of strong or emphatic snare backbeat in rhythm and blues, the following discussion will examine those few recordings where snare backbeat is included. Perhaps this discussion will reveal further contingencies regarding the use of snare backbeat in *geographic locations, functions, and musicians' repertoire.*

The extant 1949 recorded output of Arthur Crudup (eight recordings all recorded in Chicago), with Judge Riley drumming, includes emphatic snare backbeats generally used during guitar solos but sometimes appearing in sporadic fashion throughout the recording. A similar drumming style is evident in 3 of 4 recordings produced in 1949 by Arbee Stidham. Stidham's 1949 recordings include Judge Riley drumming.

Sectional use of strong or emphatic snare backbeats were located in four recordings produced in New Orleans during 1949: Paul Gayten's *Creole Gal* and Roy Brown's *Ridin' High* and *Rock-a-bye Baby* include emphatic snare backbeats in instrumental solo sections;<sup>51</sup> Fats Domino's *The Fat Man* includes strong snare backbeats located in verses and choruses. The following recordings produced in New Orleans feature strong or emphatic snare backbeats executed throughout all structural sections:

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<sup>50</sup>Such drumming is similar to that featuring in Crudup's 1947 recorded output, as previously discussed, which included Judge Riley drumming. Indeed, according to Leadbitter and Slaven (1987: 134) Judge Riley was recording with Boyd during 1948.

<sup>51</sup>These recordings include additional snare drum rhythmic activity. For example, *Creole Gal* includes comping snare rhythms in most structural sections of the recording, and *Ridin' High* comprises snare accentuations accompanying riffing horn rhythms, much in the style of 1930s swing era drumming, as previously discussed in Chapter Three.

Domino's *Detroit City Blues*, *Hide Away Blues* and Roy Brown's (*The Girls in*) *Big Town*, *Butcher Pete Part 1* and *Part 2*, *It's a Cryin' Shame*, and *Cryin' and Singin' The Blues*.<sup>52</sup> Within the context of those rhythm and blues recordings sampled in Appendix Three, Brown's slow blues tempo *Cryin' and Singin' the Blues* is notable for its consistent use of emphatic snare backbeat. Slow blues tempo recordings produced prior to 1949 generally feature even executions on all four pulses of the 4/4 bar - evident in, for example, the verse and choruses of Wynonie Harris' *Big City Blues* (N.Y., 1947)<sup>53</sup> - or perhaps shuffle or swing rhythms (for example, the slow blues tempo recordings by Louis Jordan). In comparison with earlier slow blues tempo rhythm and blues recordings, the consistent use of emphatic snare backbeat in Brown's recording is innovative.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps informed by the slow blues tempo, *Cryin' and Singin' the Blues* includes some rhythmic variations of a swing rhythm executed on ride cymbal (some examples of rhythmic variations are notated in Figure 4.2). As indicated in the following notation, cymbal rhythms also emphasize the backbeat.



Figure 4.2 Brown *Cryin' and Singin' the Blues* (drumming excerpt)

<sup>52</sup>*Butcher Pete Part 1* and *Part 2* were both recorded in Cincinnati. However, discographical information accompanying *Good Rocking Tonight* (Route 66 record: Kix-6, 1978) and *Laughing But Crying* (Route 66 record: Kix-2, 1977) suggests that Brown's New Orleans based musicians - including drummer Frank Parker - toured and subsequently recorded with Brown in Cincinnati during 1949. Consequently, the two recordings produced in Cincinnati have been included in our investigation of New Orleans rhythm and blues.

<sup>53</sup>Aside from a snare on all four pulses rhythm, Harris' *Big City Blues* also includes emphatic snare backbeats located in the introduction, trumpet and saxophone solos.

<sup>54</sup>Some early occurrences of strong or emphatic snare backbeats in slow blues tempo recordings were located in recordings by Muddy Waters (Chicago, 1946), Arthur Crudup (Chicago, 1947), and Arbee Stidham (Chicago, 1947), but snare executions were mostly sporadic or employed in particular structural sections only.

Our investigation of rhythm and blues recordings produced in Chicago and New Orleans during 1949 has revealed that 22 of 34 recordings contain strong or emphatic snare backbeat.<sup>55</sup> Most other musicians listed in Table 4.3 whose 1949 recordings include strong or emphatic snare backbeat were recording in Los Angeles. Big Jay McNeely with Leonard Hardiman drumming,<sup>56</sup> for example, recorded ten instrumental tracks of which seven contain emphatic snare backbeats occurring either throughout the recording or during saxophone solos only. Other recordings produced in Los Angeles - such as those by Floyd Dixon, Joe Houston, Amos Milburn and Roy Milton - exemplified similar strong or emphatic snare usage. However, one recording by Amos Milburn - *Bow-Wow* - includes a comparatively unusual snare rhythm. In this instance, drummer Calvin Vaughans performs a drum beat, notated in Figure 4.3, that features throughout the alto sax solo. Whilst the ride cymbal rhythm remains the same throughout the recording, the snare rhythm includes some off-pulse executions, reminiscent of snare comping style sometimes employed during the late swing era (as previously noted in Chapter Three).



Figure 4.3 Amos Milburn: *Bow-Wow* (drumming excerpt)

So far, our investigation of rhythm and blues recordings produced between 1944-49 has revealed that only a relatively small number of recordings from our sample display

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<sup>55</sup>Aside from snare drum usage, one recording - Roy Brown's *Rockin' At Midnight* - includes handclapping on the backbeat.

<sup>56</sup>Discographical information regarding Hardiman's employment on these recording sessions was obtained from liner notes accompanying the record *Barrelhouse Stomp*, (Saxonograph record: BP-1300, 1986).

at least some degree of similarity to snare backbeat usage in rock'n'roll. A summary of our findings is located in Table 4.7 below which details, firstly, the number of recordings that contain strong or emphatic snare backbeat and, secondly, the location of snare backbeat (either [1] throughout the recording or [2] sporadic and/or sectional use of backbeats). At the end of Table 4.7, the number of recordings that include strong or emphatic snare backbeat is represented as a percentage of the total number of rhythm and blues recordings sampled. For example, it is evident that, in 1947, only 3 (1%) of 251 recordings sampled contain strong or emphatic snare backbeat executed throughout a recording (the total number of rhythm and blues recordings sampled is listed near the top of Table 4.7).



<b><u>Rhythm and blues recordings, 1944-49: strong or emphatic snare backbeats.</u></b>												
<b>[1] Strong or emphatic snare backbeats used throughout the recording; [2] sporadic and/or sectional use of strong or emphatic snare backbeats.</b>												
<b>Year:</b>	1944		1945		1946		1947		1948		1949	
<b>No. of recordings:</b>	17		91		119		251		85		156	
<b>Beat:</b>	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]
Eddie Boyd										2		
Roy Brown											5	2
Arthur Crudup								11				8
Floyd Dixon											1	1
Fats Domino											2	1
Paul Gayten												1
Wynonie Harris								2				1
Joe Houston												1
Camille Howard							2			1		
Ivory Joe Hunter								3				
Louis Jordan		1										2
Saunders King						1						
Big Jay McNeely								1	1		3	4
Jack McVea				3								
Amos Milburn											1	1
Roy Milton				1			1	6			1	4
Johnny Otis									1	1		
Arbee Stidham								2	1			3
Big Joe Turner				1		1						
Muddy Waters						4						
Paul Williams									2			1
Jimmy Witherspoon										6		
<b>Total:</b>		1		5		6	3	25	5	10	14	29
<b>Percentage:</b>	0%	6%	0%	5%	0%	5%	1%	10%	6%	12%	9%	19%

Table 4.7 Rhythm and blues recordings, 1944-49: number of recordings containing strong or emphatic snare backbeats.

Having noted the extent to which strong or emphatic snare backbeats feature in our sample of rhythm and blues recordings produced between 1944-49, we will continue our survey by focussing on rhythm and blues recordings produced between 1950 and 1955.

As illustrated in Table 4.5 (page 244) and Table 4.6 (page 246), rhythm and blues recordings (as sampled in Appendix Three) produced from 1950 to 1955 increasingly feature snare backbeat. I will not attempt to describe in detail this stylistic shift up to and including 1955. In order to do so, discussion and cross-referencing of eight hundred and fifty five tracks recorded between the period 1950 up to and including 1955 would need to be undertaken. There is insufficient space here to engage in detailed explication of this recordings sample. Consequently, the following discussion will be structured as follows. Firstly, I will refer to the output of selected rhythm and blues musicians in order to illustrate drumming style evident in recordings produced in particular geographic locations. Secondly, the number of recordings produced from 1950 to 1955 that include either strong or emphatic snare backbeats will be illustrated. Thirdly, as noted earlier in this chapter, there will be a discussion of the extant recordings of Fats Domino (produced in New Orleans) and Little Richard (produced in Atlanta and Houston) will then ensue.

It is evident from the recordings sources listed in Appendix Three that the extant recorded output of Arthur Crudup, Louis Jordan, and Muddy Waters was located. Our rhythm and blues sample also contains a large sampling of recordings by Wynonie Harris, Joe Liggins and T-Bone Walker. The following summary of drum beats in rhythm and blues recordings produced between 1950 and 1955 will therefore focus on the output of the aforementioned musicians. References to drumming style evident in the output of a particular musician will be presented in point form.

- Only two of Muddy Waters' extant recordings dating from 1950 to 1953

- contain snare backbeat. From 1954, however, strong snare backbeats feature in Waters' output. In contrast, Crudup's output dating from 1952 contains weak snare backbeats and flat four based beats, perhaps as a result of the exclusion of Judge Riley from Crudup's recording sessions (as we have previously observed, Riley's drumming characteristically contained strong or emphatic snare backbeat).<sup>57</sup>
- Wynonie Harris' recordings dating from 1950 to 1955, produced in either New York or Cincinnati, include a variety of drummers performing on particular recording sessions.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, some consistency in drumming style can be generally observed in Harris' output. Although many of Harris' recordings feature other drum beats, from 1950 to 1953 a gradual increase in the use of strongly or emphatically executed snare backbeats is evident. By 1954, Harris' output mostly features strong or emphatic snare backbeat executed throughout the recording. One recording - *Good Mambo Tonight* (Cincinnati, 1954) - includes consistent use of snare backbeat variation 1 rhythms.<sup>59</sup> *Git To Gittin' Baby* (Cincinnati, 1954) includes a similar rhythm executed on an unidentified percussion instrument. Most of Harris' output contains swing or shuffle rhythms on cymbals.
  - Louis Jordan's complete recorded output dating from 1950 to 1954, mostly produced in New York,<sup>60</sup> was located and included in Appendix Three. Table

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<sup>57</sup>See Leadbitter and Slaven (1987: 303-4) for a listing of personnel included in Crudup's early 1950s recordings.

<sup>58</sup>A comprehensive discography is included in Collins (1995: 137-149).

<sup>59</sup>Snare backbeat variations are described in Chapter 2.2.

<sup>60</sup>The following nine recordings were produced elsewhere: *Blue Light Boogie, Parts 1 and 2* (Chicago, 1950), *I Want A Roof Over My Head* (Chicago, 1950), *Show Me How (You Milk The Cow)* (Chicago, 1950), *I Didn't Know What Time It Was* (L.A., 1952), *It's Better To Wait For Love* (L.A., 1952), *Jordan For President* (Washington, 1952), *Just Like A Butterfly* (L.A., 1952), *Only Yesterday* (L.A., 1952), *The Soon-A-Baby* (Washington, 1952). The range of drum beats incorporated in such

- 4.3 (page 240) and Table 4.4 (page 242) illustrates that Jordan's recordings produced from 1950 to 1951 are almost evenly divided between those that do contain snare backbeats and those that do not. A range of snare backbeat-based drum beats are featured in Jordan's recordings produced during the early '50s. For example, snare on all four pulses with weak backbeats feature in *Trouble Then Satisfaction* (1950), *Teardrops From My Eyes* (1950) includes weak snare backbeats in instrumental solos, and an emphatic snare backbeat is used throughout *Please Don't Leave Me* (1951). Jordan's 1952-3 recordings mostly contain other drum beats. However, by 1954 around one half of Jordan's recorded output contains emphatic snare backbeats generally executed throughout a recording. Jordan's recordings, including those containing other drum beats, mostly feature swing rhythms or sometimes shuffle rhythms on hi-hat or ride cymbal.
- Joe Liggins' Hollywood recordings display a gradual evolution from sectional use of snare backbeat (mostly evident during saxophone solos) to a consistent use throughout a recording. Concomitant with such development was an increasing tendency for Liggins' drummer to employ strong or emphatic snare backbeat. Liggins' recordings are generally characterized by swing rhythms on hi-hat or ride cymbal.<sup>61</sup>
  - As detailed in Table 4.3 (page 240), Table 4.4 (page 242) and Appendix Three, T-Bone Walker's output dating from 1950 mostly contains other beats, including swing or shuffle rhythms on cymbals without snare backbeat (for example, *Strollin' With Bone*, L.A., 1950), snare on all four pulses rhythms (*Get These Blues Off Me*, L.A., 1952) and, occasionally, some shuffle

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recordings does not vary from those appearing in Jordan's recordings produced in New York and, therefore, there is no need to account for any deviation resulting from a change in recordings location.

<sup>61</sup>Alternate cymbal rhythms are sometimes employed. For example, *Little Joe's Boogie* (1950) includes a shuffle rhythm on ride cymbal, and *Pink Champagne* (1950) includes a ride cymbal on all four pulses. No other cymbal rhythm variations are evident in Liggins' located recordings sample.

rhythms on snare (*Pony Tail*, New Orleans?, 1953). Only 7 of 16 recordings produced between 1953 and 1954 feature strong or emphatic snare backbeats. Two recordings - *My Baby Is Now On My Mind* (Detroit, 1953) and *Teen Age Baby* (L.A., 1954) - include snare backbeat variation 1 rhythms.<sup>62</sup>

It is evident from the previous discussion that weakly executed snare backbeats and other beats feature in many rhythm and blues recordings produced during the early 1950s. Indeed, in reference to the total sample of rhythm and blues recordings produced between 1950-55 (listed in Appendix Three), it is apparent from Table 4.8 below that strong or emphatic snare backbeats executed throughout all structural sections did not strongly feature in rhythm and blues recordings until around 1953.

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<sup>62</sup>Walker's *Hard Way* (L.A., 1954) includes tom-toms or congas performing a snare variation 1 rhythm.

**Rhythm and blues recordings, 1950-55: strong or emphatic snare backbeats.**

[1] Strong or emphatic snare backbeats used throughout the recording;  
[2] sporadic and/or sectional use of strong or emphatic snare backbeats.

Year:	1950		1951		1952		1953		1954		1955	
No. of recordings:	180		174		174		156		128		46	
Beat:	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]
Eddie Boyd									2			
Hadda Brooks					1							
Roy Brown	1	2			5		5		4		2	
Gree Carter	1											
Arthur Crudup		8	1	4	1							
Floyd Dixon	2	1			3	1	10	3	4			
Fats Domino			1	1	5		17		4		18	
Lowell Fulson		2	2	1								
Paul Gayten							1					
Peppermint Harris							1					
Wynonie Harris	1	2			4		3	1	13			
Chuck Higgins							3		5		3	
Joe Houston	1		1		4		1		3		3	
Camille Howard		1		2		1						
Helen Humes	1	1	1								2	
Ivory Joe Hunter						1						
Louis Jordan	2	2	1	8		2		1	12	1		
Jimmy Liggins			5	3			2					
Joe Liggins		3	2	5	2		4		3			
Big Jay McNeely	4		1		3		2		3			
Amos Milburn	1				1		1		4			
Roy Milton	3	7	3	4	1		1					
Lloyd Price					12	1	9	1	4			

Table 4.8 Rhythm and blues recordings, 1950-55: number of recordings containing strong or emphatic snare backbeats.

<b><u>Rhythm and blues recordings, 1950-55: strong or emphatic snare backbeats.</u></b>												
<b>[1] Strong or emphatic snare backbeats used throughout the recording; [2] sporadic and/or sectional use of strong or emphatic snare backbeats.</b>												
<b>Year:</b>	1950		1951		1952		1953		1954		1955	
<b>Beat:</b>	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]
Little Richard				3	4		6	2				
Arbee Stidham								1				
Treniers	1						4	4	4			
T-Bone Walker		1		1		2	4		2	1		
Little Walter						1			1			3
Muddy Waters				1					3	1	5	2
Paul Williams			2									
Jimmy Witherspoon							1					1
Howlin' Wolf			1		5	2						
<b>Total:</b>	18	30	21	33	51	11	75	13	71	3	37	2
<b>Percentage:</b>	10%	17%	12%	19%	29%	6%	48%	8%	55%	2%	80%	4%

Table 4.8 Rhythm and blues recordings, 1950-55: number of recordings containing strong or emphatic snare backbeats (cont'd).

It is apparent from Table 4.3 (page 240), Table 4.4 (page 242) and Table 4.8 (above), that consistent use of either strong or emphatic snare backbeat featured in the output of particular rhythm and blues musicians.<sup>63</sup> For example, a majority of Big Jay McNeely's recordings, all instrumental performances largely perpetuated by tenor saxophone solos, consistently employ either strong or emphatic snare backbeats

<sup>63</sup>Occasionally, the number of recordings listed in Table 4.8 exceeds the number of recordings sampled, as listed in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4. This is due to the inclusion in Table 4.8 of recordings that feature either strong or emphatic snare backbeats within one structural section and weak snare backbeats in other sections (for example, Howlin' Wolf's *Highway Man*, 1952 and Little Richard's *Aint That Good News*, 1953). Such recordings were designated as containing snare backbeats throughout the recording in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 but are included in Table 4.8 as containing sectional or sporadic use of strong or emphatic snare backbeats.

throughout the recording. The output of Fats Domino and Lloyd Price also contains extensive use of strong or emphatic snare backbeats. As previously signalled, detailed discussion of Fats Domino's New Orleans rhythm and blues recordings will ensue. Brief reference to Lloyd Price's recordings will also be included in the following discussion.

#### **4.3.4 Fats Domino's Rhythm and Blues Recordings**

The backing band for Domino's late '40s recording sessions was led by trumpeter Dave Bartholomew and included members from Bartholomew's rhythm and blues ensemble. Drummer Earl Palmer joined Bartholomew's ensemble in 1946 and subsequently recorded with Domino in 1949. Identifying personnel - including drummers - on Domino's later sessions is fraught with uncertainty possibly due to the rather poor record keeping practices of Imperial records and the fallibility of memory of those possible participants. For example, Keesing, Wieze and Zwisohn (1993: 48), basing their research on the existing ledgers and documents from the Imperial records files, note that Cornelius Coleman played drums on many of Domino's post-1951 sessions. Leadbitter and Slaven (1987: 349-352) list Palmer performing on Domino's 1949 and 1950 recordings but note that Coleman was drumming on all but one of Domino's recordings from 1951 to 1955.<sup>64</sup> Gillet (1983: 97) also notes that both Palmer and Coleman recorded with Domino. As we noted in Chapter Two, however, Palmer (as quoted in Flans, 1983: 12) recalls drumming on all of Domino's recordings and subsequently suggests that Cornelius Coleman was only playing in Domino's touring band. It is necessary to clarify matters concerning drumming personnel on Domino's recordings up to and including 1955 if we are to elucidate any stylistic links between

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<sup>64</sup>According to Leadbitter and Slaven (1987: 351), Palmer was drumming on *Third Avenue Breakdown* (1953), a recording that was mistitled as *Don't Leave Me This Way* when commercially released.



drumming in these recordings and Domino's post-1955 beat typologies, as listed in Chapter 2.7.2. We will briefly compare the drumming style and geographic location of various recordings by Palmer and Coleman in order to reach a reasonable assumption concerning which drummer recorded with Domino during the late 1940s and early '50s.

Coleman's recorded performances with T-Bone Walker produced during the early 1950s display a diverse range of drum beats.<sup>65</sup> For example, *Pony Tail* (New Orleans, 1953) contains a shuffle rhythm on snare and ride cymbal, *When The Sun Goes Down* (L.A.?, 1953) includes a weak snare backbeat with brushes and no cymbal work (a characteristic drum beat of Walker's earlier recordings) and *My Baby Is Now On My Mind* (Detroit, 1953) includes emphatic snare backbeat variation 1 rhythms. It can be noted from the above that these recordings took place in three different cities, this suggesting that Coleman travelled and recorded in various locations during 1953. Keesing, Wieze and Zwisohn (1993: 49-50), however, list Coleman as having recorded with Domino in New Orleans throughout 1953.

According to discographical information,<sup>66</sup> Palmer recorded with Lloyd Price throughout 1952 and early 1953. As will become evident from our subsequent discussion, Price's recordings feature similar drum beats to those contained in Domino's repertoire produced during the same period. It would be reasonable to assume, therefore, that Palmer remained in New Orleans during 1952-3 and recorded with both Price and Domino. We will therefore accept Palmer's notion, as previously

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<sup>65</sup>Discographical information is based on that included in the sleeve notes to T-Bone Walker: The Inventor of the Blues Guitar, (Blues Boy compact disc: BB 304, 1983).

<sup>66</sup>The discography is included in the sleeve notes accompanying the following compact discs: Lloyd Price: Lawdy? (Ace Records compact disc: CDCHD 360, 1991) and Lloyd Price Vol.2: Heavy Dreams (Ace Records compact disc: CDCHD 512, 1993).

cited, that he recorded with Domino from 1949 (Domino's first recording session) to 1955.

Domino's first recordings produced for Imperial records during 1949 contain the following drumming characteristics: *Hide Away Blues* contains a strong snare backbeat throughout the recording, *Detroit City Blues* includes a strong snare backbeat in the piano solo and *The Fat Man* features a strong snare backbeat in the vocal sections only. *The Fat Man* thus reverses the traditionally forties rhythm and blues practice of featuring snare backbeat in instrumental solo sections (as previously observed). Only one recording produced in 1949, *She's My Baby*, does not include snare backbeat (comping snare rhythms are featured in this recording).<sup>67</sup> Given Palmer's tendency to include snare backbeats in Domino's first set of recordings, it would be useful to briefly explore some early musical influences in order to understand Palmer's motivation toward such performance practice.

As quoted in various published interviews, Palmer's early musical experiences include performances of "bebop and 1940s ballads" in New Orleans during the mid to late 1940s.<sup>68</sup> Although Palmer (as quoted in Weinberg, 1991: 91) states that he "didn't really get interested" in rhythm and blues until he began working with Dave Bartholomew's band during the mid-1940s, Palmer was, however, familiar with rhythm and blues drumming style, as evident from his remarks on the "intense" rhythms in Domino's *The Fat Man* and post World War II popular music in general:

That backbeat became a little more pronounced. Before that they were either playing bebop or they were playing Dixieland. And in Dixieland there wasn't a very strong afterbeat [backbeat] throughout a tune. When they go on the shout

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<sup>67</sup>Excluding *The Fat Man*, which includes a swing rhythm on ride cymbal, the cymbal work in Domino's 1949 recordings (listed in Appendix Three) is very unclear in the studio mix and will therefore not be discussed here.

<sup>68</sup>See, for example, Weinberg (1991: 90), Flans (1983: 13) and Fish (1982b: 64)..

chorus, they used to play a strong afterbeat and get on a big trash-can cymbal and this is when they really heard it (Palmer as quoted in Weinberg, 1991: 91).

Palmer is referring here to the incorporation of snare backbeat accompanied by ride (“trash-can”) cymbal rhythms in the shout choruses of rhythm and blues performances. It is unfortunate that Palmer does not name any recordings in which such drumming performance practice existed. As we have noted above, “strong afterbeats” did not feature in our sample of pre-1949 recordings produced in New Orleans (also see mini-analyses of recordings by Roy Brown and Paul Gayten, for example, located in Appendix Three). Perhaps Palmer had in mind live performance practice undertaken by various 1940s New Orleans drummers, or alternately, Palmer might be referring to a post-1949 drumming performance practice. Regardless, he does confirm in the above quote that some 1940s rhythm and blues styles featured snare backbeat in shout choruses.<sup>69</sup> It is curious, however, that Palmer adhered to such 1940s rhythm and blues drumming performance practice in only two of Domino’s recordings, *The Fat Man* and *No, No Baby* (1951), the latter of which employs strong snare backbeats in the final (“shout”) choruses. As will become evident, Domino’s recordings up to and including 1955 include either snare backbeats throughout the recording or contain other drum beats; no recordings feature snare backbeat in shout choruses only.

It is evident in Table 4.3 (page 240) and Table 4.4 (page 242), that Domino’s output produced from 1951 to 1955 includes recordings that feature other drum beats. In particular, shuffle based beats and Latin beats strongly figured in Domino’s output produced during the early 1950s.<sup>70</sup> Shuffle beats are evident in *Rockin’ Chair* (1951),

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<sup>69</sup>This stylistic trait has been previously noted. For example, Table 4.7 (page 258) details occurrences of sectional strong or emphatic snare backbeat usage in the repertoire of particular rhythm and blues musicians.

<sup>70</sup>Of course, there are some exceptions to such broad categorizations. For example, Palmer is most likely playing the snare drum on all four pulses in *Careless Love* (1950). Palmer’s experience as a bebop drummer is represented on other recordings that do not contain an accented snare backbeat. For example, Palmer’s drumming on *You Know I Miss You* (1951) includes a double time swing rhythm (that is, a swing rhythm on each crotchet pulse) played against triplet piano rhythms. The quickly

for example, which contains a shuffle rhythm played on the snare drum with brushes (snare executions can be heard in the very final bars of this recording) and the ride cymbal.<sup>71</sup> Other recordings, such as *Ain't It Good* (1953), *Little School Girl* (1953) and *Don't You Hear Me Calling* (1954), contain Latin beats that feature syncopated and even quaver rhythms on drums. During the early 1950s, quaver triplet-based beats also commonly featured in Domino's output.

*Everynight About This Time* (New Orleans, 1950) was Domino's first recording that extensively employed quaver triplet chordal piano rhythms, a rhythm that Domino popularized during the rock'n'roll era through such commercial hits as *Don't Blame It On Me*, *Blueberry Hill* and *Valley Of Tears*. According to Domino's record producer, Dave Bartholomew, Domino acquired this particular piano accompaniment upon listening to the performance practice of pianist Little Willie Littlefield whose 1948 recording of *It's Midnight* (Modern records) apparently employed chordal triplet piano rhythms (Bartholomew as quoted in Broven, 1983: 31). It would be reasonable to speculate that Palmer adopted quaver triplet cymbal rhythms in his drumming in the interest of creating rhythmic homogeneity with Domino's piano accompaniment.

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executed snare bombs at the end of the guitar solo require skill with timing and rhythmic placement, as does similar such bombs occurring at the very end of the recording. *I'll Be Gone* (1951) has similar drumming but with frequent bombing on snare drum. Similarly, the alla breve tempo *No, No Baby* (1951) mostly includes off-pulse snare bombs. The tempo of the latter recording - around 200 pulses per minute - coupled with a swing on ride and snare drum bombing is reminiscent of bebop drumming technique. The instrumental recording *The Fat Man's Hop* (1952) also largely adheres to bebop rather than contemporaneous rhythm and blues drumming concepts. The horn melodies in this recording are accentuated by either the snare or ride cymbal executions. Otherwise, the recording is characterized by a cymbal or hi-hat wash of sound, possibly produced by triplet executions on the rim of the cymbal.

<sup>71</sup> Shuffle based beats are included in the following recordings. *Sometimes I Wonder* (1951) contains a shuffle rhythm on ride. At times, snare drum backbeats are included in this piece, but only for a couple of bars at a time. The force of snare backbeat execution as sounded in the recording is weak but the timbre of the snare drum as effected by the force of execution suggests that it was struck emphatically. Most of the piece, however, is without snare backbeat. *Long Lonesome Journey* (1952) includes some shuffle rhythms on ride cymbal but no snare drum rhythms. *Long Lonesome Journey* (take ?, 1952) includes shuffle rhythms on tom-toms or snare drum without the snare engaged and *You Can Pack Your Suitcase* (1954) contains shuffle rhythms on snare and also ride cymbal in the sax solo. Similarly, *I Know* (1954) contains a shuffle on snare and ride cymbal.

Coupled with snare backbeat, Palmer regularly used quaver triplet based drum beats in conjunction with similar accompaniments provided by Domino. As we have previously observed in Chapter 2.7.2, the aforementioned accompanimental beat regularly recurred in and typified Domino's rock'n'roll output.

As evident in Table 4.9 below,<sup>72</sup> only 54 (3%) of 1 577 rhythm and blues recordings sampled from 1944 to 1955 contain quaver triplet cymbal rhythms with snare backbeat.<sup>73</sup> Of those recordings listed, twenty seven were produced by Fats Domino with Earl Palmer drumming. Palmer also recorded with Lloyd Price during 1952 and 1953. Excluding *I Wish Your Picture Was You* and *Tryin' To Find Someone To Love*, which included Oliver Berry drumming,<sup>74</sup> ten recordings produced by Lloyd Price with Earl Palmer drumming include triplet cymbal rhythms and snare backbeats. Consequently, around 69% of those quaver triplet cymbal and snare backbeat based rhythm and blues recordings located in Appendix Three feature Earl Palmer drumming.

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<sup>72</sup>References to "triplet piano rhythms" in Table 4.9 infers both chordal and non-chordal piano triplet rhythm-based occurrences.

<sup>73</sup>Six recordings were located that contain quaver triplet drum rhythms recurring throughout a drum beat: Eddie Boyd and His Chess Men's *Please Help Me* (Chicago, 1954), Little Richard's *Why Did You Leave Me?* (Atlanta, 1951) and *Aint That Good News* (Houston, 1953), Little Walter's *Last Night* (Chicago, 1954), Muddy Waters' *Ooh Wee* (Chicago, 1954) and Howlin' Wolf's *Champagne Velvet Blues* (Memphis, 1952).

<sup>74</sup>Such discographical information is included in Lloyd Price: Lawdy! (Ace compact disc: CDCHD 360, 1991).

<p>Roy Brown. <i>It's a Cryin' Shame</i>, New Orleans, 1949. <i>Letter To Baby</i>, Cincinnati, 1955.</p> <p>Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup. <i>Baby I've Been Mistreated</i>, Jackson, 1952. <i>I Wonder</i>, Jackson, 1952. <i>You Didn't Mean A Word</i>, Jackson, 1952.</p> <p>Floyd Dixon. <i>Is It True</i>, N.Y., 1954.</p> <p>Fats Domino. <i>Korea Blues</i>, New Orleans, 1950. <i>Reeling And Rocking</i>, New Orleans, 1951. <i>Cheatin'</i>, New Orleans, 1952. <i>Dreaming</i>, New Orleans, 1952. <i>Goin' Home</i>, New Orleans, 1952. <i>I Guess I'll Be On My Way</i>, New Orleans, 1952. <i>Nobody Loves Me</i>, New Orleans, 1952. <i>Poor, Poor Me</i> (take ?), New Orleans, 1952. <i>Don't Leave Me This Way</i>, New Orleans, 1953. <i>Goin' Back Home</i>, Hollywood, 1953. <i>Going To The River</i>, New Orleans, 1953. <i>Goodbye</i>, New Orleans, 1953. <i>I Love Her</i>, New Orleans, 1953. <i>Something's Wrong</i>, New Orleans, 1953. <i>The Girl I Love</i>, New Orleans, 1953. <i>Thinking Of You</i>, New Orleans, 1953. <i>You Said You Love Me</i>, Hollywood, 1953. <i>I Lived My Life</i>, Hollywood, 1954. <i>Love Me</i>, New Orleans, 1954. <i>Blue Monday</i>, Hollywood, 1955. <i>Don't Blame It On Me</i>, New Orleans, 1955. <i>Helping Hand</i>, New Orleans, 1955. <i>I Can't Go On</i>, New Orleans, 1955. <i>Poor Me</i>, New Orleans, 1955. <i>So-Long</i>, Hollywood, 1955. <i>Troubles Of My Own</i>, New Orleans, 1955. <i>What's Wrong?</i>, New Orleans, 1955.</p>	<p>Jimmy Liggins. <i>Going Away</i>, Miami, 1953? <i>I'll Never Let You Go</i> (undubbed master), Miami, 1953.</p> <p>Lloyd Price. <i>Lawdy Miss Clawdy</i>, New Orleans, 1952. <i>Oooh-Oooh-Oooh</i>, New Orleans, 1952. <i>Operator</i>, New Orleans, 1952. <i>Restless Heart</i>, New Orleans, 1952. <i>So Long</i>, New Orleans, 1952. <i>They Say</i>, New Orleans, 1952. <i>What's The Matter Now?</i>, Hollywood, 1952. <i>Baby, Don't Turn Your Back On Me</i>, New Orleans, 1953. <i>I Wish Your Picture Was You</i>, Hollywood, 1953. <i>Lord, Lord, Amen</i>, ?, 1953. <i>Too Late For Tears</i>, ?, 1953. <i>Tryin' To Find Someone To Love</i>, Hollywood, 1953. <i>All Alone</i> (take ?), New Orleans, 1954. <i>Little Bea</i>, New Orleans, 1954. <i>Night And Day</i>, New Orleans, 1954. <i>Night And Day Blues</i> (take ?), New Orleans, 1954. <i>Oh Love</i>, New Orleans, 1954.</p> <p>Little Richard. <i>Maybe I'm Right</i>, Houston, 1953.</p> <p>T-Bone Walker. <i>Vida Lee</i>, Detroit, 1953.</p>
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Table 4.9 Rhythm and Blues recordings (extant), 1944-55: quaver triplet cymbal rhythms and snare backbeat.

It is clear from the above discussion and evidence provided in Table 4.9 that Earl Palmer not only established the use of accented snare backbeats in the extant recorded output of Fats Domino but also pioneered the use of triplet cymbal based drum beats in rhythm and blues musical style.

In Chapter Two we identified some accompanimental beat typologies in Domino's rock'n'roll recorded output that feature particular drum beats and piano accompaniments. Similar such beat typologies were also located in Domino's rhythm and blues recorded output and, for consistency, these are presented below. Table 4.10 and Table 4.11 include recordings that employ chordal quaver triplet piano rhythms. Recordings that include non-chordal quaver triplet based piano rhythms are not included in this sample. Table 4.12 lists Domino's shuffle-based beats and Table 4.13 lists his boogie-based beats.

<b>Chordal quaver triplet piano accompaniment, snare backbeat and quaver triplets on cymbals.</b>		
<i>Korea Blues</i> , 1950.	<i>Goin' Back Home</i> , 1953.	<i>Love Me</i> , 1954.
<i>Reeling And Rocking</i> , 1951.	<i>Goin' To The River</i> , 1953.	<i>Blue Monday</i> , 1955.
<i>What's The Matter Baby?</i> , 1951.	<i>Goodbye</i> , 1953.	<i>Don't Blame It On Me</i> , 1955.
<i>Cheatin'</i> , 1952.	<i>I Love Her</i> , 1953.	<i>Helping Hand</i> , 1955.
<i>Dreaming</i> , 1952.	<i>Rose Mary</i> , 1953.	<i>I Can't Go On</i> , 1955.
<i>Goin' Home</i> , 1952.	<i>Something's Wrong</i> , 1953.	<i>Poor Me</i> , 1955.
<i>I Guess I'll Be On My Way</i> , 1952.	<i>The Girl I Love</i> , 1953.	<i>So-Long</i> , 1955
<i>Nobody Loves Me</i> , 1952.	<i>Thinking Of You</i> , 1953.	<i>Troubles Of My Own</i> , 1955.
<i>Don't Leave Me This Way</i> , 1953.	<i>You Said You Love Me</i> , 1953.	
	<i>I Lived My Life</i> , 1954.	

Table 4.10 Fats Domino recordings (selected sample), 1949-55: triplet piano/cymbal-based beats.

<b>Chordal quaver triplet piano accompaniment plus:</b>			
<b>Snare backbeat; swing, shuffle or no cymbal rhythms.</b>	<b>No snare backbeat; quaver triplets on cymbal.</b>	<b>No snare backbeat; other or no cymbal rhythms.</b>	<b>Snare and/or cymbal rhythms unclear.</b>
<u>Shuffle on cymbal</u> <i>Ain't That A Shame</i> , 1955. <i>Don't You Know</i> , 1955.	<i>Poor, Poor Me</i> , 1952.	<u>Swing on cymbal</u> <i>I'll Be Gone</i> , 1951 [swing on cymbal]. <i>You Know I Miss You</i> , 1951. <i>How Long?</i> , 1952. <u>Shuffle on cymbal</u> <i>I've Got Eyes For You</i> , 1951. <i>My Baby's Gone</i> , 1951. <i>Right From Wrong</i> , 1951. <i>Sometimes I Wonder</i> , 1951. <i>Tired Of Crying</i> , 1951. <i>Baby Please</i> , 1954. <u>Cymbal on all 4 pulses</u> <i>Help Me</i> , 1955. <u>No cymbal rhythms</u> <i>Oh Ba-a-by</i> , 1955.	<i>Detroit City Blues</i> , 1949. <i>Hide Away Blues</i> , 1949. <i>Brand New Baby</i> , 1950. <i>Every Night About This Time</i> , 1950.

Table 4.11 Fats Domino recordings (selected sample), 1949-55: chordal piano triplets-based beats.

<b>Domino shuffle piano accompaniment and</b>	
<b>Snare backbeat and cymbal rhythms.</b>	<b>No snare backbeat and cymbal rhythms.</b>
<u>Swing on cymbal</u> <i>You Done Me Wrong</i> , New Orleans, 1953. <i>Little Mama</i> , Hollywood, 1954. <i>I'm In Love Again</i> , 1955. <i>What's Wrong?</i> , 1955. <u>Shuffle on cymbal</u> <i>44</i> , 1953. <i>If You Need Me</i> , 1953. <i>Please Don't Leave Me</i> , 1953. <i>La-La</i> , 1955.	<u>Shuffle on cymbal</u> <i>Don't You Lie To Me</i> , 1951. <i>Rockin' Chair</i> , 1951. <i>I Know</i> , 1954. <u>No cymbal rhythms</u> <i>You Can Pack Your Suitcase</i> , 1954.

Table 4.12 Fats Domino recordings (selected sample), 1949-55: piano shuffle-based beats.



<b>Boogie piano accompaniment plus:</b>	
<b>Snare backbeat and cymbal rhythms.</b>	<b>No snare backbeat and cymbal rhythms.</b>
<u>Swing on cymbal</u> <i>Hey! Fat Man</i> , 1950. <i>No, No Baby</i> , 1951. <i>Barrelhouse</i> , 1953.	<u>Swing on cymbal</u> <i>Trust In Me</i> , 1952. <u>Unclear cymbal rhythms</u> <i>Boogie Woogie Baby</i> , 1949. <i>She's Me Baby</i> , 1949. <i>Little Bee</i> , 1950.

Table 4.13 Fats Domino recordings (selected sample), 1949-55: boogie piano-based beats.

By referring to Domino's beat typologies detailed in Chapter 2.7.2, it is clear that most beats featured in Domino's rhythm and blues recordings recurred during the rock'n'roll era. In particular, triplet piano/cymbal based beats remained a dominant style characteristic of Domino's output dating from 1950 to 1960. It is perhaps likely that Gillett (1983: 88, as quoted on page 234) was referring to Domino's beats when noting that little stylistic difference is evident between Domino's rock'n'roll and rhythm and blues recordings. However, it is worth noting that Domino jump piano accompaniments did not feature in Domino's rhythm and blues output and, in this respect, some stylistic development can be observed in Domino's output.

Having reviewed Domino's rhythm and blues recordings, the following discussion will investigate the pre-rock'n'roll era recordings of Little Richard. Although contributing to our understanding of rhythm and blues drumming, the following investigation will also elucidate any stylistic difference between Richard's rhythm and blues and rock'n'roll output.

#### 4.3.5 Little Richard's Rhythm and Blues Recordings

Little Richard's early musical career was informed by a diverse range of stylistic influences. For example, some early musical experiences included performances with travelling medicine shows, such as Dr. Hudson's Medicine Show. Richard recalls singing the rhythm and blues song *Caldonia Boogie*<sup>75</sup> for Dr. Hudson's cabaret act, noting that "it was the only song I knew that wasn't a church song" (White, 1985: 34). His later tour with the Broadway Follies - which included the comedy act "The Great Snake Revue" - regularly took him to Atlanta. Richard's part of the Revue was to sing a few songs on stage. Through these shows in Atlanta, Richard came in contact with B.B. King, Jimmy Witherspoon and Billy Wright,<sup>76</sup> the latter of which was effectual in Richard obtaining his first recording contract. Wright put Richard in contact with Zenas Sears, a disc jockey working for radio station WGST who had contacts with RCA Victor. A subsequent recording session for RCA Victor took place at WGST (Atlanta) in 1951, resulting in *Every Hour*, *Get Rich Quick*, *Taxi Blues* and *Why Did You Leave Me?*. This recording session made use of a band led by trumpet player Roy Mays<sup>77</sup> and a rhythm section comprised of drums, bass, and piano with baritone, tenor and alto saxophones providing further accompaniment. The instrumentation, therefore, is in keeping with that of rhythm and blues ensembles dating from the mid-forties (as previously discussed in Chapter 4.3). Some style characteristics of 1949-51 rhythm and blues recordings also pervade Richard's aforementioned recordings. For example,

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<sup>75</sup>Louis Jordan's *Caldonia Boogie* - listed as *Caldonia* by Whitburn, 1988: 229 - was a No.1 hit for Jordan in 1945. *Caldonia Boogie* was subsequently covered and re-titled *Caldonia* by many rhythm and blues artists, including Erskine Hawkins (1945) and Sugar Chile Robinson (1949). However, none of these cover versions enjoyed the commercial success of Jordan's recording.

<sup>76</sup>Between 1949-51 Wright had four Juke Box top ten hits: *Blues For My Baby*, *You Satisfy*, *Stacked Deck* and *Hey Little Girl*.

<sup>77</sup>Mays first met Richard in Atlanta when Richard was singing for the "Great Snake Revue" at the 81 Theater. Mays's band also played at the 81 Theater every Saturday.

*Taxi Blues* and *Get Rich Quick* both feature a blues form and include riffing horns. These two recordings also reflect the increasing tendency amongst late 1940s and early '50s rhythm and blues recordings to include emphatic snare backbeats in particular structural sections (emphatic snare backbeats are incorporated in the saxophone solos and, in the case of *Get Rich Quick*, also the final verse and chorus).

Perhaps the most rhythmically curious recording from Richard's first RCA Victor session is his original composition *Every Hour*, which was a local hit in Macon and Atlanta, possibly due to Sears' promotion of the recording. *Every Hour* incorporates a consistent snare execution on pulse 2 only, filling the silence on that pulse afforded by the riff performed by the piano's left hand and the horn section (see Figure 4.4).



Figure 4.4 Richard: *Every Hour* (riff).

The piano also emphasizes pulse 2 in the introduction and final verses by withholding the right hand chord accompaniment until that particular pulse. The emphatic backbeat and noumenal accent created by the piano rhythm beginning on the second pulse produce a beat that was uncommon in rhythm and blues recordings, particularly pre-1951 recordings. In fact, of those recordings scanned in Appendix Three only Lowell Fulson's *Baby Won't You Jump With Me* (L.A., 1950) and *Back Home Blues* (L.A., 1950) exhibit this rhythmic tendency.

A second RCA Victor (Atlanta) recording session in 1952 produced *I Brought It All On Myself*, *Thinkin' 'bout My Mother*, *Please Have Mercy On Me* and *Ain't Nothin' Happening*. This session incorporated May's band but with the following changes to instrumentation: a guitar was introduced, trombone replaced baritone sax and drummer

J. Williams replaced Donald Clark. The replacement of the drummer is significant. All recordings for this session now incorporate strong or emphatic snare backbeats, even in the slow blues song, *Please Have Mercy On Me* (around 54 pulses per minute). This second session was a commercial failure for RCA and the company subsequently lost interest in recording and promoting Richard.

After a brief stint with Percy Welch and His Orchestra, which performed around Macon, Richard formed his own band, the Tempo Toppers, at the request of the Macon promoter Clint Bradley who assured the group of some work. The Tempo Toppers regularly performed at the Dew Drop Inn, New Orleans, then moved to Houston for a residency at Club Matinee. It was here that Richard first met Johnny Otis and also attracted the interest of Peacock Records president, Don Robey, who subsequently signed the band to record for his label. Four songs were recorded for Peacock Records on February, 1953: *Always*, *Ain't That Good News*, *Fool At The Wheel* and *Rice, Red Beans And Turnip Greens*. All of these recordings include strong snare backbeats and *Fool At the Wheel* includes backbeat handclaps in the tenor sax solo.

Later, Robey hired Johnny Otis and His Orchestra to accompany Richard. This final session for Peacock Records recorded in October, 1953 produced *Directly From My Heart To You*, *I Love My Baby*, *Maybe I'm Right* and *Little Richard's Boogie*, none of which were commercially released at that time. Discographical information indicates that Johnny Otis was not drumming on these tracks.<sup>78</sup> However, the range of drum beats incorporated reflect a variety of rhythm and blues drumming performance practice. For example, *Directly From My Heart To You* includes a strong snare backbeat performed with brushes and *I Love You Baby* contains strong snare backbeats

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<sup>78</sup>See *Little Richard: The Formative Years, 1951-53* (Bear Family compact disc: BCD 15448, 1989). Also, discographical information drawn from White (1985) indicates that Leard Bell was drumming on Richard's final Peacock recording session and that Johnny Otis was playing vibraphone.

in the final verses and choruses and shuffle rhythms on snare at other times. *Maybe I'm Right*, however, includes an innovative use of triplet rhythms on hi-hat alongside a strong snare backbeat.

All of Richard's pre-rock'n'roll era recordings include snare backbeats and, from 1951 to 1953, there was an increasing use of snare backbeat throughout a recording rather than sporadic or sectional use. Swing and shuffle rhythms on cymbals, including hi-hat, largely figured in Richard's pre-rock'n'roll extant recorded output. Although such rhythms recurred in Richard's rock'n'roll output, quaver triplet and even quaver cymbal rhythms also featured in many drum beats. In this respect, Richard's rhythm and blues output therefore exemplifies some difference in drum beat to his rock'n'roll era recordings.

Throughout the course of our investigation of rhythm and blues recordings we have mostly focussed on locating and discussing the occurrence of snare backbeats, in accordance with the main focus of this thesis. However, it is apparent from the above investigation that rhythm and blues recordings (as sampled) were often characterized by other drum beats, particularly from 1944 to 1952. In order to better our understanding of rhythm and blues drumming, we will briefly investigate the range of other drum beats commonly employed during the rhythm and blues era. Some paradigmatic rhythm and blues drumming rhythms will be noted and uncharacteristic drum beats will also be referenced.

#### 4.3.6 Other Drum Beats in Rhythm and Blues.

Most drum beats that exclude snare backbeats are generally characterized by either swing or shuffle rhythms on cymbals, including hi-hat. Given rhythm and blues' jazz heritage in its early formative years, as we have previously noted, the incorporation of swing or shuffle rhythms on cymbals was likely a carry over from swing era drumming performance practice. Indeed, swing era drummers often performed rhythm and blues during the 1940s. For example, drummer Sonny Greer, whose drumming style has been discussed in Chapter Three, performed on many recordings by Ivory Joe Hunter.<sup>79</sup> Also, the rhythm and blues output of Wynonie Harris was often accompanied by ensembles, and drummers, that had previously recorded during the swing era. For example, from 1948 to 1952 Harris produced numerous recordings with Lionel Hampton and His Orchestra, Lucky Millinder and His Orchestra and the Todd Rhodes Orchestra (Collins, 1995: 142-6).

Aside from drum rhythms, long-short type rhythms characteristically featured in horn riffs, boogie piano accompaniments and other accompanimental figures of those rhythm and blues recordings sampled; even quaver rhythms - which began to figure in rock'n'roll recordings from the late 1950s - were extremely rare in both rhythm and blues drum beats and other accompaniments.<sup>80</sup> In fact, only one recording from the

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<sup>79</sup>These recordings are as follows: *Don't Fall In Love With Me* (Cincinnati, 1947), *False Friend Blues* (Cincinnati, 1947), *I Like It* (Cincinnati, 1947), *Send Me Pretty Mama* (Cincinnati, 1947), *Siesta With Sonny* (Cincinnati, 1947), *Stop Rockin' That Train* (Cincinnati, 1947), *What Did You Do To Me* (Cincinnati, 1947), *I Got Your Water On* (Cincinnati, 1949), *That's The Gal For Me* (L.A., 1949), *Please Don't Cry Anymore* (Cincinnati, 1949) (see discographical information contained in the sleeve notes to *Ivory Joe Hunter: 7th Street Boogie*, Route 66 record: Kix-4, 1977, and *Ivory Joe Hunter: I Had A Girl*, Route 66 record: Kix-25, 1984). Excluding *That's The Girl For Me*, which includes strong backbeat handclaps in the verses and the trumpet solo, none of the aforementioned recordings contain a snare backbeat. Rather, such recordings are mostly characterized by swing rhythms on cymbals.

<sup>80</sup>One such rare example is Lloyd Price's *Walkin' The Track* (New Orleans, 1953) which includes an introductory section with riffing horns and a rhythm guitar performing even quaver rhythms.

rhythm and blues recordings sample, Johnny Otis' *Right Now Baby* (L.A., 1948), includes even quaver rhythms on cymbals throughout the recording (a mini analysis of this recording is contained in Table 4.14 below).<sup>81</sup>

<p>Johnny Otis. <i>Right Now Baby</i>, L.A., 1948.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Vocal. Snare backbeat in sax and trumpet solo. Even quavers on ride. Bo Diddley clave rhythm. Bongo rhythms.</td> </tr> </table>	Vocal. Snare backbeat in sax and trumpet solo. Even quavers on ride. Bo Diddley clave rhythm. Bongo rhythms.
Vocal. Snare backbeat in sax and trumpet solo. Even quavers on ride. Bo Diddley clave rhythm. Bongo rhythms.	

Table 4.14 Rhythm and Blues recordings (extant recordings), 1944-55: even quavers on cymbal.

Rhythm and blues recordings that feature swing and shuffle cymbal rhythms sometimes include sporadic snare drum executions that were either comped or accentuated the rhythmic profile of horn riffs. Listen to, for example, Jimmy Liggins' *Now's The Time* (Hollywood, 1947), T-Bone Walker's *Strollin' With Bone* (L.A., 1950) or Louis Jordan's *You Broke Your Promise* (L.A., 1949) and *The Dipper* (N.Y., 1954), all of which include comping snare and some additional accentuation of riffing horn rhythms. Some rhythm and blues drum beats also contain extensive bass drum bombing and ride cymbal rhythms sounded on all four pulses. When occurring in fast tempo rhythm and blues recordings, these beats are particularly reminiscent of bebop drumming style. Ivory Joe Hunter's *Woo Wee Blues* (Nashville, 1947), for instance, exemplifies such bebop drumming in rhythm and blues accompaniments (a notation of the drumming featured in the first four bars of the trumpet solo is included in Figure 4.5).

<sup>81</sup>T-Bone Walker's *Hard Way* (L.A., 1954) includes even quavers on cymbal until the guitar solo. Swing rhythms on cymbals are then incorporated for the remainder of the recording.



Figure 4.5 Hunter *Woo Wee Blues* (drumming excerpt).

Aside from comping snare activity, snare drum executions on all four pulses were also commonly employed in rhythm and blues recordings (as sampled). Mostly, snare executions on all four pulses were not accompanied by cymbal rhythms.<sup>82</sup> For example, Lowell Fulson's *San Francisco Blues* (Oakland, 1946), *Poor Boy Blues* (Oakland, 1948) and *One More Drink* (L.A., 1951) contain snare with brushes on all four pulses and no cymbal work is evident in these slow blues tempo recordings. Camille Howard's *The Boogie And The Blues* (Hollywood, 1947), *Unidentified Boogie No. 1* (Hollywood, 1948), and *Boogie In G* (Hollywood, 1950) include snare on all four pulses with staccato pulses 1 and 3 and legato pulses 2 and 4 produced by sliding the brushes across the snare drum. No backbeat emphasis is produced. Aside from Fulson's slow blues tempo recordings and Camille Howard's boogie piano accompanied tracks, snare on all four pulses was also commonly employed in comparatively harmonically sophisticated rhythm and blues songs - particularly the category of rhythm and blues style referred to as "club blues" by Gillett (1983: 147). For instance, Joe Liggin's *I Just Can't Help Myself* (Hollywood, 1950) includes club blues style "brushed drums" (Gillett, 1983: 147) alongside altered chord harmonies. Liggin's recording of *The Honeydripper* (Hollywood, 1950), which includes riffing singing reminiscent of bebop melodic style, also features snare on all four pulses. Flat four snare rhythms, commonly used in swing era jazz drumming (as noted in Chapter

<sup>82</sup>Occasionally, snare on all four pulses is alternated with cymbal rhythms. For example, Joe Liggin's *Pink Champagne* (Hollywood, 1950) includes a snare on all four pulses performed with brushes. During the saxophone solo, the drummer (Peppy Prince) switches to the ride cymbal and executes rhythms on all four pulses.



Three), are therefore contained in a range of rhythm and blues styles.

Shuffle rhythms executed on the snare drum were sometimes incorporated in rhythm and blues drum beats. For example, Roy Brown's *Good Rockin' Tonight* (New Orleans, 1947) features a shuffle rhythm on snare with some occasional bombing on the bass drum. No cymbal work can be heard in the recording. The drumming rhythm notated in Figure 4.6 is paradigmatic of the drum beat used in *Good Rockin' Tonight*.



Figure 4.6 Roy Brown *Good Rockin' Tonight* (drumming excerpt)

Shuffle rhythm based drum beats often featured varied performance practices, including shuffle rhythms simultaneously executed on snare and hi-hat or on other items of percussive hardware. A list of recordings exemplifying some typical shuffle rhythm based drum beat variations is included in Table 4.15. As is evident from Table 4.15, many recordings containing shuffle rhythm based drum beats also feature boogie piano accompaniments. The combination of boogie piano and shuffle rhythms on drums created an homogeneous accompaniment that was often dynamically positioned above other accompanimental activity occurring in the recording.

<p>Roy Brown. <i>Rainy Weather Blues</i>, New Orleans, 1948.</p> <p>Vocal. Shuffle on snare. No cymbal work. Blues form. Legato horns.</p> <p><i>Lolly Pop Mama</i>, Cincinnati, 1947.</p> <p>Vocal. Shuffle on snare and hi-hat. Blues form. Boogie piano. Call and response sax.</p> <p><i>Good Rockin' Tonight</i>, New Orleans, 1947.</p> <p>Vocal. Shuffle on snare and bombing on bass drum generally on final semiquaver of pulse 3.</p> <p>Antoine 'Fats' Domino. <i>You Can Pack Your Suitcase</i>, New Orleans, 1954.</p> <p>Vocal. Shuffle on snare. No cymbal work in vocal section. Change to shuffle on ride in sax solo. Snare shuffle continues in sax solo. Blues form. Riffing horns.</p> <p>Louis Jordan. <i>Choo-Choo Ch'Boogie</i>, N.Y. 1946.</p> <p>Vocal. Shuffle on snare. No cymbal work. 2/2 time. Blues form. Boogie piano. Call and response horns.</p> <p>Jimmy Liggins and His Drops Of Joy. <i>Shuffle Shuck</i>, Hollywood, 1950.</p> <p>Instrumental (sax solo). Shuffle on snare with brushes. No cymbal work. Blues form. Boogie piano. Riffing horns.</p>	<p>Joe Liggins. <i>Rhythm in the Barnyard</i>, Hollywood, 1950.</p> <p>Vocal. Shuffle on tom-tom. No cymbal except for sax solo. 2/2 time. Blues form. Boogie piano. Riffing horns.</p> <p><i>Shuffle Boogie Blues</i>, Hollywood, 1951.</p> <p>Vocal. Some snare punctuations on off-pulse (shuffle rhythm) in introduction and riffing horns solos. Shuffle on hi-hat and ride. Blues form. Boogie piano. Riffing horns. Impro. gtr. with some triplet rhythms.</p> <p>The Treniers. <i>Flip Our Wigs</i>, L.A.?, 1953.</p> <p>Vocal. Riffing horns. Shuffle on snare with sticks in verses. Shuffle on ride. Possibly a snare backbeat in the solo breaks. Boogie piano.</p> <p>Jimmy Witherspoon. <i>Big Daddy</i>, Chicago, 1954.</p> <p>Vocal. Strong shuffle shared between snare and ride. Blues form. Riffing horns. Boogie piano.</p>
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Table 4.15 Rhythm and Blues recordings: shuffle on snare and variations (typical examples).

Aside from the paradigmatic rhythm and blues drum beats noted above, our rhythm and blues sample contained some recordings which featured Bo Diddley drum rhythms (the recordings are listed in Table 4.16).

Roy Brown. <i>Whose Hat Is That?</i> , New Orleans, 1947.	Johnny Otis and Co. <i>Right Now Baby</i> , L.A., 1948. <i>That's Your Last Boogie</i> , L.A., 1948.
Floyd Dixon. <i>Blues For Cuba</i> , L.A., 1950.	Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five. <i>Early In The Morning</i> , N.Y., 1947. <i>Run Joe</i> , N.Y., 1947. <i>Push-Ka-Pee She Pie</i> , L.A., 1949. <i>You Will Always Have A Friend</i> , N.Y., 1950. <i>Junco Partner</i> , N.Y., 1952.
Antoine 'Fats' Domino. <i>Mardi Gras In New Orleans</i> , New Orleans, 1952.	The Treniers. <i>I Got The Blues So Bad</i> , N.Y., 1953.
Paul Gayten and Annie Laurie. <i>Hey Little Girl</i> , New Orleans, 1947.	
Jack McVea and his All Stars. <i>Carlos</i> , L.A., 1947.	

Table 4.16 Rhythm and Blues recordings (extant recordings), 1944-55:  
Bo Diddley beats.

Most of the recordings listed in Table 4.16 incorporate a Bo Diddley rhythm performed on clave. Roy Brown's *Whose Hat Is That?* (New Orleans, 1947), on the other hand, is innovative in its projection of a Bo Diddley type rhythm. As notated in Figure 4.7, *Whose Hat Is That?* includes a Bo Diddley rhythm that is distributed across the bass and snare drums.

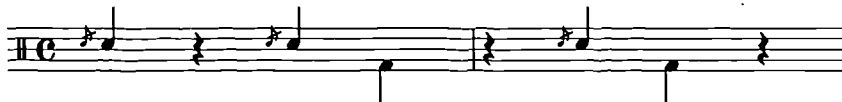


Figure 4.7 Roy Brown *Whose Hat Is That?* (Drumming excerpt)

As evident from Table 4.16 above, only 13 (around 0.8%) of 1 577 rhythm and blues recordings include a Bo Diddley rhythm.

Latin drum beats were also located in some rhythm and blues recordings (as listed in Table 4.17 below).

<p>Floyd Dixon <i>Me Quieras</i>, Hollywood, 1953 (an emphatic snare backbeat occurs in the saxophone solo).</p> <p>Camille Howard <i>Within This Heart Of Mine</i>, Hollywood, 1950 (the Latin beat is interspersed with snare on all four pulses). <i>Shrinking Up Fast</i>, Hollywood, 1950.</p> <p>Jimmy Liggins <i>Brown Skin Baby</i>, L.A., 1951 (a shuffle on snare occurs during the saxophone solo).</p> <p>Joe Liggins <i>Tanya</i>, Hollywood, 1952 (in saxophone solo). <i>Blues For Tanya</i>, Hollywood, 1952 (in saxophone solo).</p>	<p>Lloyd Price <i>Chee Koo Baby</i>, New Orleans, 1952. <i>Chee Koo Baby</i>, alternate take, New Orleans, 1952. <i>Carry Me Home</i>, New Orleans, 1953. <i>Carry Me Home</i>, alternate take, New Orleans, 1953. <i>Tell Me Pretty Baby</i>, New Orleans, 1952.</p> <p>Fats Domino' <i>Ain't It Good</i>, New Orleans, 1953. <i>Little School Girl</i>, New Orleans, 1953. <i>Don't You Hear Me Calling</i>, New Orleans, 1954.</p>
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Table 4.17 Rhythm and blues recordings (extant recordings), 1944-55: Latin drum beats.

At times, Latin beats are contained in particular structural sections of a recording. For example, Liggins' *Tanya* and *Blues For Tanya* features Latin beats during the saxophone solo only. Similarly, Dixon's *Me Quieras* contains a Latin beat in most structural sections but includes emphatic snare backbeats during the saxophone solo, in the manner of rhythm and blues performance practice (the latter recording is included in our sampling of rhythm and blues recordings containing sectional use of snare backbeat).

Aside from those drum beats noted above, other drum beats contained in our rhythm and blues recordings sample included weak, strong or emphatic snare backbeats (as previously discussed). In order to conclude our findings so far, a summary account of the extent to which the snare backbeat featured in our rhythm and blues sample follows.

#### 4.3.7 Conclusion: Snare Backbeat in Rhythm and Blues

In reference to the existence of snare backbeat in rhythm and blues recordings from the period 1944 to 1955 (as listed in Appendix Three), the following was revealed:

- the first continuous use of an emphatic snare backbeat regularly recurring in the repertoire of those rhythm and blues musicians output scanned in Appendix Three was located in the 1947 extant recorded repertoire of Arthur “Big Boy” Crudup, recorded in Chicago. Here, eleven of twelve recordings with Judge Riley drumming contain emphatic snare backbeat. Further, Crudup’s output produced in Chicago between 1949 and 1951, also with Riley drumming, mostly contain emphatic snare backbeats.<sup>83</sup> Similar snare backbeat usage was observed in the output of two other Chicago musicians who recorded with Judge Riley: Eddie Boyd and Arbee Stidham;
- aside from recordings produced in Chicago, emphatic occurrences of the backbeat often occur in the output of Roy Brown, Fats Domino and Lloyd Price who were recording in New Orleans from the late 1940s and early ‘50s. In particular, the early 1950s output of Fats Domino and Lloyd Price, with Earl Palmer drumming, consistently features either strong or emphatic snare backbeat executed throughout the recording;
- snare backbeat did not frequently occur in the output of musicians who were recording in other geographic locations. Those few examples located only contain snare backbeat in instrumental (mostly saxophone) solos and/or final verses or choruses;
- 3 (around 0.2%) of 1 577 recordings include snare backbeat variation 1 (snare

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<sup>83</sup>Those recordings that do not contain emphatic snare backbeats are as follows: *Hey Mama*, *Everything’s All Right* (Chicago, 1947), *Second Man Blues* (Chicago, 1951), *Too Much Competition* (Chicago, 1951), and *Where Did You Stay Last Night* (Chicago, 1951).

backbeat variations are discussed in Chapter Two);<sup>84</sup>

- an analysis of drumming rhythm in *R.M. Blues* revealed that snare executions were spread to each pulse of the 4/4 bar and cymbals or hi-hat were not employed in the recording. In other words, *R.M. Blues* contains neither the snare backbeat nor cymbal rhythms characteristic of rock'n'roll drumming.

In reference to cymbal, including hi-hat, rhythms in rhythm and blues, the following was revealed:

- cymbal executions in recordings dating from around the 1940s include hi-hat use in verses and generally a change to ride cymbal in solo sections or shout choruses;
- swing and shuffle rhythms on cymbals and hi-hat were employed in most recordings, including those without snare backbeats. We have observed in Chapter Three that jazz drumming predominantly featured swing and shuffle rhythms on cymbals. It is likely, therefore, that such rhythms endured in the drum beats of rhythm and blues era drummers;
- quaver triplet cymbal rhythms and snare backbeat were located in 54 of 1 577 rhythm and blues recordings. Most recordings (37 or 69%) containing quaver triplet cymbal rhythms and snare backbeats were located in the output of Fats Domino and Lloyd Price, with Earl Palmer drumming.

It is apparent from the above conclusions that the drumming of Judge Riley and Earl Palmer is significant to our locating the roots of the rock'n'roll snare backbeat. We have previously discussed the drumming of Earl Palmer in relation to Fats Domino's

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<sup>84</sup>Some quaver based drum beats (quaver snare rhythms on pulse 2 and a crotchet rhythm on pulse 4) were located in the late 1950s and early 1960s recorded output of two rhythm and blues musicians previously discussed: Roy Brown's *Party Doll* (New Orleans, 1958, with Charles Williams drumming) and Johnny Otis' *It Must Be Love* (L.A., 1961), *California Mash (The Hash)* (L.A., 1962), *The Hey, Hey, Hey Song* (L.A., 1962), *I Know My Love Is True* (L.A., 1962), and *Bye, Bye Baby* (L.A., 1962). All of Otis' recordings include Gaynel Hodge drumming.

rhythm and blues output and, in such discussion, have noted a jazz influence in Palmer's musical development. In order to complete our survey of drumming in rhythm and blues, the following discussion will investigate the drumming style of Judge Riley and, more generally, early rhythm and blues drumming in Chicago. As will become evident below, some commentators consider that Chicago rhythm and blues drumming prefigured the occurrence of rock'n'roll snare backbeat.

#### **4.4 Rhythmic Roots of Rock'n'Roll: Chicago Rhythm and Blues.**

We have previously noted in our investigation of other drum beats (Chapter 4.3.4 above) that many rhythm and blues drummers performed swing era jazz early in their career. Similarly, many early Chicago rhythm and blues drummers began their careers playing jazz. Drummers S.P. Leary and Fred Below, for example, both came from a jazz heritage prior to their performances and recordings with such seminal blues performers as Muddy Waters, Little Walter, Howlin' Wolf and T-Bone Walker.<sup>85</sup> Leary and Below, however, had to adapt their jazz drumming technique to blues musical style. For example, Leary's initial attempts at blues drumming were noted by T-Bone Walker, who subsequently suggested some alternate beats to Leary's jazz inspired performances.<sup>86</sup> As Leary (as quoted in Santelli, 1987: 25) explains,

[Walker] made me learn how to play with the brushes because he didn't like sticks. He didn't like loud beats. He just wanted that drive - that steady drive.

Leary is most likely inferring comping snare rhythms executed with drum sticks in his reference to "loud beats". As we have observed in Chapter Three, comping snare

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<sup>85</sup>Santelli (1987) includes interviews with Leary and Below and subsequent discussions of their jazz heritage.

<sup>86</sup>Leary (as quoted in Fish, 1982a: 86) cites big band jazz drummers as influential to his early drumming experiences, particularly Art Blakey, Louie Bellson and Gene Krupa.

rhythms were contained in Chicago jazz styles dating from the 1930s, as exemplified in the drumming of Gene Krupa. As evident below, Below similarly adapted his jazz drumming style to blues performances.<sup>87</sup>

In discussing his musical development, Below (as quoted in Fish, 1982a: 20) notes that his early blues drumming style was informed by Muddy Waters' drummer, Elga Edmonds, who was recording with Muddy Waters from around 1950 to 1954.<sup>88</sup> Most recorded performances of Edmonds from that period contained brush work on snare, usually executed on all four pulses, or swing or shuffle rhythms on hi-hat.<sup>89</sup> Similar rhythms were adopted by Below in his early recordings of rhythm and blues with Muddy Waters. For example, *Just Make Love To Me* (Chicago, 1954) includes snare on all four pulses with brushes and some shuffle rhythms on snare. Bass drum activity is on all four pulses and there is no cymbal work in the recording. *Oh Yeh* (Chicago, 1954) and *I Don't Know Why* (Chicago, 1954) both contain a shuffle on snare and cymbal with some triplet rhythms executed on the snare drum.

Below's recorded performances from the early 1950s mark his period of development from jazz to rhythm and blues drumming style. By the mid 1950s, however, Below (as quoted in Fish, 1982a: 20) states that he had "established a style that was from a jazz musician interpreting the blues in a different way. I had established the backbeat". The earliest emphatic use of a snare backbeat in Below's recordings appears to date

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<sup>87</sup>Meyers (as quoted in Fish, 1982a: 20) describes Below's first performance experience at blues drumming as follows:

Below tried to play with us but couldn't. He said "I can't play with y'all, tonight is my last night." I said, "Man, it's funny you can't learn to play blues and you say you can play jazz and all be-bop and stuff, it's mighty funny you can't play blues".

<sup>88</sup>See Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier (1994: 285-6).

<sup>89</sup>Two recordings include backbeats during harmonica solos: *Stuff You Gotta Watch* (Chicago, 1951) and *Gone To Main Street* (Chicago, 1952).



from around 1954. For example, Muddy Waters' recordings of *I'm Ready* (Chicago, 1954) and *Smokestack Lighting* (Chicago, 1954), with Below drumming, include strong snare backbeats with a swing rhythm on ride and cymbal on all four pulses, respectively.<sup>90</sup>

Although Below considers himself important to the establishment of the snare backbeat in Chicago rhythm and blues, his emphatic use of a snare backbeat was not an innovative development. As evident in our previous discussion of rhythm and blues recordings (see Chapter 4.3.3), Judge Riley, drumming with Arthur Crudup during the 1940s, consistently featured emphatic snare backbeats in his recorded performances. In this respect, Riley's drumming is comparatively more significant to our search for the roots of the snare backbeat. Below's opinion that he "established" the snare backbeat probably results from his lack of contact and familiarity with Riley's drumming or, in fact, any rhythm and blues drumming styles evident in Chicago during the late 1940s. As Below (as quoted in Fish, 1983: 28) notes, "when I was home in Chicago from 1946 to 1948 I had learned how to play bebop" and it was through his meeting with Muddy Waters' drummer Elgie Edmonds in 1951 that "turned me on to the blues". During his tenure at Chicago from 1946 to 1948, Below's musical concerns were therefore directed toward contemporaneous jazz styles rather than rhythm and blues drumming style. As we shall see, this fact contrasts with Fish's (1982a) account of the development of Chicago rhythm and blues drumming and snare backbeat.

After noting that rock drumming was "born of the culmination of two musical styles: blues and country/western", Fish (1982a: 18-19) continues his discussion of the

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<sup>90</sup>Below's drumming with Little Walter and his Jukes in the recording *Oh Baby* (Chicago, 1954) also includes a strong snare backbeat performed with drumsticks, and the backbeat is given added emphasis by the use of a close tracking echo on the snare executions.

“blues” influence on rock drumming with some specific reference to the lineage of the snare backbeat:

On *Kind Hearted Woman*, recorded in 1948, there are no drums at all. Muddy [Waters] is playing an electric slide guitar, and Ernest “Big” Crawford is preparing the way for what would become “backbeat” drums. The bassist hits a note on beats one and three, and slaps the bass on beats two and four occasionally, while walking through the chord changes of the song. That same year, on *I Can’t Be Satisfied*, the bassist is deliberately slapping on beats two and four.

Fish is inferring in the above quote that rhythm and blues drummers, particularly Below and subsequent rock’n’roll drummers,<sup>91</sup> were influenced by the percussive slap-bass rhythms evident in Chicago blues performance and subsequently adopted this rhythm in their drum beats. Before we can accept this rhythmic congruence, two claims evident in Fish’s account require testing. Firstly, that Ernest Crawford was incorporating slap bass in *Kind Hearted Woman* and *I Can’t Be Satisfied*, and, secondly, Fish’s tacit assumption that Chicago rhythm and blues drummers were not incorporating snare backbeats in their performances. We will deal with the latter below and in conjunction with the drumming style of Judge Riley during the 1940s. As we have observed in Chapter Four, Riley incorporated emphatic snare backbeats in rhythm and blues recordings by Crudup, Boyd and Stidham. Our subsequent investigation of Riley’s drumming with other Chicago rhythm and blues musicians during the late 1940s will test the extent to which Riley incorporated snare backbeats in his recorded performances. If Riley consistently used snare backbeats in his recordings, then we will need to investigate some possible influences that informed his performance practice. In the meantime, we will briefly overview the performance practice of double bassist Big Crawford as evident in Muddy Waters’ pre-1954 extant recordings that include double bass but exclude drums from the instrumentation. If Fish’s notion of backbeat slap bass rhythms in Chicago rhythm and blues is correct, then such is of

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<sup>91</sup>Fish (1982a: 20) states that Chicago rhythm and blues drummer Fred Below “almost singlehandedly invented the book on Chicago-style blues drumming and was a major innovator in rock drumming”. Here, Fish is possibly referring to Below’s drumming with Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley, among others.

direct relevance to our search for the roots of the rock'n'roll backbeat. Relevant recordings (dating from 1948 to 1951) and mini analyses of Crawford's double bass performance are listed in Table 4.18.<sup>92</sup> During this period, Willie Dixon (double bass) performed on three recordings with Muddy Waters and these have also been included in Table 4.18.

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<sup>92</sup>Recordings are arranged in chronological order of recording, as presented in the compact disc set The Complete Muddy Waters, 1947-1967 (Charly compact discs: CD RED BOX 3, 1992).

<p><i>Good Lookin' Woman</i>, Chicago, 1948 (Big Crawford - bass).</p> <p>Bass mostly on pulses 1 and 3. Slow blues tempo.</p> <p><i>Mean Disposition</i>, Chicago, 1948 (Big Crawford - bass).</p> <p>Bass mostly on pulses 1 and 3. Slow blues tempo.</p> <p><i>I Can't Be Satisfied</i>, Chicago, 1948 (Big Crawford - bass).</p> <p>Bass on pulses 1 and 3. Slap bass on pulses 2 and 4. 2/2 time.</p> <p><i>I Feel Like Going Home</i>, Chicago, 1948 (Big Crawford - bass).</p> <p>Bass mostly on pulses 1 and 3. Some slap bass on pulses 2 and 4 (walking bass in guitar solo). Slow blues tempo.</p> <p><i>Train Fare Home</i>, Chicago, 1948 (Big Crawford - bass).</p> <p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Slow blues tempo.</p> <p><i>Down South Blues</i>, Chicago, 1948 (Big Crawford - bass).</p> <p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Some slap bass on off-pulse. Moderato.</p> <p><i>Kind Hearted Woman</i>, Chicago, 1948 (Big Crawford - bass).</p> <p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Slow blues tempo.</p> <p><i>Sittin' Here And Drinkin'</i>, Chicago, 1948 (Big Crawford - bass).</p> <p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Slow blues tempo.</p>	<p><i>You're Gonna Miss Me</i>, Chicago, 1948 (Big Crawford - bass).</p> <p>Bass on pulses 1 and 3. Slap bass on pulses 2 and 4. Rhythm guitar accents off-pulse at times. 2/2 time.</p> <p><i>Mean Red Spider</i>, Chicago, 1948 (Big Crawford - bass).</p> <p>Bass mostly on pulses 1 and 3 (all 4 pulses in guitar solo). Moderato.</p> <p><i>Stand Here Trembling</i>, Chicago, 1948 (Big Crawford - bass).</p> <p>Bass mostly on pulses 1 and 3 (on all 4 pulses in guitar solo). Some slap bass on pulses 2 and 4. Moderato.</p> <p><i>Streamline Woman</i>, Chicago, 1948 (Big Crawford - bass).</p> <p>Bass mostly on pulses 1 and 3 (on all 4 pulses in guitar solo). Some slaps on pulses 2 and 4 in intro.. Slow blues tempo.</p> <p><i>Hard Days</i>, Chicago, 1948 (Big Crawford - bass).</p> <p>Bass mostly on all 4 pulses. Moderato.</p> <p><i>Muddy Jumps 1</i>, Chicago, 1948 (Big Crawford - bass).</p> <p>Bass mostly on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse in guitar solo.</p> <p><i>Little Geneva</i>, Chicago, 1949 (Willie Dixon - bass).</p> <p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Moderato.</p>
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Table 4.18 Muddy Waters' rhythm and blues recordings (with double bass and without drums) showing slap bass in relation to backbeats.

<p><i>Canary Bird</i>, Chicago, 1949 (Willie Dixon - bass).</p>	<p><i>Early Morning Blues</i>, Chicago, 1950 (Big Crawford - bass).</p>
<p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Moderato.</p>	<p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Slow blues tempo.</p>
<p><i>Burying Ground</i>, Chicago, 1949 (Willie Dixon - bass).</p>	<p><i>Appealing Blues</i>, Chicago, 1950 (Big Crawford - bass).</p>
<p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Moderato.</p>	<p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Slow blues tempo.</p>
<p><i>Rollin' And Tumblin' Part 1</i>, Chicago, 1950 (Big Crawford - bass).</p>	<p><i>Evans Shuffle</i>, Chicago, 1950 (Big Crawford - bass).</p>
<p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse, sounding like a swing on snare rim (leading the accompanying recordings discography to note "possibly Elgar Edmonds, drums." Moderato.</p>	<p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Moderato.</p>
<p><i>Rollin' And Tumblin' Part 2</i>, Chicago, 1950 (Big Crawford - bass).</p>	<p><i>Long Distance Call</i>, Chicago, 1951 (Big Crawford - bass).</p>
<p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse, sounding like a swing on snare rim (leading the accompanying recordings discography to note "possibly Elgar Edmonds, drums." Moderato.</p>	<p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Slow blues tempo.</p>
<p><i>Walking Blues</i>, Chicago, 1950 (Big Crawford - bass).</p>	<p><i>Too Young To Know</i>, Chicago, 1951 (Big Crawford - bass).</p>
<p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Moderato.</p>	<p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Slow blues tempo.</p>
<p><i>You're Gonna Need My Help I Said</i>, Chicago, 1950 (Big Crawford - bass).</p>	<p><i>Hey Bee - 1</i>, Chicago, 1951 (Big Crawford - bass).</p>
<p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Slow blues tempo.</p>	<p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Slow blues tempo.</p>
<p><i>Sad Letter Blues</i>, Chicago, 1950 (Big Crawford - bass).</p>	<p><i>Howling Wolf - 1</i>, Chicago, 1951 (Big Crawford - bass).</p>
<p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Slow blues tempo.</p>	<p>Bass on all 4 pulses. Slow blues tempo.</p>

Table 4.18 Muddy Waters' rhythm and blues recordings (with double bass and without drums) showing slap bass in relation to backbeat (cont'd).

Referring to the mini analyses located in Table 4.18, we note that *Kind Hearted Woman* does not include slap bass on the backbeat. Rather, Crawford is performing a shuffle rhythm comprising bass executions on all four pulses with slap bass performed on the off-pulse. Fish's (1982a: 18, as quoted above) statement concerning the existence of backbeat slap bass rhythms in this recording is therefore incorrect (it is likely that Fish has heard the percussive off-pulse slaps in Crawford's shuffle rhythms on double bass as backbeats). Fish's notion concerning the existence of backbeat slap bass in *I Can't Be Satisfied*, however, is confirmed upon listening to this recording. *You're Gonna Miss Me* exemplifies a similar double bass accompaniment to that of *I Can't Be Satisfied*. Also, three other recordings contained in our sample, *I Feel Like Going Home*, *Stand Here Trembling*, and *Streamline Woman*, include some occasional use of slap bass backbeats. Seven of twenty-nine recordings were located that include consistent off-pulse slap bass rhythms, producing either a percussive shuffle or swing rhythmic effect rather than backbeat accentuations. As noted in Table 4.18, *Rollin' and Tumblin'*, for example, includes a strong percussive swing rhythm effect, leading one recordings discographer to suggest that Elga Edmonds could possibly be drumming.<sup>93</sup> All remaining recordings by Crawford and Dixon, as sampled in Table 4.18, do not include slap bass rhythms. The existence of slap bass backbeats in twenty-nine extant recordings by Muddy Waters during the period 1948 to 1951, therefore, is limited to five recordings, produced in 1948.

Below was located in Chicago during 1948 but, as noted above, was primarily concerned with performing jazz, and particularly bebop. In fact, according to Below, it was not until he returned to Chicago in 1951 that he was introduced to the blues. We have earlier observed, however, that Crawford was not recording slap bass rhythms

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<sup>93</sup>See the sleeve notes to *The Complete Muddy Waters, 1947-1967* (Charly compact discs: CD RED BOX 3, 1992). *Rollin' And Tumblin'* parts one and two have been included in Appendix Three, in the event that Elga Edmonds was, in fact, drumming on these tracks.

with Muddy Waters during this period. It is most unlikely, therefore, that Below heard Crawford perform slap bass backbeats during this period. Fish's notion regarding the importance of slap bass backbeats to the development of snare backbeats in Below's rhythm and blues recordings is therefore tenuous and finds little support in recorded evidence. We have previously noted that Judge Riley was drumming in Chicago during the late 1940s - that same period when Crawford was performing with Muddy Waters - and included snare backbeats in his recorded performances with Crudup. In order to determine whether or not Riley's use of snare backbeat was informed by Crawford's slap bass performances we will briefly investigate the extent to which Riley and Crawford musically interacted during the late 1940s by referring to relevant discographical information.

According to Leadbitter and Slaven (1987: 302-4), Crudup's recording sessions with Judge Riley drumming included Ransom Knowling performing on double bass (Crudup's earlier recording sessions with Riley drumming omitted double bass from *the instrumentation*). Further examination of discographical information contained in Leadbitter and Slaven (1987) and also Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier (1994), revealed that Riley and Crawford never performed together in recording sessions. For example, Washboard Sam's October, 1947 recording session included Big Crawford on bass and no drums. Sam's subsequent session in November included Judge Riley and Ransom Knowling, who replaced Crawford on double bass (Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier, 1994: 675). Similarly, Tampa Red's 16 September, 1946 recording session involved Big Crawford with Jump Jackson drumming, and Red's 23 September, 1947 recording session included Ransom Knowling with Judge Riley drumming (Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier, 1994: 565). Upon listening to recordings resulting from these sessions, it is clear that Ransom Knowling, performing with Judge Riley on drums, did not employ slap bass backbeats. However, Riley's recorded performances with Tampa Red and Washboard Sam contain some emphatic

snare backbeats (thus predating Below's use of snare backbeats by around seven years). In reference to Big Crawford's performances with Tampa Red and Washboard Sam (as noted above), only one of eight extant recordings includes some use of slap bass backbeats.<sup>94</sup> It is therefore unlikely that Riley's drumming was informed by slap bass rhythms.

The occurrence of snare backbeats in Judge Riley's drumming appears to be a significant feature in Chicago rhythm and blues drumming. In order to ascertain whether Riley's use of strong and emphatic snare backbeat in Chicago rhythm and blues were freak occurrences or otherwise a characteristic feature of his drumming, we will briefly investigate the extent to which Riley, drumming with Washboard Sam, Tampa Red and other Chicago rhythm and blues musicians, incorporated snare backbeat in his recorded performances.

#### **4.4.1 Chicago Rhythm and Blues Recordings with Judge Riley Drumming.**

A search of Leadbitter and Slaven (1987) and Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier (1994) for pre-1955 Chicago rhythm and blues recordings that include Judge Riley drumming revealed that Riley recorded with fourteen Chicago rhythm and blues performers. The names of such performers and their recordings that included Riley drumming are listed in Table 4.19. According to Rowe (1975: 17), the Chicago blues musicians listed in Table 4.19, such as Muddy Waters, Big Bill Broonzy, Tampa Red, Jazz Gillum, and Washboard Sam among others, were recorded and employed by Lester Melrose, an Anglo-American businessman who was associated with the RCA Victor record label as

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<sup>94</sup>Washboard Sam's *Ramblin' With That Woman* (Chicago, 1948) contains some slap bass backbeats in the final clarinet solo.



an A & R man.<sup>95</sup> Perhaps mindful of the tendency toward small rhythm and blues ensembles during the 1940s, Melrose generally included a concise instrumentation comprising double bass, piano and guitar in his 1940s recordings with occasional use of saxophones or harmonica. All that was missing here from the established 1940s rhythm and blues rhythm section format was drums. As evident in Table 4.19, Melrose subsequently employed drummer Judge Riley from 1946, perhaps intending to better position his recorded products within a broader commercial arena.

Discussion and mini-analyses of Riley's drumming with various Chicago rhythm and blues performers during the late 1940s is located in Appendix Four. When available, the extant recorded repertoire of musicians listed in Table 4.19 was sought, however, some recordings were unavailable at the time of writing this thesis.<sup>96</sup> Nonetheless, a large sampling of Chicago rhythm and blues recordings with Judge Riley drumming was undertaken thus enabling some plausible judgements regarding his importance to the formation of snare backbeats in rhythm and blues drum beats.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>According to Rowe (1975: 17), Melrose also recorded Walter Davis, Lonnie Johnson, Memphis Minnie, Roosevelt Sykes, Johnny Temple, Big Joe Williams and Sonny Boy Williams. Melrose must have commanded respect from such Chicago blues musicians and also record company executives because, as Rowe (*ibid.*) states, Melrose was "really responsible for shaping the Chicago sound of the late '30s and the '40s". As noted by blues musician Dave Edwards (as quoted in Lomax, 1995: 401), Melrose preferred to record contemporaneous blues songs, not "them old songs like my daddy plays, we don't know nothing about them old numbers. What we play is what they records, the peoples like Mister Melrose up in Chicago". Aside from recording newly composed blues repertoire, Melrose also considered how such repertoire should be accompanied for recording purposes. An increase in the number of accompanying instruments was gradually adopted and, by the late 1940s, most of Melrose's blues recordings utilized a rhythm section.

<sup>96</sup>This includes all recordings listed in Table 4.19 by the following musicians: Doctor Clayton's Buddy, L.C. McKinley, Memphis Minnie, Roosevelt Sykes, Big Joe Williams and Yas Yas Girl. Some recordings by Eddie Boyd and Arbee Stidham were also unable to be located (such absent recordings are noted in Appendix Four).

<sup>97</sup>Aside from those recordings listed in Table 4.19, one other recording was located with Riley drumming: Willie "Long Time" Smiths *Homeless Blues* (Chicago, 1947). Here, Riley is performing a swing rhythm on hi-hat. During the saxophone solo, Riley executes emphatic snare backbeats and includes some emphatic backbeats generally on pulse 4 in subsequent structural sections. (Recordings source: News and The Blues: Telling It Like It Is, Columbia compact disc: CK 46217, 1990).

<b>Eddie Boyd (Leadbitter and Slaven, 1987: 134).</b>	
<i>Baby What's Wrong With You</i> , 1948.	<i>What Makes These Things Happen To Me</i> , 1948.
<i>Chicago Is Just That Way</i> , 1948.	<i>I Gotta Find My Baby</i> , 1949.
<i>Eddie's Blues</i> , 1948.	<i>Why Don't You Be Wise Baby</i> , 1949.
<b>Big Bill Broonzy (Leadbitter and Slaven, 1987: 153-155).</b>	
<i>I Can Fix It</i> , 1946.	<i>Rambling Bill</i> , 1947.
<i>I Can't Write</i> , 1946.	<i>Shoo Blues</i> , 1947.
<i>Old Man Blues</i> , 1946.	<i>Stop Lying Woman</i> , 1947.
<i>What Can I Do</i> , 1946.	<i>Summer Time Blues</i> , 1947.
<i>Bad Luck Man</i> , 1947.	<i>Leavin' Day</i> , 1951.
<i>Big Bill's Boogie</i> , 1947.	<i>South Bound Train</i> , 1951.
<i>I Feel Like Crying</i> , 1947.	<i>Tomorrow</i> , 1951.
<i>Just Rocking</i> , 1947.	<i>You Changed</i> , 1951.
<b>Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup (Leadbitter and Slaven, 1987: 303-304).</b>	
<i>Crudup's After Hours</i> , 1946.	<i>Mercy Blues</i> , 1949.
<i>Chicago Blues</i> , 1946.	<i>She's Just Like Caldonia</i> , 1949.
<i>I Want My Lovin'</i> , 1946.	<i>Shout Sister Shout</i> , 1949.
<i>I Don't Know It</i> , 1946.	<i>Tired Of Worry</i> , 1949.
<i>That's All Right</i> , 1946.	<i>You Know That I Love You</i> , 1949.
<i>You Got To Reap</i> , 1946.	<i>Anytime Is The Right Time</i> , 1950.
<i>Crudup's Vicksburg Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>Behind Closed Doors</i> , 1950.
<i>Cry Your Blues Away</i> , 1947.	<i>Mean Old Santa Fe</i> , 1950.
<i>Gonna Be Some Changes Made</i> , 1947.	<i>My Baby Left Me</i> , 1950.
<i>Hey Mama, Everything's All Right</i> , 1947.	<i>Nobody Wants Me</i> , 1950.
<i>Hoodoo Lady Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>Oo-Wee Darling</i> , 1950.
<i>Just Like A Spider</i> , 1947.	<i>She Ain't Nothin' But Trouble</i> , 1950.
<i>Katie Mae</i> , 1947.	<i>Star Bootlegger</i> , 1950.
<i>Lonesome World To Me</i> , 1947.	<i>I'm Gonna Dig Myself A Hole</i> , 1951.
<i>Roberta Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>Love Me Mama</i> , 1951.
<i>Some Day</i> , 1947.	<i>Never No More</i> , 1951.
<i>That's Why I'm Lonesome</i> , 1947.	<i>Pearly Lee</i> , 1951.
<i>Train Fare Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>Second Man Blues</i> , 1951.
<i>Come Back Baby</i> , 1949.	<i>Too Much Competition</i> , 1951.
<i>Dust My Broom</i> , 1949.	<i>Where Did You Stay Last Night</i> , 1951.
<i>Hand Me Down My Walking Cane</i> , 1949.	
<b>Doctor Clayton's Buddy (Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier, 1994: 548).</b>	
<i>Across The Hall Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>Nappy Head Woman</i> , 1947.
<i>Broke And Hungry</i> , 1947.	<i>No Whiskey Blues</i> , 1947.
<i>Farewell Little Girl</i> , 1947.	<i>Sweet Lucy Blues</i> , 1947.
<i>Illinois Central</i> , 1947.	<i>Walking With The Blues</i> , 1947.

Table 4.19 Judge Riley (drumming): pre-1955 rhythm and blues recordings.

Jazz Gillum (Leadbitter and Slaven, 1987: 460-461).	
<i>Can't Trust Myself</i> , 1946.	<i>The Blues What Am</i> , 1947.
<i>I'm Gonna Train My Baby</i> , 1946.	<i>What A Gal</i> , 1947.
<i>I'm Not The Lad</i> , 1946.	<i>You Should Give Some Away</i> , 1947.
<i>Roll Dem Bones</i> , 1946.	<i>You Got To Run Me Down</i> , 1947.
<i>Country Woman Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>A Lie Is Dangerous</i> , 1949.
<i>Chaufer Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>Gonna Be Some Shooting</i> , 1949.
<i>Gonna Take My Rap</i> , 1947.	<i>Look What You Are Today</i> , 1949.
<i>Hand Reader Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>Take One More Chance With Me</i> , 1949.
<i>Jazz Gillum's Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>Broadcasting Mama</i> , 1950.
<i>Signifying Woman</i> , 1947.	<i>Don't Think I'm Buster Brown</i> , 1950.
<i>Take A Little Walk With Me</i> , 1947.	<i>Floating Power</i> , 1950.
<i>The Devil Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>I'm Still Going Down Slow</i> , 1950.
L.C. McKinley (Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier, 1994: 192).	
<i>All Alone Blues</i> , 1953.	
<i>Pain in my Heart</i> , 1953.	
<i>Rosalie Blues</i> , 1953.	
Memphis Minnie (Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier, 1994: 203-204).	
<i>Fish Man Blues</i> , 1946.	<i>Western Union</i> , 1946.
<i>Got To Leave You</i> , 1946.	<i>Blue Monday Blues</i> , 1947.
<i>Hold Me Blues</i> , 1946.	<i>Daybreak Blues</i> , 1947.
<i>Killer Diller Blues</i> , 1946.	<i>Million Dollar Blues</i> , 1947.
<i>Lean Meat Won't Fry</i> , 1946.	<i>Shout The Boogie</i> , 1947.
<i>Moaning Blues</i> , 1946.	<i>Three Times Seven Blues</i> , 1947.
<i>My Man Is Gone Again</i> , 1946.	
Arbee Stidham (Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier, 1994: 538).	
<i>I Found Out For Myself</i> , 1947.	<i>What The Blues Will Do</i> , 1949.
<i>I Don't Know How To Cry</i> , 1947.	<i>You'll Be Sorry</i> , 1949.
<i>In Love With You</i> , 1947.	<i>Any Time You Ring My Bell</i> , 1950.
<i>My Heart Belongs To You</i> , 1947.	<i>Feel Like I'm Losing You</i> , 1950.
<i>A Heart Full Of Misery</i> , 1949.	<i>Let My Dreams Come True</i> , 1950.
<i>Barbecue Lounge</i> , 1949.	<i>Squeeze Me Baby</i> , 1950.
<i>Falling Blues</i> , 1949.	<i>Knob On The Door</i> , 1952.
<i>I've Got So Many Worries</i> , 1949.	<i>Love You Give To Me</i> , 1952.
<i>Marcia</i> , 1949.	<i>Mr. Commissioner</i> , 1952.
<i>Send My Regrets</i> , 1949.	<i>Someone To Tell My Troubles To</i> , 1952.
<i>So Tired Of Dreaming</i> , 1949.	
Roosevelt Sykes (Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier, 1994: 557).	
<i>Boogie Honky Tonk</i> , 1947.	<i>I Know How You Feel</i> , 1947.
<i>Booze Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>Time Wasted On You</i> , 1947.
<i>Heavy Hearted Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>Until The Cows Come Home</i> , 1947.
<i>High As A Georgia Pine</i> , 1947.	<i>What Is Your Aim Today</i> , 1947.

Table 4.19 Judge Riley (drumming): Pre-1955 rhythm and blues recordings (cont'd).

Tampa Red (Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier, 1994: 565).	
<i>Blue And All Alone</i> , 1947.	<i>I Know My Baby Loves Me</i> , 1947.
<i>Grieving Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>You Better Woo Your Baby</i> , 1947.
Washboard Sam (Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier, 1994: 675).	
<i>Dollar Is Your Best Friend</i> , 1947.	<i>She's Just My Size</i> , 1947.
<i>Fool About That Woman</i> , 1947.	<i>You Know How I Feel</i> , 1947.
Muddy Waters (Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier, 1994: 284).	
<i>Burying Ground Blues</i> , 1946.	
<i>Hard Day Blues</i> , 1946.	
<i>Jitterbug Blues</i> , 1946.	
Big Joe Williams (Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier, 1994: 725).	
<i>Baby Please Don't Go</i> , 1947.	<i>King Biscuit Stomp</i> , 1947.
<i>Bad And Weak Hearted Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>Mean Step Father Blues</i> , 1947.
<i>Banta Rooster Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>Mellow Apples</i> , 1947.
<i>Don't You Leave Me Here</i> , 1947.	<i>P Vine Blues</i> , 1947.
<i>House Lady Blues</i> , 1947.	<i>Stack Of Dollars</i> , 1947.
<i>I'm A Highway Man</i> , 1947.	<i>Wild Cow Moan</i> , 1947.
Yas Yas Girl (Leadbitter, Fancourt and Pelletier, 1994: 800).	
<i>Bad Whiskey Blues</i> , 1947.	
<i>Don't Think I'm Buster Brown</i> , 1947.	
<i>Rattlesnake Blues</i> , 1947.	
<i>School Boy Blues</i> , 1947.	

Table 4.19 Judge Riley (drumming): Pre-1955 rhythm and blues recordings (cont'd).

#### 4.4.2 Conclusion: Snare Backbeat in Judge Riley's Drumming.

It is evident from my investigation of Riley's Chicago rhythm and blues recordings, located in Appendix Four, that 84 (around 83%) of 101 recordings mini-analyzed contain snare backbeats. 78 (around 77%) of 101 recordings feature either strong or emphatic snare backbeats. At times, Riley used snare backbeat in instrumental solos or shout choruses and, in this respect, his performance practice is similar to some late 1940s drumming (as previously discussed). Riley's consistent use of swing rhythms on cymbals in his Chicago recordings is also reflective of rhythm and blues drumming. However, my investigation of Riley's performance with various Chicago rhythm and blues musicians, revealed the following innovative aspects:

- emphatic snare backbeats are used in recordings that feature a comparatively smaller instrumentation than New Orleans, Los Angeles or New York rhythm and blues ensembles;
- sporadic use of emphatic snare backbeat is sometimes included throughout a recording. Snare backbeats are therefore not restricted to shout choruses or instrumental solos only; and
- Riley's drumming with Chicago musicians during the 1940s provides the earliest located instances of consistent strong or emphatic snare backbeat usage in rhythm and blues recordings as sampled.

Having seen how important Judge Riley is to the formation of a rock'n'roll beat, it is interesting to note that he has been neglected in discussions that overview the history of rock'n'roll and also rhythm and blues drumming. For example, Fish (1982a) does not mention Riley in his discussion of blues drummers and their influence on the formation of rock drumming. Further, Santelli (1985 and 1987) does not include or mention Riley in his series of interviews with Chicago blues drummers. Aside from the obvious fact the Riley was employed as a session drummer with Melrose and, subsequently, RCA Victor records during the late 1940s and early '50s, nothing is known about his life, musical understandings and influences. One particular consequence to this situation is that we are unaware of some specific musical influences that informed Riley's adoption of the backbeat. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on broad musical-structural influences that may help explain Riley's drumming style.

We have previously noted in Chapter Three that a tendency to accentuate the backbeat on either cymbals or snare drum characterized the recorded output of drummers associated with Chicago, including Baby Dodds and Gene Krupa. It may be that the Chicago drumming style of Dodds, then Krupa was carried on by Riley in his recordings of rhythm and blues. However, to assign the occurrence of snare backbeat

in Riley's drumming to the singular influence of Chicago style drumming is, perhaps, premature at this stage. It is wise to consider other stylistic influences before such judgements can be made. Chapter Five will therefore include an investigation of some musical styles produced in Chicago from around the late 1920s in order to locate some other stylistic influences that might have informed Riley's musical development. As signalled earlier in this chapter, we will then investigate country and western musical style in an attempt to locate further occurrences of snare backbeat.

## Chapter Five

In order to locate other stylistic influences that might have informed Riley's consistent and emphatic use of snare backbeat in Chicago rhythm and blues recordings, the following discussion will focus on pre-rhythm and blues musics - excluding jazz - produced in Chicago from the late 1920s to the early '40s.<sup>1</sup> We will refer to some published accounts of styles that informed rhythm and blues in order to focus our investigation.

George (1988: xii) states that the term "rhythm and blues" originated in the 1940s as "a description of a synthesis of black musical genres - gospel, big-band swing, blues". George subsequently notes that the influence of gospel on rhythm and blues produced a "propulsive, spirited brand of popular music". Aside from big band jazz and blues, Gillett (1983: 155) also notes a relationship between gospel and rhythm and blues:<sup>2</sup>

Indirectly and directly, gospel styles and conventions were introduced into rhythm and blues - and constituted the first significant trend away from the blues as such in black popular music.

According to Gillett (ibid.), "gospel styles and conventions" were largely apparent in the vocal style of some early rhythm and blues performers. In reference to Roy Brown, for example, Gillett (ibid.) states that a gospel influence is evident in Brown's singing which "almost cracked up with the emotional intensity it was trying to express". Shaw (1986: 210), however, notes a relationship between rhythm and blues and gospel rhythm. According to Shaw (ibid.), the "excitement" of rhythm and blues derives from the "handclapping, foot-stamping, rattling tambourines, and a thumping,

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<sup>1</sup>Chicago jazz style has previously been dealt with in Chapter Three. Stylistic characteristics of Chicago jazz drumming evident in Riley's recorded performances have been posited in Chapter Four.

<sup>2</sup>Relationships amongst big band jazz style, blues and rhythm and blues have been noted in Chapter Four.

tinny upright piano” of gospel accompaniment.<sup>3</sup> Shaw does not notate or discuss the particular rhythms contained in gospel accompaniments; however, some cursory references to gospel rhythms were located elsewhere.

In discussing the influence of gospel on rhythm and blues musical style, and then on rock’n’roll, Friedlander (1996: 18) notes that

The gospel-generated emphasis on the second and fourth beats of the measure (or “backbeat”), played primarily on the snare drum, created a body movement that excited the listener.

Leaving aside for the moment the idea that rhythm and blues snare backbeats were “gospel-generated”, Friedlander’s notion that gospel rhythms emphasized the backbeat finds some support in various gospel musics recorded during the 1950s. For example, The Chosen Gospel Singers’ recordings *Ananais* (Hollywood, 1952), *I’m Going Back With Him* (Hollywood, 1954) and *Stay With Me Jesus* (Georgia, 1955)<sup>4</sup> include backbeat handclapping in “excited” and joyous sections of praise (such formal-structural sections are also characterized by a change to a high tessitura in the vocals and a subsequent increase in dynamic level).<sup>5</sup> The Bradford Specials’ recording *Somebody Touched Me* (Hollywood, 1955) includes backbeat handclaps as does the Swan Silvertones’ recording of *Trouble In My Way* (Hollywood, 1952).<sup>6</sup> Some earlier examples of backbeat handclaps in gospel were located in recordings by guitar

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<sup>3</sup>Elsewhere, Shaw (1978: 150) states that “it was gospel music that brought an excited vitality into R & B that sharply distinguished it from pop, also from jazz, which became intellectual, cool, and concert-oriented after World War II”. Similarly, Strachwitz (as quoted in Shaw, 1978: 259) notes that “in its early period, R & B had guts. It had the drive and thrust and excitement of Sanctified Church rhythms”.

<sup>4</sup>Recordings source: Chosen Gospel Singers *The Lifeboat* (Specialty Records: CD CHD414, 1992).

<sup>5</sup>Other recordings by the Chosen Gospel Singers include backbeats performed by a tambourine, such as *No Room in the Hotel* and *Watch Ye Therefore* (Hollywood, 1954).

<sup>6</sup>Recording source: *This Is How it All Began* (Specialty Records: SPS 2117, 1969).



evangelists. For example, Reverend Utah Smith's recorded sermons and songs, including *God's Mighty Hand* (N.Y., 1944) and *I Want Two Wings* (N.Y., 1944), contain backbeat handclapping (probably performed by the congregation) and Reverend Charles White's recording of *How Long* (Oakland, 1948) includes backbeat handclaps and also quaver rhythms performed on a water bucket which emphasize the backbeat.<sup>7</sup> In reference to the above cited recordings, it would be reasonable to assume that handclapping in gospel (as noted by Shaw, 1986: 210 above) is often executed on the backbeat (as intimated by Friedlander, 1996: 18). We will accept this notion and explore below the extent to which backbeat handclaps were included in pre-rhythm and blues gospel recordings produced in Chicago. Perhaps the following investigation will reveal a stylistic influence that might have figured in Judge Riley's musical development.

### **5.1 Backbeat in Chicago Gospel.**

According to Floyd (1995: 126-9), Harris (1992) and Millar (1971: 7-8), Thomas A. Dorsey was largely responsible for the development of the early gospel song movement in Chicago, dating from the late 1920s. Dorsey's main contribution to gospel involved a melding of blues vocal style with elements of the religious hymn, resulting in gospel blues (Harris, 1992: 209-240). Dorsey's career as a blues pianist and composer, and then as a pianist for blues singer Ma Rainey, involved organizing and directing instrumental ensembles for blues performances. Dorsey was therefore required to consider drum and other rhythm section accompaniments for such performances. It would initially seem that an investigation of Dorsey's recorded repertoire might provide a convenient starting point in our search for backbeats in gospel, based upon the

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<sup>7</sup>Recordings source: God's Mighty Hand: Gospel Evangelists (Heritage compact disc: HT CD 09, 1992).

premise that the development of ensemble accompanied blues into gospel blues might follow a similar path as the rhythmicization of blues into rhythm and blues. Perhaps the demonstrative and concomitant rhythmic behaviour of “excited” gospel congregations exemplified by “handclapping” and “foot-stamping” (as previously noted by Shaw, 1986: 210) was evident in gospel blues performance practices as developed by Dorsey.

Harris’ (1992) account of Dorsey’s gospel blues style mostly relates to solo gospel blues styles and particularly to various blues based vocal inflections that characterized performances of Dorsey’s gospel blues compositions. However, some reference to accompanimental performance practice in Harris’ account is contained in interviews with members of choruses that were directed by Dorsey. An interview with a member of the Pilgrim Baptist Church chorus, for example, reveals that some chorus members would “sit where they could clap their hands and sway their bodies and go on” (Harris, 1992: 208). Harris (1992: 212) notes that Dorsey had been coaching the Pilgrim and also Ebenezer choruses in “blues performances practices - how to holler, clap, jump, and say ‘Amen’”. Recordings of such choruses, dating from the 1930s, could not be located for analysis and discussion here and, consequently, we cannot determine what rhythms were clapped out by the chorus members during performance. We will therefore continue our investigation of early Chicago gospel in order to locate specific musical evidence regarding the rhythms employed in gospel handclapping.

Excluding Dorsey’s direction of such ensembles as the Pilgrim and Ebenezer choruses, demonstrative congregational convocation was generally discouraged by many Chicago churches. Alternately, attempts to evoke communal emotionalism within a congregation were effected through quartet ensemble performances, for example, rather than by spontaneous congregational rhythmic participation. Such rhythmic mellowing of African-American religious performance practice during the 1920s and ‘30s was

evident in many contemporaneous gospel movements. As Harris (1992: 111) notes, the stylistic tendency of gospel composition and performance during the 1920s and '30s was "far from being joyous and spontaneous as in the earlier singing" but, rather, the congregational style was "more straight with an emphasis on the harmony instead of the rhythm". One objective of propagating such "straight" gospel styles was to encourage greater recognition amongst the Chicago musical community of the artistic merit exemplified in Afro-American gospel music. As Work (as quoted in Harris, 1992: 112) confirms,

the general adaptability of [gospel music] to a high degree of development is its hope of gaining artistic recognition. It deserves to be put into a finished form .... those who would keep it as it was first reduced to writing, in their mistaken zeal would doom it to stagnation and to the contempt of highly musical people.

Musical outcomes reflecting gospel performance practice in its "finished form" include legato four or five-part vocal style and flat four type accompaniments, the latter of which is perhaps representative of the trend towards such accompaniments in swing era jazz and, later, early rhythm and blues beats. The musical repertoire of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, of which Work was both a member and musical director, reflected Work's desire to make the spiritual an "art song" and pleasing to "highly musical people" (Harris, 1992: 112). In order to test whether a shift to legato style gospel quartet singing occurred in Chicago, I located a compilation of Chicago gospel quartet recordings produced from 1937 to the mid-1950s.<sup>8</sup> Although the sample consists of only sixteen recordings by a selection of Chicago gospel quartet groups, it is nevertheless evident in results contained below (see Table 5.1) that backbeat handclapping was probably not characteristic of pre-rock'n'roll Chicago gospel. In fact, 15 of 16 recordings featured legato style quartet singing, exemplifying an "emphasis on the harmony instead of the rhythm" (Harris, 1992: 111, as cited above) and therefore indicative of the general shift to legato flat four-type gospel vocal quartet

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<sup>8</sup>Recordings source for this sample: Glad I Found The Lord: Chicago Gospel, 1937-1957 (Heritage compact disc: HT CD 08, 1992).

accompaniments evident in other geographic locations.

<b>Handclap backbeats.</b>	<b>No handclap or other accompanimental backbeats.</b>
<p>Golden Eagle Gospel Singers. <i>Tone The Bell</i>, Chicago, 1937.</p>	<p>Golden Eagle Gospel Singers. <i>He's My Rock</i>, Chicago, 1940. Famous Blue Jay Singers of Birmingham. <i>I Must Tell Jesus</i>, Chicago, 1947. <i>Praising Jesus Evermore</i>, Chicago, 1948. <i>While My Blood Runs Warm In Your Veins</i>, Chicago, 1950. Seven Melody Men. <i>Nobody Knows, Nobody Cares</i>, Chicago, 1947. Melody Jubilee Singers of Chicago. <i>Freedom Afterwhile</i>, Chicago, 1948. <i>When The Battle Is Over</i>, Chicago, 1948. Norfolk Singers. <i>By And By</i>, Chicago, 1949. <i>Dig A Little Deeper</i>, Chicago, 1949. Norfleet Brothers. <i>Jesus Is All The World To Me</i>, Chicago, 1953. <i>None But The Righteous</i>, Chicago, 1953. Pilgrim Jubilee Singers. <i>Happy In The Service Of The Lord</i>, Chicago, 1953. <i>Just A Closer Walk With Thee</i>, Chicago, 1953. Gospel Songbirds. <i>When They Ring Those Golden Bells</i>, Chicago, mid-1950s. <i>God's Creation</i>, Chicago, mid-1950s.</p>

Table 5.1 Chicago gospel, 1937-1955: handclap backbeats and other beats.

At this point, it is worth noting that some commentators posit a relationship between gospel quartet style and 1950s vocal group style. For example, Floyd (1995: 175) states that “gospel quartets greatly influenced the development of the R & B quartets of the 1950s, the relationship going back more than two decades”. Gribin and Schiff (1992: 25), adopting the term “doowop” in reference to secular vocal quartet style

described by Floyd as “R & B quartet” style,<sup>9</sup> note that many doowop singers were trained in gospel “with its religious themes, organ backgrounds, call and response patterns, group harmonies and falsettos”. In discussing the “paleo-doo-wop era”, lasting from approximately 1952-1954, Gribin and Schiff (1992: 25-8) refer to such groups as The Clovers, The Dominoes, Harptones, Ravens, The Drifters, The Penguins and others as stylistically representative. Gillett (1983: 155) states that the first “deliberate” use of gospel-trained singers in secular music “seems to have been around 1950” in the musical style of The Dominoes. Other “gospel-influenced rhythm and blues”, according to Gillett (1983: 156-8), include recordings by The Drifters, Five Royals and The Midnighters.

The following brief excursion from our current topic will involve an investigation of “gospel-influenced rhythm and blues” produced during the rhythm and blues era in order to determine, firstly, whether flat four beats contained in gospel quartet performance were also evident elsewhere and, secondly, to determine the frequency of occurrence of backbeat accompaniments in recordings by such vocal quartet ensembles as those previously mentioned. For convenience, I will adopt the term “doowop” to describe the output of particular vocal quartet groups variously labelled as “R & B quartets”, “gospel-influenced rhythm and blues” and “black vocal groups”.

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<sup>9</sup>Although Gribin and Schiff (1992: 25) note that doowop style mostly developed from gospel and rhythm and blues, they consider doowop as separate from rhythm and blues and rock’n’roll style.

## 5.2 Backbeat in Doowop.

Floyd (1995: 175), Gillett (1983: 155-8) and other accounts of doowop (that is, “R & B vocal quartets”) do not include reference to accompanimental rhythms, including handclap or snare backbeat performances.<sup>10</sup> Gribin and Schiff (1992: 20) however, include some cursory reference to doowop “beat”:

*Doowop music started on street corners and the rhythm was originally provided by the snapping of fingers or clapping of hands. Perhaps as a result, background beats in doowop songs are simple and heavy (with the emphasis on the second and fourth beats) and the drumming structure is uncomplicated and anything but subtle.*

It is evident in the above quote that Gribin and Schiff note a relationship between performance practice in pre-dooowop vocal quartet performance practice - “snapping of fingers or clapping of hands” - and backbeat emphasis in 1950s doowop style. The occurrence of backbeat in doowop is re-affirmed in Gribin and Schiff’s (1992: 22) twenty-point scale of “doo-wop-ishness” - a listing of style criteria allowing the reader to assess whether or not a given song fits into the category of “doowop” - which includes the reference “backbeat simple and heavy”. “Beat” in “paleo doowop, 1952-1954” however, is described by Gribin and Schiff (1992: 46) as containing “very little jazz influence, more allied with r & b”. Gribin and Schiff’s reference to rhythm and blues beat is not subject to further explication. The reader, therefore, is left in the dark regarding the existence of “simple and heavy” backbeats in paleo-dooowop style.

In order to determine the frequency of occurrence of backbeat in early (“paleo”) doowop, I have surveyed recordings of vocal quartet groups cited by Gribin and Schiff (1992: 25-8), Gillett (1983: 155-8) and Millar (1971: 23-40) as representative examples. The survey involved an investigation of eighty-eight recordings produced

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<sup>10</sup>Other accounts of doowop are located in Shaw (1986: 184), Millar (1971) and Groia (n.d.). These accounts include reference to a gospel influence - for example, Millar (1971: 6) states that “gospel music ... is the oldest, most enduring and most influential” of the styles informing “black vocal group singing” - but little or no reference is made to accompanimental rhythms.

from 1951 to 1955 as contained on compilation discs that were commercially available at the time of writing this thesis. Recordings and recordings sources are listed in Table 5.2. Table 5.3 details results of the survey in graph form.

<b>Recordings Sources:</b>	
(1)	<u>Old Town Doowop, Vol.1.</u> Ace compact discs: CDCHD 433, 1993.
(2)	<u>Old Town Doowop, Vol.2.</u> Ace compact discs: CDCHD 470, 1993.
(3)	<u>Old Town Doowop, Vol.3.</u> Ace compact discs: CDCHD 471, 1993.
(4)	<u>Old Town Doowop, Vol.3.</u> Ace compact discs: CDCHD 570, 1994.
(5)	<u>Doowop From Dolphin's of Hollywood, Vol.1.</u> Ace compact disc: CDCHD 364, 1991.
(6)	<u>Doowop From Dolphin's of Hollywood, Vol.2.</u> Ace compact disc: CDCHD 365, 1991.
(7)	<u>Dootone Doo Wop Vol.1.</u> Ace Recordings compact disc: CDCHD 579, 1995.
(8)	<u>Hardcore Doo-Wop: In The Hallway, Under The Street Lamp.</u> Ace Records compact disc: CDCHD 514, 1993.
(9)	<u>Shoop Shoop: Southern Doo Wop, Vol.1.</u> Ace Records compact disc: CDCHD 529, 1995.
(10)	<u>The Dominoes Featuring Clyde McPhatter.</u> King Records compact disc: KCD 5006, 1995.
(11)	<u>Atlantic Rhythm and Blues, 1947-1974, Vol.1.</u> Atlantic Records compact disc: 781 293-2, 1985.
(12)	<u>Atlantic Rhythm and Blues, 1947-1974, Vol.2.</u> Atlantic Records compact disc: 781 294-2, 1985.
Backbeats.	Other Beats.
1951	
Jesse Belvin. <i>Dream Girl</i> , L.A. (8) The Clovers. <i>Don't You Know I Love You</i> , N.Y. - backbeat mostly on pulse 2. (11) <i>Fool, Fool, Fool</i> , N.Y. (11) <i>One Mint Julep</i> , N.Y. (11)	The Cardinals. <i>Shouldn't I Know</i> , N.Y. (11) The Dominoes. <i>Do Something For Me</i> , Cincinnati. (10) <i>Harbour Lights</i> , Cincinnati. (10) <i>I Can't Escape From You</i> , Cincinnati. (10) <i>No Says My Heart</i> , Cincinnati. (10) <i>Weeping Willow Blues</i> , Cincinnati. (10)
1952	
The Clovers. <i>Ting-A-Ling</i> , N.Y. (11) - backbeat on pulse 2 only. The Dominoes. <i>That's What You're Doing To Me</i> , Cincinnati. (10)	The Diamonds. <i>A Beggar For Your Kisses</i> , N.Y. (12) The Dominoes. <i>When The Swallows Come Back To Capistrano</i> , Cincinnati. (10) <i>Love, Love, Love</i> , Cincinnati. (10) The Four Flames. <i>Wheel of Fortune</i> , L.A. (8)

Table 5.2 Snare backbeats in Doowop, 1951-55.

1953	
<p>The Clovers.  <i>Good Lovin'</i>, N.Y. (12) - snare backbeat on pulse 2 only.            Five Crowns.  <i>Good Luck Darling</i>, N.Y. (2)  <i>Later, Later Baby</i>, N.Y. (1)            The Drifters.  <i>Money Honey</i>, N.Y. (12)            The Hollywood Arist-O-Kats.  <i>Amazon Beauty</i>, Hollywood. (6)</p>	<p>The Dominoes.  <i>Don't Leave Me This Way</i>, Cincinnati. (10)            The Drifters.  <i>Such A Night</i>, N.Y. (12)            Five Crowns.  <i>Lullabye Of The Bells</i>, N.Y. (2)  <i>You Could Be My Love</i>, N.Y. (1)            The Hollywood Arist-O-Kats.  <i>I'll Be Home Again</i>, Hollywood. (6)</p>
1954	
<p>Grady Chapman and The Suedes.  <i>Don't Bloop</i>, Hollywood. (6)            The Chords.  <i>Sh-Boom</i>, N.Y. (12) - some shuffle on snare with some backbeats.            The Hollywood Flames  <i>Fare Thee Honey, Fare Thee Well</i>, L.A. (6)  <i>I'm Leavin' (Clickity Clack)</i>, Hollywood. (6)            The Original Turks (Hollywood Flames).  <i>Wagon Wheels</i>, Hollywood. (6)            Solerettes  <i>I Call To You</i>, N.Y. (4)            Solitaires.  <i>Girl Of Mine</i>, N.Y. (4)            The Turbans  <i>No No Cherry</i>, Hollywood. (5)  <i>The Goose is Gone</i>, Hollywood. (5)  <i>Tick Tock A Woo</i>, Hollywood. (5)  <i>When I Return</i>, Hollywood. (5)            The Turks.  <i>Emily</i>, Hollywood. (6)</p>	<p>Grady Chapman and The Suedes.  <i>I Need You So</i>, Hollywood. (6)            The Drifters.  <i>Honey Love</i>, N.Y. (12)  <i>White Christmas</i>, N.Y. (12)            The Penguins.  <i>No There Aint No News Today</i>, L.A. (7)            Solitaires.  <i>Lonely</i>, N.Y. (4)            Valentines  <i>Summer Love</i>, N.Y. (4)            The Unknowns  <i>Listen, Listen Baby</i>, N.Y. (4)</p>

Table 5.2 Snare backbeats in Doowop, 1951-55 (cont'd).



1955	
<p>Tony Allen and The Champs.  <i>I</i>, L.A. (8)  <i>Nite Out</i>, L.A. (8)  The Calvanes.  <i>Don't Take Your Love (From Me)</i>, L.A. (7)  The Cameos.  <i>Craving</i>, L.A. (7)  The Cardinals.  <i>The Door Is Still Open</i>, N.Y. (12), snare  backbeat on pulse 2 only.  Clefftones.  <i>Little Girl (I Love You Madly)</i>, N.Y. (2)  Dootones.  <i>Teller of Fortune</i>, L.A. (7)  Harptones.  <i>Mambo Boogie</i>, N.Y. (1)  <i>You Know You're Doin' Me Wrong</i>, N.Y. (3)  <i>You're Going To Need My Help Someday</i>, N.Y.  (3)  Don Julian and the Meadowlarks.  <i>Always and Always</i>, L.A. (7)  The Marigolds.  <i>Love You - Love You - Love You</i>, Nashville (9)  - backbeats in sax solo.  The Medallions.  <i>Buick '59</i>, L.A. (7)  The Miracles (Jaguars)  <i>A Girl Named Joe</i>, Hollywood. (5)  <i>My Angel</i>, Hollywood. (5)  <i>9 Boogie</i>, Hollywood. (5)  <i>Let Us Be As One</i>, Hollywood. (5)  The Penguins.  <i>Ookey-Ook</i>, L.A. (7)  The Robins.  <i>Smokey Joe's Cafe</i>, N.Y. (12)  Solitaires.  <i>Magic Rose</i>, N.Y. (1)  <i>The Wedding</i>, N.Y. (3)  <i>What Did She Say</i>, N.Y. (2)  Supremes.  <i>Darling, Listen To The Words Of This Song</i>,  N.Y. (3)  Valentines.  <i>Tonight Kathleen</i>, N.Y. (1)  The Voices.  <i>Crazy</i>, Hollywood. (5)  <i>Takes Two To Make A Home</i>, Hollywood (5)</p>	<p>Jesse Belvin.  <i>Where's My Girl</i>, L.A. (8)  The Calvanes.  <i>They Call Me Fool</i>, L.A. (7)  Clefftones.  <i>Guess Who?</i>, N.Y. (3)  <i>My Dearest Darling</i>, N.Y. (2)  <i>The Masquerade Is Over</i>, N.Y. (2)  Harptones.  <i>I Got A Notion</i>, N.Y. (2)  <i>I Love You Baby</i>, N.Y. (3)  <i>Life Is But A Dream</i>, N.Y. (2)  <i>School Girl</i>, N.Y. (3)  <i>On Sunday Afternoon</i>, N.Y. (1)  <i>My Success It All Depends Upon You</i>, N.Y. (1)  Laurals.  <i>Message of Love</i>, N.Y. (1)  The Marigolds.  <i>Rollin' Stone</i>, Nashville. (9)  <i>Two Strangers</i>, Nashville. (9)  Johnny Twovoice and the Medallions.  <i>My Pretty Baby</i>, L.A. (7)  The Voices.  <i>Two Things I Love</i>, Hollywood. (5)  <i>Why</i>, Hollywood. (5)</p>

Table 5.2 Snare backbeats in Doowop, 1951-55 (cont'd).

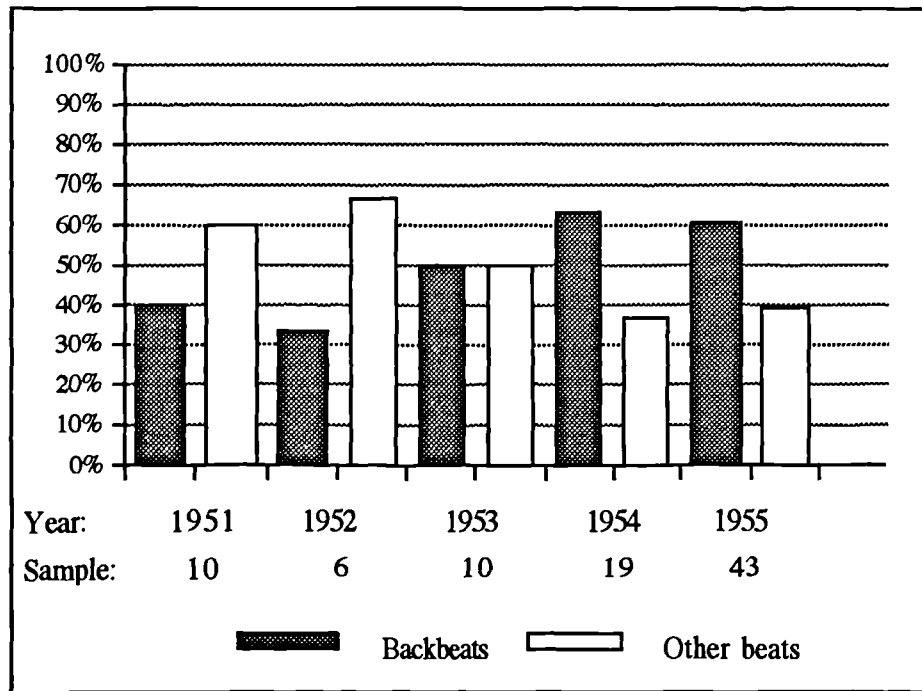


Table 5.3 Doowop recordings, 1951-55: backbeats and other beats.

It is evident from Table 5.2 and Table 5.3 that snare backbeat did not predominately feature in our sample of 1950s doowop recordings until around 1954. Further, no recordings contained backbeat handclaps. This means that the relationship of gospel vocal quartet style to rhythm and blues, as posited by such authors as those mentioned above, concerns style characteristics other than snare backbeat and backbeat handclaps. What other gospel styles, then, featured backbeat handclaps? Here, we will return to our focus on Chicago in order to search for stylistic congruences between Judge Riley's use of snare backbeat in Chicago rhythm and blues and gospel accompaniments.

Within the broader context of Afro-American religion, there existed numerous small Sanctified churches that burgeoned in Chicago during the early twentieth century. These small churches encouraged a more personal and emotional participation in their religious services exemplified, in part, by "extensive use of hand clapping and foot

tapping” (Floyd, 1995: 63). We will briefly investigate some recordings of Sanctified gospel in order to locate handclapping on the backbeat.

### 5.3 Backbeat in Chicago Sanctified Gospel.

In contrast to pre-1955 rhythm and blues, Sanctified Chicago gospel dating from the 1920s is comparatively far less documented in commercially available recordings. Also, few references were able to be located in published accounts. Consequently, I have had to content myself with cursory references to Sanctified singers in published accounts and available recordings of gospel singers designated as “Sanctified” in order to focus my search on representative musicians. Such references and recordings sources will be cited below.

My investigation of Sanctified Chicago gospel recordings revealed the following.

- Of sixteen extant recordings featuring Sister Bessie Johnson - described by Boyer (1995: 40) as a “legendary” Sanctified gospel singer<sup>11</sup> - ten recordings include emphatic handclaps on the backbeat.<sup>12</sup> Backbeat handclaps were consistently employed throughout the recording by Johnson and members of her Sanctified gospel group. Some of Johnson’s recordings also include early jazz-type soloistic rhythms executed on an unidentified percussion instrument (e.g. *What Kind of Man Jesus Is*, Chicago, 1928). Such early jazz rhythms are

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<sup>11</sup>Bessie Johnson, although described by Boyer (1995: 40) as “legendary” is not subject to any lengthy discussion. Rather, Boyer (ibid.) only includes the following remark: “Sister Johnson’s voice, while that of the average alto, could summon up a deep and dark quality and assume the growling timbre associated with the African-American folk preacher” (ibid.).

<sup>12</sup>Johnson’s extant recordings are included in Memphis Gospel 1927-1929: The Complete Recorded works of Sister May Nelson, Lonnie McIntorsh, Bessie Johnson In Chronological Order (Document Records compact disc: DOCD-5072, 1991).

inconsistently used, not clearly audible in the recording, and mostly occur in final formal-structural sections.

- Two recordings by Reverend P.W. Williams with Samuel Alexander and Sanctified Singers were located.<sup>13</sup> Both recordings - *Testifying Meeting Part I* and *Testifying Meeting Part 2* (Chicago, 1928) - include backbeat handclaps and piano accompaniment.
- Twenty-five extant recordings by Reverend D.C. Rice and his Sanctified congregation were located.<sup>14</sup> Around one half of Rev. D.C. Rice's extant recorded sermons with singing include woodblock rhythms and an ensemble mostly consisting of piano, a brass bass instrument (usually trumpet or trombone) and double bass. No recordings include backbeat handclaps or accompaniments with backbeat emphasis. Rather, accompaniments emphasize all four pulses, much in the manner of flat four beats which, as we have noted in Chapter 3.3.1 were becoming increasingly common in jazz during the late 1920s and early '30s.<sup>15</sup>
- The complete recorded output of Arizona Dranes, produced during the late 1920s and early '30s, was located.<sup>16</sup> Although no recordings included handclap backbeats, Dranes' stride piano accompaniments sometimes contained accents on the backbeat (for example, *God's Got A Crown*, Chicago, 1928,

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<sup>13</sup>Recordings source: Gospel Classics - Volume 2 (1927-1935) (Document Records compact disc: DOCD 5313, 1994).

<sup>14</sup>Recordings source: Rev. D.C. Rice 1928-1930: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order (Document Records compact disc: DOCD-5071, 1991).

<sup>15</sup>Flat four beats can be clearly heard in accompaniments that feature double bass. For example, *No Night There* (Chicago, 1929) features double bass and piano performances on all four pulses.

<sup>16</sup>Recordings source: Arizona Dranes: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order (Document Records compact disc: DOCD-5186, 1993). The output of Arizona Dranes is discussed by Oliver (1984: 188-90) in terms of Sanctified gospel.

contains stride piano and also guitar accompaniment that include some accenting of backbeats).

- Seven extant recordings produced in 1927 by Jessie Hill May, accompanied by Arizona Dranes, mostly featured stride piano accompaniments.<sup>17</sup> No backbeat handclaps were included in the recordings.
- Tambourine accompaniments that accent the backbeat were contained on two of six extant recordings by Sister Called Fancy, produced in Chicago in 1929: *Everybody Get Your Business Right* and *Goin' On To Heaven In The Sanctified Way*.<sup>18</sup>

Although a limited number of Sanctified gospel recordings were located, there is nevertheless a very considerable presence of emphatic backbeats, mostly occurring as handclaps and some tambourine hits, in the output of some Sanctified gospel singers produced during the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>19</sup> It is possible, therefore, that backbeat handclaps occurring in Sanctified gospel performance figured in the musical development of Judge Riley. However, this notion must remain conjectural given the dearth of published information concerning Riley's musical development and

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<sup>17</sup>Recordings source: Gospel Classics (1927-1931): Complete Recorded Works (Document Records compact disc: DOCD 5190, 1993).

<sup>18</sup>Recordings source: Gospel Classics - Volume 2 (1927-1935) (Document Records compact disc: DOCD 5313, 1994). Sister Called Fancy's membership of the Sanctified church was confirmed by the title of her recording *Goin' To Heaven in the Sanctified Way* and also the inclusion of "Sanctified Singers" on two recordings included in the recordings source.

<sup>19</sup>During my search of Sanctified gospel recordings, I located other recordings of gospel that contain backbeat emphasis in accompaniments. In particular, six extant recordings by Blind Willie Davis', produced during the late 1920s, include recurring accented backbeat bass notes in his slide guitar accompaniment (recordings source: Gospel Classics (1927-1931): Complete Recorded Works (Document Records compact disc: DOCD 5190, 1993). The occurrence of accented bass notes on pulses 2 and 4 support Davis' higher pitched and often legato slide guitar work, mostly occurring on pulses 1 and 3 (Davis' emphasis of bass notes that occur on the backbeat is a departure from such common accompaniments as oompah beats, the latter of which features bass notes on pulses 1 and 3 and chordal executions on pulses 2 and 4).

influences.

Having investigated the influence of gospel and gospel-derived styles on rhythm and blues, with particular attention given to the occurrence of backbeat, we will now focus on the roots of snare backbeat in country and western musical styles (as previously flagged in Chapter Four). The necessity to investigate snare backbeat and also other accompanimental backbeats in country and western music has, to a large extent, become apparent from results of our rhythm and blues survey. In recapping a main feature of our results, we have observed in Chapter Four that strong or emphatic snare backbeats were not apparent in rhythm and blues until around 1952. Table 5.4 (below) summarizes results regarding the frequency of occurrence of strong or emphatic snare backbeats in our rhythm and blues sample.

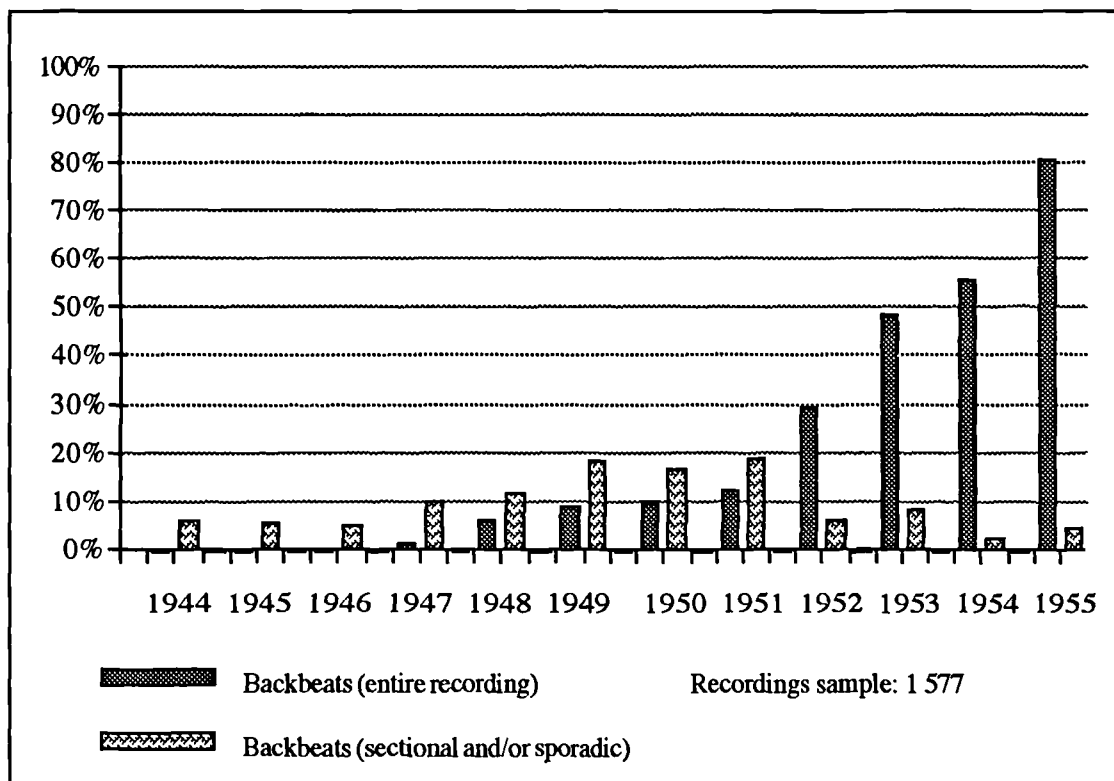


Table 5.4 Rhythm and blues recordings, 1944-55: recordings containing strong or emphatic snare backbeats.

Perhaps rhythm and blues drummers, recording during the early 1950s, were influenced by other musical styles which predominately included backbeat accompaniments. Given that many rock commentators posit country and western as a stylistic influence on the development of rock'n'roll, it is therefore logical to focus on country and western style as one possible precursory influence of snare backbeat performance.

#### 5.4 Backbeat in Country and Western Music.

Unlike rhythm and blues, drumming on pre-1950s country and western recordings was comparatively rare. As Malone (1974: 278) notes, it was not until the rock'n'roll era that drums became a permanent addition to most country and western ensembles, and this was probably informed by a great percentage of youth who, influenced by the rock'n'roll sound, “demanded intensified beats and stepped up rhythms”. As will become evident below, the importance of “stepped up rhythms” - and particularly the backbeat - to the development of country music and also rock'n'roll strongly figured in the musical development of Bill Haley and some other pre-rock'n'roll country and western music performers.

The influence of western music on the formation of rock'n'roll style was noted by Bill Haley who, in an interview conducted by Red Robinson in Vancouver, 31 May, 1966, stated that “absolutely too much publicity has been given to the fact that rock'n'roll is rhythm and blues music, and it is not, it very definitely isn't, anymore more than it is western music”. According to Haley, the formation of rock'n'roll style largely involved the development of accompanimental rhythms influenced by “western music” beat rather than rhythm and blues accompanimental style. In reference to his early rock'n'roll style, for example, Haley notes that

We changed [rhythm and blues] rhythm from just a shuffle type rhythm to the heavy 2/4 beat, which was 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4 [here Haley accents pulses 2 and 4 and further emphasizes the backbeat by slapping the desk] *Get out 'n that kitchen and rattle those pots and pans ...* [Haley continues to emphasize pulses 2 and 4 by slapping the desk whilst singing this excerpt from *Shake, Rattle and Roll*] whereas it used to be da-da da-da da-da da-da, da-da da-da da-da da-da [the latter is sung with a shuffle rhythm and the desk is slapped on each pulse] (Haley as recorded by Robinson, 1995: 6:07).

Haley's notion that rhythm and blues was characterized by shuffle rhythms possibly derived from his working in New Orleans and “doing rhythm and blues” there during the mid-1940s (Haley as recorded by Robinson, 1995: 4:20). As we have previously



observed in Chapter Four, our pre-1949 New Orleans recordings sample included shuffle or swing rhythms on cymbals; snare backbeats were not evident in this recordings sample. In order to understand how Haley effected a change from rhythm and blues “shuffle” rhythm to a “heavy 2/4 beat”, we will briefly overview Haley’s musical career and include specific reference to his recorded output from 1951 to 1953. Following this discussion, we will investigate the roots of the rock’n’roll backbeat in the recorded repertoire of other country and western performers.

Haley’s early musical career, dating from around 1944 to 1946, included performances as a country and western yodeller with the Downhomers, an Indiana based group who worked out of radio station WOWO in Fort Wayne. The bandleader, Shorty Cook (as quoted in Swenson, 1983: 21-2), recalls conversations with Haley about making “crossover” records, by which he is implying recordings that include elements of both “pop music” and country and western style. Although no recordings were produced by Haley during this period, some collaborative song writing with Cook did result. One compositional effort was *Four Leaf Clover Blues*, which Haley later recorded for Cowboy records in 1948 with his newly formed band the Four Aces of Western Swing. This recording could not be located whilst writing this thesis and, therefore, a discussion of its stylistic characteristics cannot take place here. However, in describing his musical style between 1947 and 1949, Haley (as quoted in Gillett, 1983: 23) recalls that “the style ... was a combination of country and western, Dixieland, and the old style rhythm and blues”. Haley (as quoted in Gillett, 1983: 24) subsequently discusses some rhythmic characteristics that featured in performances undertaken during this period, but offers little qualification of his reference to “Dixieland”:

I felt then that if I could take, say, a Dixieland tune and drop the first and third beats, and accentuate the second and fourth, and add a beat the listeners could clap to as well as dance to this would be what they were after.

If we accept that Haley’s reference to a Dixieland “tune” infers a Dixieland “accompaniment”, then his accenting of pulses two and four during this period

presumably relates to the performance practice of accompanying instruments, particularly his rhythm guitar playing. As we shall see, backbeat accentuations endure in the guitar accompaniments of Haley's 1951 extant recorded output. Haley's reference to "Dixieland", however, is anomalous given that his musical concern during this period was to combine rhythm and blues and country styles (as noted above). It is likely that Haley had in mind some prominent country and western ensembles of the 1940s, such as Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys, and, more generally, a contemporaneous musical style that is generally referred to by commentators as "western swing".<sup>20</sup> According to Malone (1974: 179-180), western swing ensembles included "jazz-like" improvisations on steel guitar (for example) and performed repertoire displaying a "jazz influence". Indeed, many recordings by Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys display jazz influences and these generally relate to early jazz, or Dixieland jazz style, rather than to contemporaneous jazz styles such as bebop or late swing. *Roly Poly* (Hollywood, 1945), for example, contains early jazz-like improvisations on trumpet, violin and guitar. *Fat Boy Rag* (Hollywood, 1946) and *Who Walks In When I Walk Out?* (Dallas, 1935) include backbeat banjo accompaniments and occasional cymbal crashes on pulse 4 which, as we have previously noted in Chapter Three, are characteristic of early jazz drumming.<sup>21</sup> By referring to "Dixieland", therefore, Haley is probably intimating early jazz-influenced improvisations and accompaniments evident in the repertoire of Bob Wills and probably

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<sup>20</sup>Malone (1974: 171-181) and Carr (1980: 102-124), for example, include discussion of Bob Wills and western swing style from the late 1930s to around 1950. Both of these authors note that Bob Wills became one of the dominant influences in country music during this period.

<sup>21</sup>*Roly Poly* and *Fat Boy Rag* are included on The Essential Bob Wills, 1935-1947 (Columbia compact disc: CK 48958, 1992). *Who Walks In When I Walk Out?* is included in the western swing compilation Western Swing: Texas, 1928-1944 (Fremaux compact discs: FA 032, 1994). Malone (1974: 180) cites some other recordings by Bob Wills which display a jazz influence, including *Basin Street Blues* and *St. Louis Blues*.

other western swing bands who were recording from the late 1930s.<sup>22</sup>

By the late 1940s, Haley had disbanded his Four Aces of Western Swing and assembled a new line-up, The Saddlemen. This band's instrumentation, similar to that of the Four Aces of Western Swing, was to remain the nucleus for Haley's later recordings and comprised Al Rex (double bass), Billy Williamson (steel guitar), and John Grande (piano and accordion). Much of The Saddlemen's early recorded material was unreleased and any released material was not commercially available at the time of writing this thesis. Haley (as recorded by Robinson, 1995: 4:37), however, provides some indication of The Saddlemen's musical style in his recollection that the "flavour" of the music performed was "a mixture of country and western and rhythm and blues". Swenson (1983: 27) notes a degree of stylistic innovation in The Saddlemen's compositional efforts and suggests that one particular recording, *Yodel Your Blues Away*, exemplifies "hints of the pre-rock style his band was developing". Swenson (ibid.) subsequently describes *Yodel Your Blues Away* as follows:

Though the tune is related to the eastern European polka style popular in the region ... the driving cadence and rhythm accompaniment is definitely harder edged. Grande's accordion flies through the arrangement at breakneck speed while Haley's expert yodelling twists around in an exciting rush, pushed along by Rex's revolutionary bass playing, which is crudely percussive rather than melodic.

Any relationship amongst the "pre-rock style" of *Yodel Your Blues Away*, European polka style and percussive bass playing is not fully explicated in Swenson's account. However, of particular interest in Swenson's account is his notion of a "harder edged" accompaniment evident in the recording. Is Swenson comparing Haley's accompaniment to that of European polka style which was "popular in the region"? If so, then Swenson is inferring a relationship between oompah beats in polka

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<sup>22</sup>Referring to recordings included on *Western Swing: Texas, 1928-1944* (Fremaux compact discs: FA 032, 1994), Milton Brown and His Musical Brownies' *Talking About You* (San Antonio, 1934), Crystal Springs Ramblers' *Fort Worth Stomp* (Dallas, 1937) and Jimmie Revard and His Oklahoma Playboys' *Oh! Swing It* (San Antonio, 1938), among other, all comprise Dixieland characteristics, as previously discussed.

accompaniment (as previously discussed in Chapter Three) and backbeat emphasis in the guitar strumming and “crudely percussive” double bass performance comprising Haley’s accompaniments. Unfortunately, that accompanimental style of Polish-American polka music is under-researched<sup>23</sup> and, consequently, this notion must remain within the realm of conjecture.

Following on from *Yodel Your Blues Away*, Swenson (1982: 34) posits Haley’s recording of *Rocket 88* (1951) as a significant step towards rock’n’roll musical style. It is useful, therefore, to discuss percussive bass performances and Haley’s rhythm guitar accompaniments vis-a-viz *Rocket 88* and other extant recordings by Haley and His Saddlemen that were recorded during 1951 in order to better understand how such recordings might exhibit pre-rock’n’roll style. Mini-analyses of Haley’s 1951 extant recorded repertoire is included in Table 5.5 and such recordings will be discussed subsequently.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>I’m particularly referring here to Janice Kleeman (1982) *The Origins and Stylistic Development of Polish-American Polka Music* (Ph.D. diss.: Uni. of California), Victor Greene (1992) *A Passion for Polka: Old-Time Ethnic Music in America* (Berkeley: Uni. of California Press) and Charles and Angeliki Keil (1992) *Polka Happiness* (Temple Uni. Press: Philadelphia). These texts include discussion of the development of polka music in America during the twentieth century but omit any stylistic discussion of polka accompaniments, including its rhythmic aspects.

<sup>24</sup>Haley’s extant 1951 recordings are included in *Bill Haley and His Comets: Rock The Joint! - The Original Essex Recordings, 1951-1954*, (Schoolkids Records compact disc: SKR 1529, 1994). According to the discography accompanying this compact disc, the following 1951 recordings are absent from this recorded collection: *I’m Cryin* (Pennsylvania), *I Don’t Want To Be Alone This Christmas* (Pennsylvania), *Pretty Baby* (Pennsylvania) and *Year Ago This Christmas* (Pennsylvania).

<p><i>Dance With A Dolly (With A Hole In Her Stocking)</i>, Pennsylvania, 1951.</p> <p>Vocal. Strong backbeat on rhythm guitar. Bass on all four pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano. Improvising steel guitar.</p>	<p><i>Rock The Joint</i>, Pennsylvania, 1951.</p> <p>Vocal. Emphatic backbeat on rhythm guitar. Blues form. Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano. Improvising steel guitar.</p>
<p><i>Down Deep In My Heart</i>, Pennsylvania, 1951.</p> <p>Vocal. Emphatic backbeat on rhythm guitar. Bass on pulses 1 and 3. Oompah and improvising piano. Legato steel guitar.</p>	<p><i>Rocket 88</i>, Pennsylvania, 1951.</p> <p>Vocal. Strong backbeat on rhythm guitar. Blues form. Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano. Legato steel guitar.</p>
<p><i>Green Tree Boogie</i>, Pennsylvania, 1951.</p> <p>Vocal. Emphatic backbeat on rhythm guitar. Blues form. Bass on all four pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse in bass solo. Oompah piano. Legato steel guitar.</p>	<p><i>Rockin' Chair On The Moon</i>, Pennsylvania, 1951.</p> <p>Vocal. Weak backbeat on rhythm guitar. Some strong backbeats on steel guitar. Blues form. Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano. Improvising steel guitar.</p>
<p><i>Icy Heart</i>, Pennsylvania, 1951.</p> <p>Vocal. Emphatic backbeat on rhythm guitar. Bass on pulses 1 and 3. Oompah and improvising piano. Improvising steel guitar.</p>	<p><i>Stop Beatin' Around The Mulberry Bush</i>, Pennsylvania, 1951.</p> <p>Vocal. Some strong snare backbeats during instrumental solos. Swing on hi-hat. Some strong backbeats on rhythm and steel guitars. Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano. Improvising steel guitar.</p>
<p><i>Jukebox Cannonball</i>, Pennsylvania, 1951.</p> <p>Vocal. Strong backbeat on rhythm guitar. Bass on pulses 1 and 3. Oompah piano. Legato steel guitar.</p>	<p><i>Sundown Boogie</i>, Pennsylvania, 1951.</p> <p>Vocal. Strong backbeat on rhythm guitar. Blues form. Bass on all 4 pulses. Some slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano. Legato steel guitar.</p>
<p><i>Real Rock Drive</i>, Pennsylvania, 1951.</p> <p>Vocal. Some weak snare backbeats. Some strong backbeats on steel guitar in final guitar solo. Some comping snare. Swing on hi-hat. Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano. Improvising steel guitar.</p>	<p><i>Tearstains On My Heart</i>, Pennsylvania, 1951.</p> <p>Vocal. Strong backbeat on rhythm guitar. Bass on all 4 pulses. Oompah piano. Legato steel guitar.</p>

Table 5.5 Bill Haley: Essex recordings (extant), 1951.

Swenson (1982: 34) states that *Rocket 88* was “the first significant white interpretation

of the postwar R & B form".<sup>25</sup> Indeed, *Rocket 88* is certainly dissimilar to *Tearstains On My Heart*, recorded by Haley at the same session. The latter track, and Haley's subsequent 1951 recordings of *Down Deep In My Heart*, *Icy Heart*, and *Jukebox Cannonball*, are perhaps indicative of Haley's early country and western style. In contrast to such recordings, *Rocket 88* includes a boogie piano accompaniment and a double bass performing on all four pulses with off-pulses accentuated by slapping the double bass string against the fingerboard. The resultant effect is a shuffle based accompanimental rhythm with percussive emphasis provided on the off-pulse by slap bass. It is probably this slap bass technique which Swenson (as quoted above) is referring to in his noting of "revolutionary" and "crudely percussive" bass playing. Aside from double bass accompaniments, *Rocket 88*, *Down Deep In My Heart*, *Icy Heart*, *Jukebox Cannonball*, and *Tearstains On My Heart* all include either strong or emphatic backbeats executed on the rhythm guitar, a characteristic that will be discussed later in this chapter in reference to early country and western recordings.<sup>26</sup> Excluding *Rocket 88*, the aforementioned recordings also include oompah piano executions which further emphasize the backbeats evident in Haley's guitar strumming. Perhaps it is the backbeat emphasis in Haley's guitar accompaniments that Swenson (1983: 27, as quoted above) considered as having "European polka style" origins.

The next significant rhythm and blues crossover recording by Haley was *Rock The Joint*, composed by Jimmy Preston.<sup>27</sup> Haley first heard *Rock The Joint* on radio

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<sup>25</sup>*Rocket 88* was a rhythm and blues tune written by Jackie Brenston and introduced to Haley by Dave Miller, who later formed Essex records in 1952. Brenston recorded *Rocket 88* for Chess Records with Sam Phillips producing. The record entered the Billboard R & B Jukebox and Best Seller charts in mid-1951.

<sup>26</sup>To this listener, the backbeats emphasized in rhythm guitar strumming sound like snare executions performed with brushes and, therefore, project a percussive rather than harmonic musical effect.

<sup>27</sup>Preston's *Rock The Joint* was released in 1949 and was reasonably successful, reaching no.6 on the R & B Jukebox chart and no.11 on the Best Seller chart.

station WPWA where the recording was used as a signature tune for disc jockey Jim Reeve's race records radio show "Judge Rhythm Court". Haley followed "Judge Rhythm Court" with a live country show and, while waiting to go on air, familiarized himself with the tune and lyrics of *Rock The Joint*. The lyrics were subsequently rewritten by Haley and the song recorded for Essex records. The looming success of *Rock The Joint* initially posed a problem for Haley and his Saddlemen because their country ballad *Icy Heart*, released on the Essex records label, was also beginning to receive radio airplay. Haley chose to pursue the musical style of *Rock the Joint* and subsequently renamed his band "Bill Haley and His Comets", at the suggestion of Bix Reichner who hosted a jazz show on radio WPWA, in order to signal to his audience the new artistic direction.<sup>28</sup> Reichner composed *Stop Beating Around The Mulberry Bush* for Haley and His Comets and the subsequent recording employed, for the first time in Haley's recording career, a drummer in the ensemble.<sup>29</sup> *Stop Beating Around The Mulberry Bush* includes some strong snare backbeats during instrumental solos, otherwise, drumming is mostly confined to a swing rhythm on hi-hat.<sup>30</sup> Backbeats, however, are emphasized throughout the recording by the rhythm and steel guitars. Double bass performance includes consistent slapping on the off-pulse, leading Swenson (1982: 42) to observe that "the rhythm of the song was still carried by the bass". As evident in Table 5.5, Haley's remaining 1951 recordings all contain slap bass. The incorporation of double bass slapping technique can readily serve as a delineating factor separating Haley's pre-rock stylistic attempts from the four

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<sup>28</sup>By this stage Al Rex had left the band and was replaced by "Lord" Jim Ferguson who hosted an early morning sports and commentary show at radio station WPWA.

<sup>29</sup>According to Swenson (1982: 42), Dick Richards was drumming. However, the discography accompanying *Bill Haley and His Comets: Rock The Joint! - The Original Essex Recordings, 1951-1954*, (Schoolkids Records compact disc: SKR 1529, 1994) cites Billy Gussak.

<sup>30</sup>Similarly, *Real Rock Drive* is largely characterized by swing rhythms on hi-hat, but some weak snare backbeats can be occasionally heard.

recordings that, as we have previously noted, might be considered as country and western in style.

Haley's subsequent recordings for the Essex records label, produced in 1953, are listed in Table 5.6 below.



<p><i>Crazy Man, Crazy</i>, Pennsylvania, 1953.</p> <p>Vocal. Emphatic snare backbeats in chorus and solos. Comping snare at other times. Some strong backbeats on rhythm guitar. Strong backbeat on hi-hat in final verses and choruses. Ride on all 4 pulses in solos. Blues form. Bass on all four pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano. Improvising steel guitar.</p>	<p><i>Live It Up</i>, Pennsylvania, 1953.</p> <p>Vocal. Strong snare backbeat. Swing on hi-hat (?). Blues form. Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano. Improvising guitar. Some riffing baritone sax.</p>
<p><i>Chattanooga Choo Choo</i>, Pennsylvania, 1953.</p> <p>Vocal. Some strong backbeats on rhythm and steel guitar. Some comping snare. Shuffle on hi-hat. Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off pulse. Boogie piano.</p>	<p><i>Pat-A-Cake</i>, Pennsylvania, 1953.</p> <p>Vocal. Emphatic snare backbeat in guitar solos. Ride on all 4 pulses in guitar solos. Comping snare at other times. Blues form. Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano.</p>
<p><i>Farewell, So Long, Goodbye</i>, Pennsylvania, 1953.</p> <p>Vocal. Strong backbeat on rhythm guitar and also steel guitar at times. Swing on hi-hat (?), otherwise drum beat is not clear. Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano. Improvising guitar. Some riffing baritone sax.</p>	<p><i>Straightjacket</i>, Pennsylvania, 1953.</p> <p>Instrumental (sax solo). Some strong snare backbeats. Some comping snare. Weak backbeats on steel guitar in guitar solo. Swing on ride. Bass on all 4 pulses. Boogie piano. Riffing vocals.</p>
<p><i>Fractured</i>, Pennsylvania, 1953.</p> <p>Vocal. Emphatic snare backbeat in guitar solos. Ride on all 4 pulses in guitar solos. Comping snare at other times. Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano.</p>	<p><i>Ten Little Indians</i>, Pennsylvania, 1953.</p> <p>Vocal. Strong snare backbeat. Swing on hi-hat. Bass on all 4 pulses. Boogie piano. Improvising guitar.</p>
<p><i>I'll Be True</i>, Pennsylvania, 1953.</p> <p>Vocal. Strong backbeat on rhythm guitar. Handclaps on backbeat in guitar and baritone sax solos. Shuffle on snare. Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano. Improvising guitar. Some riffing baritone sax.</p>	<p><i>What'cha Gonna Do?</i>, Pennsylvania, 1953.</p> <p>Vocal. Emphatic snare backbeat in guitar and piano solos. Swing on ride in guitar solos. Hi-hat on all 4 pulses (?) in piano solo. Shuffle on maracas (?) at other times. Strong backbeat on rhythm guitar. Blues form. Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano. Legato steel guitar.</p>
	<p><i>Yes Indeed!</i>, Pennsylvania, 1953.</p> <p>Vocal. Emphatic snare backbeat. Ride on all 4 pulses in chorus and solos. Bass on all 4 pulses. Slap bass on off-pulse. Boogie piano.</p>

Table 5.6 Bill Haley: Essex recordings (extant), 1953.

Following *Stop Beating Around The Mulberry Bush*, the Comet's next record, *Crazy Man, Crazy*, was recorded on the Essex record label in 1953. Swenson considers this recording as "little more than a catalogue of effects" and comprising a "longer, more elaborate and dramatic drum solo intro as well as more drumming inside the main arrangement of the song". As noted in Table 5.6, *Crazy Man, Crazy* features varied drum beats: an emphatic snare backbeat and ride cymbal on all four pulses in the chorus and instrumental solos, otherwise hi-hat rhythms and comping snare in other structural sections. As we have observed in Chapter Four, such drumming performance practice was peculiar to late 1940s rhythm and blues recordings that included snare backbeats. Swenson also notes that the recording is largely characterized by "the [double] bass pushing the beat" (1982: 42). Double bass performance in *Crazy Man, Crazy* includes off-pulse slap bass utilized throughout the recording. This occurrence, coupled with a boogie piano accompaniment, might well be considered to "push the beat" in terms of rhythmic consistency and prominence within the recording.

A similar accompanimental beat as that previously discussed - snare backbeats in instrumental solos and/or choruses (some comping snare at other times), cymbal on all four pulses in such sections, double bass on all four pulses with slap bass on off-pulse, and boogie piano - is employed in *Fractured*, *Pat-A-Cake*, and *What'cha Gonna Do?* Strong or emphatic snare backbeats throughout the recording are included in *Live It Up*, *Ten Little Indians*, and *Yes Indeed!* alongside off-pulse slap bass rhythms and boogie piano accompaniment. *Chattanooga Choo Choo*, *Farewell*, *So Long*, *Goodbye* and *Straightjacket* include boogie piano accompaniment and, excluding the latter recording, off-pulse slap bass is also evident. In comparison to Haley's 1951 recordings, rhythm guitar backbeats are generally not prominent in the aforementioned 1953 Essex recordings. However, backbeats are produced by the snare drum and these mostly figure in solo structural sections adjacent to comping snare rhythms. We have previously observed in Chapter Four that comping snare rhythms and sectional use of

snare backbeats are also occasionally employed in rhythm and blues recordings dating from the late 1940s.

In reference to our brief investigation of Bill Haley's pre-rock recorded repertoire, the following stylistic observations result:

- Haley wished to combine country and western with rhythm and blues musical style;
- Haley's recorded repertoire as previously discussed includes emphasis on the backbeat provided by the rhythm guitar and sometimes the piano. This rhythmic proclivity is mostly evident, however, in Haley's 1951 recordings;
- the accompanimental beat produced in Haley's 1953 recordings is characterized by a shuffle rhythm produced by on-pulse and off-pulse slap bass rhythms and boogie piano; and
- slap bass occurs in Haley's early recorded repertoire from 1951, excluding four recordings which, for the moment, we will designate as early country and western in style.<sup>31</sup> These four recordings also employ a strong emphasis on the backbeat produced by an oompah piano rhythm.

We have previously noted in Chapter Four that shuffle rhythms often characterized the accompanimental rhythmic profile of rhythm and blues recordings, usually in the form of hi-hat rhythms, sometimes snare rhythms, and boogie piano performance. It would be reasonable to state, therefore, that Haley's conflation of rhythm and blues styles with country music in his pre-rock'n'roll recordings initially involved the incorporation of shuffle rhythms, evident in double bass performance. The incorporation of snare backbeats throughout particular structural sections and the inclusion of boogie piano accompaniments in Haley's 1953 recordings reflects a later development of his pre-

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<sup>31</sup>*Down Deep In My Heart, IcyHeart, Jukebox Cannonball and Tearstains On My Heart.*

rock'n'roll musical style. As evident in Appendix Three, boogie piano rhythms were common accompaniments in rhythm and blues and the inclusion of these in Haley's 1953 recorded output clearly reflects a rhythm and blues influence. The drumming performance practice evident in Haley's 1953 recordings might also be designated as rhythm and blues informed. As we shall see, however, some performance practices characterizing country music accompaniments might at least equally account for the adoption of snare backbeats in such recordings. For instance, we must not dismiss Haley's consistent use of a backbeat emphasis in his rhythm guitar accompaniments in our search for the roots of the rock'n'roll snare backbeat in country music. It may well be that Haley's drummer reproduced the rhythm guitar's backbeat emphasis by executing backbeats on the snare drum, perhaps doing so in the interests of maintaining some consistency and homogeneity in rhythmic texture within the accompaniment.

We will investigate some other pre-rock'n'roll country musics in our search for the roots of the rock'n'roll backbeat. Our investigation will begin with a brief discussion of Smokey Dacus, who was drumming with Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys from 1935-41. As Fish notes (1982b: 16), Smokey Dacus was the first drumset player in western swing and "arguably influenced every drummer to follow in country music". Dacus' published accounts regarding his drumming style with Wills will be referenced in order to clarify the nature and extent of his "influence". A discussion of Hank Williams' accompanimental style will then follow. Williams' recordings, dating from 1947 to 1953, are considered by many commentators as influential to the development of both country music<sup>32</sup> and rock'n'roll.<sup>33</sup> The accompanimental rhythmic

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<sup>32</sup>See, for example, Carr (1980: 187-199) and Malone (1974: 232-238) for a discussion of Williams' influence on country music's development.

<sup>33</sup>For example, Goldrosen (1975: 25) suggests that Hank Williams was "probably the most profound early influence on Holly". Carr (1980: 220) considers that Haley's recording of *Icy Heart* (1951) was "obviously derived from Hank Williams". Similarly, Aquilo (1989: 13) states that "rockabilly artists" were "weaned on the sounds of Hank Williams, Lefty Frizzell, Roy Acuff, and other Grande Ole Opry

characteristics of Williams' extant recordings will be investigated and their relationship to the formation of the rock'n'roll backbeat determined.

Dacus (as quoted in Fish, 1982b: 16) notes that his drumming for Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys mostly contained snare rolls and snare brushwork, the rhythms of which were adapted to suit the various musical styles that comprised Wills' repertoire. Although details regarding the drum rhythms that were employed in Wills' earliest recordings are not forthcoming in his account, Dacus (*ibid.*: 17) does state that he "hero worshipped" the drumming style of Sonny Greer (performing with Duke Ellington). We have previously noted in Chapter Three, that Greer's drumming largely comprised flat four beats. It is likely, therefore, that the performance of flat four based beats would have figured in Dacus' performances with Wills, although such beats were varied by press rolls and brushwork to suit particular accompanimental circumstances. Dacus (*ibid.*: 16) recognized in his early drumming attempts with Wills that these beats were not "basic with all the tunes" and, subsequently, he developed an appropriate drum beat for western swing. Influences informing this development, occurring around the mid-1930s, are noted by Dacus (*ibid.*: 16-17):

I began to listen to that slap on the bass fiddle and I began to notice - when I couldn't hear the rest of the music very well - I could still hear the slap of that bass fiddle. It was the tonal frequency that just cut like a knife .... The slap, together with the banjo and the rhythm guitar, choked the second and fourth beat. With that in mind, I took a brush in my left hand and played two and four on the snare. That brush blended with the choke of the guitar, the slap of the bass, and the whack of the banjo. I would play cymbal or close my sock cymbal and play [it] with my right hand, like a "bounce" rhythm. I learned that I could play on all four beats with my brush. It just added a little bit to the first and third beat, but it was a matter of accent. I didn't accent the first and third beats but you could feel it there. But, when I hit the second and fourth beats on a closed sock, the sound just melted into the rhythm guitar. That's when I finally found out what I could play on drums that matched every other instrument in the band.

It is evident in Dacus' discussion (above) that a main objective for employing snare

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stars." Haley (as quoted in Shaw, 1975: 142) also recognizes Williams' contribution to the development of country music, noting that "my influence in the country field came from Hank Williams, largely because of the good songs he wrote, the heart songs and blues".

backbeats in his drumming revolved around his concern to blend with other accompanimental instruments of Wills' western swing band. This concept of ensemble playing might have resulted from Dacus' performance experiences with a concert band where the "main objective was to take seventy pieces and make it sound like one" (Dacus as quoted in Fish, 1982b: 17). It can also be noted from the above that Dacus' use of backbeats in his drumming was largely informed by rhythmic characteristics contained in other accompaniments, namely the backbeat "slap" of the double bass and rhythm guitar and banjo rhythms which "choked the second and fourth beat".

Dacus' reference to a "bounce" rhythm in the above quote most likely refers to a swing or shuffle rhythm which, as we have previously noted, were two common cymbal rhythmic paradigms of the swing era, as utilized by Sonny Greer in his performances with Duke Ellington (for example). Dacus' performance practice of accenting pulses two and four on the "sock" (hi-hat) cymbal, however, is in contradiction to that of swing era drummers. For example, Sonny Greer (with the Duke Ellington orchestra) and Jo Jones (with Count Basie) emphasized all four pulses of a 4/4 bar in order to project a flat four beat within the rhythmic section (see Chapter Three). Therefore, Dacus' accentuation of the backbeat in hi-hat rhythms represents a development of hi-hat drumming technique and probably also results from his wish to effectively blend with other backbeat emphasized accompaniments produced by the rhythm section.

We will test Dacus' claims regarding his drumming style by briefly investigating recordings by Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys with Smokey Dacus drumming. Four recordings were located: *Osage Stomp* (Dallas, 1935), *Steel Guitar Rag* (Chicago, 1936), *Right or Wrong* (Chicago, 1936),<sup>34</sup> and *Who Walks In When I Walk Out?*

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<sup>34</sup>Included on The Essential Bob Wills, 1935-1947 (Columbia compact disc: CK 48958, 1992).

(Dallas, 1935).<sup>35</sup>

*Osage Stomp* (Dallas, 1935) includes banjo rhythms that strongly accent the backbeat. This rhythm mostly disguises drumming activity throughout the recording. However, a swing on snare with brushes and a strong backbeat emphasis can be heard in the steel guitar and double bass solos. The double bass includes slap bass on off-pulses during the double bass solo, resulting in a shuffle rhythm with percussive emphasis produced on the off-pulse. No cymbal work is evident in this recording. Aside from ornamental drumming activity - including occasional snare fills with brushes, cowbell rhythms and cymbal executions on pulse four (all of which are reminiscent of early jazz drumming style) - drum beats can not be clearly heard in *Steel Guitar Rag* (Chicago, 1936). It is evident, however, that cymbal rhythms are not incorporated in Dacus' drumming. The accompanimental rhythm produced by the piano, guitar and banjo emphasizes the backbeat and double bass performances are mostly executed on pulses 1 and 3; no backbeat slap bass is evident. Drumming cannot be heard on *Right or Wrong* (Chicago, 1936). However, accompanimental instruments are emphasizing the backbeat and the double bass is performing on pulses 1 and 3, sometimes with Bartok staccato. Some double bass slapping on the backbeat can be occasionally heard in *Who Walks In When I Walk Out?* (Dallas, 1935). Here, Dacus is performing on-pulse rhythms executed on the snare drum with brushes. Backbeats are emphasized during the piano solo. At other times, drumming can not be clearly heard but it is evident that cymbal rhythms are not employed.

The lack of consistent cymbal rhythms in the four recordings discussed above suggests that Dacus was mostly performing on drums, supporting his notion that press rolls and snare with brushes were incorporated in Wills' early recordings. However, the poor

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<sup>35</sup>Recordings source: Western Swing: Texas, 1928-1944 (Fremeaux compact disc: FA 032, 1994).

recording quality of the aforementioned recordings and the strong backbeat accentuations evident in other accompanimental activity detracts from any clear analysis of Dacus' drumming beats in his performances with Bob Wills. Indeed, given Dacus' desire to blend with the ensemble by adopting a beat "basic to all the tunes", it is possible that backbeat snare executions would be subsumed within such accompanimental rhythmic activity and, therefore, would less likely be heard within the recording. Nonetheless, snare backbeats could be heard in some recordings and such occurrences albeit partially support Fish's notion (1982b: 16, as previously cited) that Dacus was an influential figure in the formation of a rock'n'roll beat. As previously noted, double bass slapping on the backbeat was heard in *Who Walks In When I Walk Out?* (Dallas, 1935) but was not incorporated throughout the recording. Dacus' statement concerning the existence of slap bass technique in country and western music is therefore true. However, the extent to which it was employed in recordings, at least in Wills' recordings thus covered, is not as extensive as Dacus intimates. We will later investigate double bass performance practice in country music, and include specific reference to slap bass rhythms. In the meantime, we will continue in our search for backbeats in country and western music by focussing on western swing and its precursory musical styles.

Western swing is considered by many country music commentators to have had its basis in the music of early 1900s Texan "singing cowboy" groups, and is often discussed as an outcome of developments of the singing cowboy music genre.<sup>36</sup>

Prominent musicians generally associated with this musical genre include such Texans as Jules Verne Allen, Gene Autry and Tex Ritter. These and other early Texan singing

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<sup>36</sup>For example, Malone (1974: 171) notes that western swing had "roots running deeply into the country past". Lengthy discussions concerning the roots of western swing in the singing cowboy genre can be found in Shelton and Goldblatt's chapter titled "Way Out West: Singing Cowboys and Western Swing (1971: 145-177) and Carr's chapter titled "Music from the Lone Star State" (1980: 102-137).



cowboys employed guitar accompaniments to their singing, mostly based on oompah rhythms comprising chordal executions on the backbeat and single bass notes executions on pulses 1 and 3 (see Figure 5.1).<sup>37</sup>



Figure 5.1 Country and western oompah guitar beat.

Variations to such oompah rhythms also comprised early singing cowboy accompaniments and these mostly featured additional chordal accents on pulse 3 of an oompah beat. This chordal variation follows a one bar sounding of an oompah beat (see Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2 Country and western guitar polka-type beat.

Such country and western oompah guitar beat variations will be referred to as “polka beats” due to their similarity to such axiomatic polka accompanimental rhythms included in, for example, Strauss’ *Blumenfest-Polka* and *Polka Française*.<sup>38</sup> It is probably not surprising to find polka beats in the repertoire of Texan singing cowboys.

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<sup>37</sup>Country and western oompah guitar beats can be heard in the following recordings of singing cowboys, located in the compilation recording *Western Cowboy Ballads and Songs, 1925-1939*, (Fremaux compact discs: FA 026, 1995): Jules Verne Allen, *Little Joe The Wrangler* (El Paso, 1928), Mac McClintock, *The Old Chisholm Trail* (L.A., 1928), Gene Autry, *Way Out West In Texas* (N.Y., 1933), Montano Slim, *Little Old Log Shack* (N.Y., 1934), and Tex Ritter, *The Hills Of Old Wyoming* (? , 1936). Carl T. Sprague’s *Following The Cow Trail*, (New York, 1925) varies this rhythm by performing even quavers on chords above an oompah bass line.

<sup>38</sup>Country and western polka-type guitar beats can be heard in the following recordings: Carl T. Sprague, *When The Work’s All Done This Fall* (New York, 1925), Jules Verne Allen, *The Gal I Left Behind Me* (El Paso, 1928), Mac McClintock, *Sam Bass* (L.A., 1928), J.D. Farley, *Bill Was A Texas Lad* (San Antonio, 1929, the final chord on pulse 4 of bar two is omitted), Powder River Jack Lee, *Tying A Knot In The Devil’s Tail* (L.A., 1930), Ken Maynard, *The Lone Star Trail* (L.A., 1930), and Tex Ritter, *Sam Hall* (New York, 1935).

As Carr (1980: 104) notes,

Texas has long had a heavy settlement of German, Bohemian, and other central European peoples, who brought their love of polkas, schottisches, and waltzes with them, forever to be associated with Texas music.

It would be reasonable to assume, therefore, that accompanimental rhythms of such music genres somehow figured in the development of country music accompaniments.

In reference to the previously cited examples, the incorporation of country and western oompah and polka guitar beats excluded emphatic emphasis of the backbeat. However, it will become clear from our following discussion that the subsequent development of country music was associated with an increased emphasis on chordal guitar executions.

Malone (1974: 163-4) considers that country music through the 1930s changed quite significantly in Texas, mostly due to the increased performance opportunities in Honky Tonks and subsequent alteration of musical style resulting from performances in such venues. Honky Tonks became popular meeting places through the 1930s for both drinking and dancing. An increase in volume within this venue accompanied their growing popularity and, consequently, musical performances had to become louder in order to be heard above the noise of the social soundscape. According to Malone (1974: 164), a change in guitar performance practice (including rhythmic aspects) and an increase in instrumentation affected the audibility of country and western ensembles:

sock rhythm - the playing of closed chords, or the striking of all six strings in unison in order to achieve a percussive effect - was applied to the guitar; the string bass became a firm fixture in the hillbilly band; and in rare cases drums were used.

Recorded evidence suggests that an increase in ensemble instrumentation resulted in the adoption of double bass rhythms on pulses 1 and 3 - these possibly emulating the bass of oompah guitar rhythms - and strong backbeat emphases in guitar strumming

rhythms.<sup>39</sup> Malone (1974: 166-7) continues to note that after such musical developments were effected, further changes were made through the “natural experimentation and improvisation of the performers”. Although Malone does not fully explicate the musical-structural consequences arising from such “experimentation and improvisation”, he does note that the double bass was “instituted to provide a heavy beat” (ibid.). Malone might be referring here to the addition of slap bass backbeats to double bass accompaniments, a notion that is supported to some extent by Ginell (1994).

According to Ginell (1994: 252), Wanna Coffman, performing with the western swing band Milton Brown and his Musical Brownies, was the first double bassist to pioneer the use of slap bass in country music. Coffman began his musical career by playing steel guitar but, at the request of Brown, quickly turned his attention to performing on the double bass. Brown (as quoted in Ginell, 1994: 70-1) was particular about the style of double bass playing required of Coffman, noting that Coffman was “not going to use the bow, he’s going to slap it. He’ll use the bow only on waltzes”. Similarly, Coffman (as quoted in Ginell, 1994: 71) recalls that “Milton wanted me to pick and slap [the double bass] right off”. Three recordings were located with Coffman performing with Milton Brown: *Talking About You* (San Antonio, 1934), *I’ll Be Glad When You’re Dead, You Rascal You* (Chicago, 1935), and *Louise Louise Blues* (Dallas, 1937).<sup>40</sup> Double bass rhythms in such recordings comprise performances on pulses 1 and 2 but exclude the use of slap bass technique. In the absence of any recordings by Coffman that include slap bass, we must therefore rely on Coffman’s and Brown’s testimony regarding its existence in their repertoire. However, slap bass

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<sup>39</sup>Listen to, for example, the Light Crust Doughboys’ *Oh! Susannah!*, (Fort Worth, 1936) which clearly displays such characteristics.

<sup>40</sup>Recordings source: Western Swing: Texas, 1928-1944 (Freemex compact disc: FA 032, 1994).

accompaniments were located in recordings by other early western swing ensembles. For instance, the instrumental introduction of the Crystal Springs Ramblers' *Fort Worth Stomp* (Dallas, 1937, with Homer Kinnaird drumming) contains a double bass shuffle rhythm with slapping on the off-pulse, producing a percussive effect. Throughout the remainder of the recording, slap bass on the backbeat can be clearly heard. Other instrumental accompanimental activity in this recording features crotchet rhythms on all four pulses with strong emphases on the backbeat.<sup>41</sup> Slap bass on the backbeat is also used during the fiddle solos in The Tune Wranglers' *Red's Tight Like That* (San Antonio, 1936) and is particularly audible in the final fiddle solo which comprises the last four bars of the recording.

Given our discussion of early country and western music accompaniments, the following conclusions concerning the occurrence of backbeats may be drawn:

- slap bass executions on the backbeat existed in country and western musical styles of the 1930s;
- slap bass technique was not generally employed in recordings but, given the testimony of Dacus, Coffman and Brown (as cited above), might have characterized live performances; and
- the adoption of snare backbeats by Dacus was informed by slap bass use and other accompanimental activity which also emphasized the backbeat.

From the late 1930s and early '40s, country music began to be recorded in Hollywood and, as Malone notes (1974: 154), groups such as the Sons of the Pioneers and Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys appeared in numerous movies in order to accompany the featured actor. Malone (ibid.) considers that a commercial "exploitation" of country

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<sup>41</sup>Similar accompanimental beats, including some occasional backbeat slapping on double bass, is audible in the Light Crust Doughboys' *Just Once Too Often* (Dallas, 1937).

music resulted and, subsequently, a “concept of western music became fixed in the public mind”. Some located recorded examples suggest that this “concept of western music” lacked antipodal rhythms, and indeed, backbeat emphases that previously characterized the accompaniments of rural country music recorded during 1930s. For example, Patsy Montana’s recording of *I’m An Old Cowhand* (Chicago, 1936)<sup>42</sup> contains even quaver rhythms on the guitar and other accompanying instruments, and also a bass rhythm on pulses 1 and 2, without any slap bass backbeats.<sup>43</sup> Some mollification of backbeat emphasis can also be heard in recordings of western swing ensembles dating from the mid 1940s. For example, *Sugar Moon* (Hollywood, 1946), *Fat Boy Rag* (Hollywood, 1946), *Bob Wills Boogie* (Hollywood, 1946) and *Deep Water* (Hollywood, 1947), recorded by Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys, all include walking bass and snare rhythms on all four pulses. Some backbeat emphasis is evident in the oompah piano accompaniment, banjo rhythms and, at times, snare drumming,<sup>44</sup> but the total effect approaches that of early swing era flat four accompanimental beats. During the 1940s, however, a return to a rural honky tonk country music style became evident and, by the late 1940s, dominated country music. Hank Williams’ recordings dating from the late 1940s can be considered to reflect this trend toward a honky tonk sound and, particularly, a return to country music traditionalism evident in Williams’

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<sup>42</sup>This track was written by Johnny Mercer in 1936 for the Bing Crosby film *Rhythm on the Range*.

<sup>43</sup>Other recordings that comprise this accompanimental beat include: Gene Autry’s *Panhandle Pete*, (L.A., 1938) and *Back In The Saddle Again*, (Hollywood, 1939); Sons of the Pioneers’ *Hold That Critter Down*, (L.A., 1937) and *The Devil’s Great Grandson*, (L.A., 1937); and Roy Rodgers’ *When The Black Sheep Gets The Blues*, (L.A., 1937).

<sup>44</sup>Johnny Cuviallo, drumming on *Sugar Moon* (Hollywood, 1946), includes weak snare backbeats in the piano and steel guitar solos. Also, *Deep Water* (Hollywood, 1947) comprises snare on all four pulses with some weak backbeats and *Bob Wills Boogie* (Hollywood, 1946) includes shuffle on snare and snare on all four pulses with some strong backbeats in guitar solos.

use of a small ensemble and no drums.<sup>45</sup> As we shall see, Williams' accompanimental rhythms also reflect a return to strong backbeat accentuation, including some percussive backbeat emphases by non-percussive accompanying instruments.

Fifty seven recordings by Hank Williams, all in duple meter, were located in order to investigate the musical structure of his accompanimental rhythms.<sup>46</sup> Forty five of fifty seven recordings sampled displayed a remarkable consistency regarding accompanimental beat. These 45 recordings are listed in Table 5.7<sup>47</sup> and the accompanimental paradigm, with variations, is notated in Figure 5.3.

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<sup>45</sup>Other aspects relating to Williams' return to country music traditionalism include his ensemble instrumentation, namely guitars and double bass, and his musical style which largely references that of the singing cowboy repertoire dating from the 1920s.

<sup>46</sup>The recordings source located was Hank Williams: The Original Singles Collection, (Polydor compact disc: 847 194-2, 1990). At the time of writing this thesis, this recordings source comprised the total commercially available extant recorded output of Williams' duple meter songs.

<sup>47</sup>All dates listed refer to the MGM records release date rather than the actual date of recording.

The image displays a musical score for Hank Williams' accompanimental beat and variations. It is organized into two main sections. The left section contains three staves: 'Electric guitar' (top), 'Acoustic guitar strumming pattern' (middle), and 'Double bass' (bottom). The right section, titled 'Electric guitar variation:', contains seven staves of variations. The 'Acoustic guitar strumming pattern' staff includes a 'G' chord marking and a '3' indicating a triplet. The 'Electric guitar variation:' section includes a single staff at the top and seven staves below, each featuring a '3' indicating a triplet. The music is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature.

Figure 5.3 Hank Williams: accompanimental beat and variations.

<p><i>Honky Tonkin'</i>, (1947).  <i>I Don't Care (If Tomorrow Never Comes)</i>, (1947).  <i>(Last Night) I Heard You Crying In Your Sleep</i> (1947)  <i>Move It On Over</i>, (1947).  <i>My Love For You (Has Turned To Hate)</i>, (1947).  <i>Pan American</i>, (1947).  <i>A Mansion On The Hill</i>, (1948).  <i>Honky Tonkin'</i>, (1948).  <i>I Saw The Light</i>, (1948).  <i>I Can't Get You Off My Mind</i>, (1948).  <i>I'll Be A Bachelor 'Til I Die</i>, (1948).  <i>I'm A Long Gone Daddy</i>, (1948).  <i>My Sweet Love Ain't Around</i>, (1948).  <i>Rootie Tootie</i>, (1948).  <i>Six More Miles (To The Graveyard)</i>, (1948).  <i>The Blues Come Around</i>, (1948).  <i>My Bucket's Got A Hole In It</i>, (1949).  <i>There'll Be No Teardrops Tonight</i>, (1949).  <i>A House Without Love</i>, (1950).  <i>I Just Don't Like This Kind Of Living</i>, (1950).  <i>Long Gone Lonesome Blues</i>, (1950).  <i>Moanin' The Blues</i>, (1950).</p>	<p><i>Nobody's Lonesome For Me</i>, (1950).  <i>They'll Never Take Her Love From Me</i>, (1950).  <i>Why Should We Try Anymore</i>, (1950).  <i>Why Don't You Love Me</i>, (1950).  <i>Baby, We're Really In Love</i>, (1951).  <i>Cold, Cold Heart</i>, (1951).  <i>Crazy Heart</i>, (1951).  <i>Howlin' At The Moon</i>, (1951).  <i>I Can't Help It (If I'm Still In Love With You)</i>, (1951).  <i>I'd Still Want You</i>, (1951).  <i>My Heart Would Know</i>, (1951).  <i>Half As Much</i>, (1952).  <i>I Could Never Be Ashamed Of You</i>, (1952).  <i>I'll Never Get Out Of This World Alive</i>, (1952).  <i>I'm Sorry For You, My Friend</i>, (1952).  <i>Jambalaya (On The Bayou)</i>, (1952).  <i>Settin' The Woods On Fire</i>, (1952).  <i>Window Shopping</i>, (1952).  <i>You Win Again</i>, (1952).  <i>I Won't Be Home No More</i>, (1953).  <i>Kaw-Liga</i>, (1953).  <i>Take These Chains From My Heart</i>, (1953).  <i>Your Cheatin' Heart</i>, (1953).</p>
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Table 5.7 Hank Williams Beat.

It is evident in figure 5.3 that rhythm guitar accompaniments featured various strumming rhythms which accented the backbeat. These strumming rhythm variations (as listed) may repeatedly occur within a recording, however, repeated listening to Williams' recordings suggested a hierarchy regarding their frequency of occurrence. Consequently, rhythm guitar strumming variations are listed according to a notional account of their frequency of occurrence within the recordings sample. Many of the recordings sampled included a rhythm guitar performance technique whereby the backbeat is emphasized by firm and quickly executed strumming. The resultant effect is not dissimilar to a strong snare backbeat played with brushes. We have previously noted that Malone (1974: 164) refers to this guitar technique as a "sock rhythm" as occurring in the honky tonk performance practices dating from the 1930s. Here, then, we have a correlation between Williams' style and 1930s honky tonk country music



style.<sup>48</sup>

Electric guitar accompaniments mostly incorporated unpitched crotchet rhythms with emphasis on the backbeat provided by a percussive, staccato “click”. This “click” was probably achieved by the guitarist partially blocking the guitar strings by resting his right (strumming) hand over the bridge or strings of the guitar then plucking the relevant string with a plectrum. One common variation to the electric guitar rhythm included the sounding of notes on pulses 1 and 3, followed by a percussive click on the backbeat. This variation is noted in Figure 5.3. The dynamic level of the electric guitar’s percussive backbeat click varied amongst the recordings sampled. For example, *I Saw The Light* (1948) includes a very soft backbeat click clearly audible during the fiddle solo but otherwise intermittently occurring throughout the recording. *Honky Tonkin’* (1947), however, contains an emphatic electric guitar percussive click throughout all structural sections excluding, of course, the electric guitar solo. Various recordings, particularly Williams’ 1952 recorded output, feature weak clicks during verses and choruses and strong or emphatic clicks during steel guitar or fiddle solos. For example, *You Win Again* (1952) includes emphatic guitar clicks in the introduction and steel guitar solos. Otherwise, the electric guitar accompaniment is mixed back in the verses and choruses.

Twelve recordings were located that did not include a percussive electric guitar click<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Sock guitar rhythms are clearly evident in the following recordings by Williams: *My Sweet Love Ain’t Around* (1948), *A Mansion On The Hill* (1948), *I Just Don’t Like This Kind Of Living* (1950), *Why Don’t You Love Me* (1950), *Why Should We Try Anymore* (1950), *They’ll Never Take Her Love From Me* (1950), *Moanin’ The Blues* (1950), *Nobody’s Lonesome For Me* (1950), *Cold, Cold Heart* (1950), *My Heart Would Know* (1951), and *Your Cheatin’ Heart* (1953).

<sup>49</sup>These recordings are as follows: *Calling You* (1947), *Fly Trouble* (1947), *Lovesick Blues* (1949), *Wedding Bells* (1949), *Mind Your Own Business* (1949), *Lost Highway* (1949), *You’re Gonna Change* (1949), *May You Never Be Alone* (1950), *My Son Calls Another Man Daddy* (1950), *Dear John* (1951), *Hey, Good Lookin’* (1951) and *Honky Tonk Blues* (1952).

but the rhythm guitar performances in these recordings adhered to the beat paradigm as notated in Figure 5.3. Many of these recordings included rhythm guitar sock rhythms. For example, *Fly Trouble* (1947) includes an emphatic sock rhythm throughout the recording, sounding to this listener like a strong snare backbeat with brushes. A double bass rhythm on pulses 1 and 3 was common to all of the fifty seven recordings in duple meter sampled. Some occasional walking bass, interspersed with performances on pulses 1 and 3, was located in *(Last Night) I Heard You Crying In Your Sleep* (1947), *Mind Your Own Business* (1949), *You're Gonna Change (Or I'm Gonna Leave)* (1949), *Honky Tonkin'* (1948), and *Six More Miles (To The Graveyard)*, (1948).

Backbeat slap bass performance was not evident in any of Hank Williams' recordings thus covered. However, visual evidence was located which suggests that double bass performance practice included a strong percussive element. For example, Carr (1995: 219, 228 and 239) includes three pictures of a double bass, probably the same double bass, that has a wooden attachment on the body and situated to the performer's left-hand side of the fingerboard. These photos were taken at the Grand Ole Opry, Nashville, in 1951. Carr (1995: 219) includes a photo of Hank Williams, backed by Chet Atkins (guitar) and an unknown double bassist. Here, the bassist is holding a wire drum brush with his right hand. This suggests that the double bassist was striking the percussion board during performance. Similarly, on page 239 the bassist performing with Marty Robbins is holding a wire drum brush in his right hand. Two other photos of double basses with percussion boards were located. Carr (1980: 134) includes a picture taken at the Grand Ole Opry (n.d.) of Jim Reeves and Broven (1983: 102) includes a photo of Edward Frank, Peter Badie and Blanche Thomas, circa. 1956, with a double bass modified with a percussion board and located on the performer's left hand side.

Given that many of the western swing recordings located comprised double bass rhythms on pulses 1 and 3, and that visual evidence was located regarding the existence of double bass percussive performance practice, it is likely that, firstly, backbeats were sounded by slap bass or striking the double bass with a drum stick or brushes and, secondly, that slap bass technique constituted live performance but was generally not employed in the recording studio.

## Chapter Six

This chapter is divided into three sections. I will firstly present some important conclusions drawn from our investigation of rock'n'roll drumming and its roots. Secondly, methodological conclusions and implications resulting from this study will be listed. Areas for further research within this field of study will then be identified.

### 6.1 Snare Backbeat in Rock'n'Roll and Pre-Rock'n'Roll Musics.

#### 6.1.1 Snare Backbeat in Rock'n'Roll.

- We have observed in Chapter Two that 644 (around 90%) of 712 recordings included in the Selected Sample and 803 (around 92%) of 874 recordings included in the Extant Recordings sample contain snare backbeat. Snare backbeat is therefore one codefining style characteristic of rock'n'roll.
- Snare backbeat is mostly strongly or emphatically executed. Only 61 of 874 recordings (Extant Recordings sample) contain weak snare backbeats.
- Most recordings feature snare backbeat executed throughout all formal-structural sections. Only 21 (around 3%) of 712 rock'n'roll recordings (Selected Sample) include sectional and/or sporadic use of snare backbeat.
- 35 (around 5%) of 712 rock'n'roll recordings included in our Selected Sample contain snare backbeat variation 1 rhythms, 13 (around 2%) of 712 recordings included in our Selected Sample contain snare backbeat variation 2 rhythms and 60 (around 8%) of 712 recordings contain snare backbeat variation 3 rhythms (see Figure 6.1, Figure 6.2 and Figure 6.3 below). Although some early recordings by Carl Perkins contain snare backbeat variation 1 rhythms, snare backbeat variations mostly occur in rock'n'roll recordings produced from around 1957. In particular, snare backbeat variation rhythms typically recur in Jerry Lee Lewis' recorded output with Jimmy Van Eaton drumming.



Figure 6.1 Snare backbeat variation 1.



Figure 6.2 Snare backbeat variation 2.



Figure 6.3 Snare backbeat variation 3.

- 65 of 712 recordings included in the Selected Sample feature snare rhythms executed on all four pulses with accented backbeats. The following snare rhythms with accented backbeats regularly recur in our analytic sample:
  - shuffle on snare with accented backbeat;
  - snare on all four pulses with accented backbeat;
  - swing on snare with accented backbeat;
  - quaver triplets on snare with accented backbeat.

The Platters' output is most notable for its inclusion of the abovementioned snare rhythms.

The following conclusions detail cymbal usage in rock'n'roll drum beats containing snare backbeat.

- Long-short type cymbal rhythms, exemplified in shuffle and swing rhythms, characterize the output of our representative rock'n'roll musicians produced from 1954 to around 1959.
- Quaver triplet cymbal rhythms were located in many recordings, particularly the

output of Fats Domino with Earl Palmer drumming.

- The frequency of occurrence of cymbal rhythms on all four pulses gradually decreased during the period 1954 to 1960.
- The frequency of occurrence of even quaver cymbal rhythms gradually increased during the period 1956 to 1960. By 1960, a majority of rock'n'roll recordings contain even quaver cymbal rhythms. Even quaver cymbal rhythms commonly feature in the late 1950s output of Jerry Lee Lewis with Jimmy Van Eaton drumming. Concomitant with Van Eaton's use of even quaver cymbal rhythms was a decrease in Lewis' boogie piano rhythms.
- Drum beats that do not contain cymbal rhythms consistently feature in the Selected Sample. In particular, The Platters' and Elvis Presley's output commonly features drum beats that do not contain cymbal rhythms.

Listed below are conclusions regarding other drum beats in rock'n'roll.

- Many recordings that do not contain snare backbeat feature, firstly, drum beats that contain shuffle, swing or quaver triplet rhythms on snare drum or snare drum on all four pulses or, secondly, drum beats that contain cymbal rhythms but no snare drum ostinati.
- Only 3 (around 0.4%) of 712 recordings included in the Selected Sample and 4 (around 0.5%) of 874 recordings included in the Extant Recordings sample contain Bo Diddley beats. The perceived popularity of Bo Diddley rhythms, as noted by Gillett (1983: 31), Hoffman (1983: 177-8) and Keil (Keil and Feld, 1994: 104), is therefore informed by factors other than its frequency of occurrence in rock'n'roll.
- Only 15 of 712 recordings included in the Selected Sample and 17 of 874 recordings included in the Extant Recordings sample contain Latin drum beats either throughout the recording or in particular structural sections only.

### 6.1.2 Snare Backbeat in Jazz.

The following general conclusions concerning the roots of the rock' n' roll snare backbeat in early jazz may be drawn.

- Snare and cymbal backbeat - contained in oompah drum beats - were traced to nineteenth century orchestral marches and polkas and, later, marches as performed by wind and brass marching and concert bands in the U.S.A..
- Early jazz drumming contained oompah drum beats adjoining soloistic rhythms performed on a variety of percussion. By the late twenties in Chicago, oompah drum beats included strong emphasis on the backbeat and increasingly began to feature in long formal-structural sections of a recording, generally the final chorus and/or loud tutti sections.
- Backbeat emphasis was located in early jazz banjo accompaniments (these often providing the "pah" to a tuba accompaniment's "oom"), stride piano performances and slap bass accompaniments, the latter of which occasionally featured percussive "slaps" on the backbeat.

In reference to swing era and bebop drumming, the following general conclusions regarding the roots of the rock' n' roll snare backbeat may be drawn.

- Chicago style drumming, exemplified in performances by Krupa and Barbarin, for example, included accented snare backbeats in loud tutti sections, final choruses or instrumental solos. Such drumming derived from early jazz drumming in Chicago.
- Some drummers consistently accented the backbeat on hi-hat or a choked cymbal throughout long structural sections of a recording. Such performance practice was common to Chicago style drumming and, in particular, the drumming of Gene Krupa.
- Although comping snare rhythms might occasionally fall on the backbeat, consistent snare executions on the backbeat were not characteristic of bebop

drumming.

### 6.1.3 Snare Backbeat in Rhythm and Blues.

In reference to the existence of snare backbeat in rhythm and blues recordings produced from 1944 to 1955 (as listed in Appendices Three and Four), the following was revealed.

- Only a relatively small number of rhythm and blues recordings produced between 1944-49 display at least some degree of similarity to snare backbeat usage in rock'n'roll.
- Weakly executed snare backbeats and other beats strongly featured in rhythm and blues recordings produced during the early 1950s.
- Strong or emphatic snare backbeats executed throughout all formal-structural sections of a recording did not feature in our rhythm and blues recordings corpus until around 1953.
- The earliest set of recordings that contain regular use of emphatic snare backbeat were produced in Chicago from around 1947 to 1950 with Judge Riley drumming. Riley's recorded performances with various Chicago rhythm and blues musicians, such as Arthur Crudup and Arbee Stidham, reveal the following innovative aspects. Firstly, emphatic snare backbeat is used in recordings that feature a comparatively smaller instrumentation than New Orleans, Los Angeles or New York rhythm and blues ensembles. Secondly, sporadic use of emphatic snare backbeat is occasionally contained throughout a recording. The use of snare backbeat is therefore not restricted to shout choruses or instrumental solos only, as is the case in most rhythm and blues recordings produced during the 1940s.
- Early and regularly recurring examples of strong or emphatic snare backbeat



executed throughout all formal-structural sections of a recording were located in various New Orleans musicians' output dating from around 1949. In particular, the output of Fats Domino and Lloyd Price, with Earl Palmer drumming, consistently features either strong or emphatic snare backbeat generally executed throughout all formal-structural sections of a recording.

- 3 (around 0.2%) of 1 577 recordings include snare backbeat variation 1 (snare backbeat variation 1 is notated in Figure 6.1 above).

In reference to cymbal, including hi-hat, rhythms in rhythm and blues, the following was revealed.

- Swing and shuffle rhythms on cymbals and hi-hat were employed in most recordings of rhythm and blues, including those that do not contain snare backbeat. Given that rhythm and blues drumming drew upon a jazz heritage in its formative years, as noted in Chapter 4.3, the incorporation of swing or shuffle rhythms on cymbals was likely a carry over from swing era drumming performance practice. As we have noted above, swing and shuffle cymbal rhythms also endured in rock'n'roll drumming.
- Quaver triplet cymbal rhythms and snare backbeat were located in 54 of 1 577 rhythm and blues recordings. Most recordings (37 or 69%) containing quaver triplet cymbal rhythms and snare backbeat were located in the output of Fats Domino and Lloyd Price with Earl Palmer drumming. Palmer's use of quaver triplet cymbal rhythms, alongside snare backbeat, endured in his subsequent recordings with Fats Domino produced during the rock'n'roll era.
- Even quaver cymbal rhythms - which began to figure in rock'n'roll recordings from the late 1950s - were extremely rare in both rhythm and blues drum beats and other accompaniments. In fact, only one recording from the rhythm and blues recordings sample, Johnny Otis' *Right Now Baby* (L.A., 1948), includes even quaver rhythms on cymbals. The use of even quaver cymbal rhythms

during the late rock'n'roll era represents an innovative development in drumming.

Other drum beats located in rhythm and blues include the following.

- Most rhythm and blues drum beats that exclude snare backbeat are generally characterized by either swing or shuffle rhythms on cymbals, including hi-hat.
- Rhythm and blues recordings that feature swing and shuffle cymbal rhythms sometimes include sporadic snare drum executions that are either comped or accentuate the rhythmic profile of horn riffs. Some rhythm and blues drum beats also contain extensive bass drum bombing and ride cymbal rhythms sounded on all four pulses. When occurring in fast tempo rhythm and blues recordings, the aforementioned drum beat is particularly reminiscent of bebop drumming style.
- Snare drum executions on all four pulses, characteristically employed in much swing era drumming (as noted in Chapter 3.3.2), were commonly used in rhythm and blues drumming. Most drum beats containing snare executions on all four pulses do not include cymbal rhythms.
- Shuffle rhythm based drum beats executed on snare or other items of percussive hardware were commonly used in rhythm and blues drumming. Shuffle rhythm based drum beats often complimented boogie piano accompaniments.
- Very few rhythm and blues recordings contain Latin drum beats.
- Only 13 (around 0.8%) of 1 577 rhythm and blues recordings include a Bo Diddley rhythm.

#### **6.1.4 Backbeat in Gospel and Doowop.**

- There was a very considerable presence of emphatic backbeat, mostly occurring as handclaps and some tambourine hits, in the output of particular Sanctified gospel singers produced in Chicago during the late 1920s and early 1930s. It is possible, therefore, that backbeat handclaps occurring in Chicago Sanctified gospel performance exerted some influence on Judge Riley's drumming style.
- Snare backbeat did not predominately feature in our sample of 1950s doowop recordings until around 1953-4, that same period in which snare backbeat predominately featured in our rhythm and blues recordings corpus.

#### **6.1.5 Backbeat in Country and Western.**

- During the 1930s, country and western accompaniments that included oompah or polka beats often contained backbeat emphasis.
- Given the testimony of various country and western music performers who were musically active around the 1930s and '40s, it seems that slap bass executions on the backbeat existed in country and western musical styles of the 1930s. Slap bass technique was not generally employed in recordings but, rather, featured in live performance.
- Drummer Smokey Dacus, who recorded with Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys throughout the late 1930s, included snare backbeat in his drumming. Dacus' use of snare backbeat was largely informed by the backbeat "slap" contained in double bass accompaniments and backbeat emphasis evident in rhythm guitar or banjo accompaniments.
- Electric guitar accompaniments in Hank Williams' output often feature unpitched crotchet rhythms with emphasis on the backbeat provided by a

percussive, staccato “click”. Williams’ rhythm guitar accompaniments also commonly feature emphasis on the backbeat.

- Bill Haley’s output produced during 1951 includes emphasis on the backbeat provided by rhythm guitar and sometimes piano accompaniments. The accompanimental beat contained in Haley’s 1953 output is characterized by shuffle rhythms produced by on-pulse and off-pulse slap bass rhythms and boogie piano accompaniments. The inclusion of shuffle rhythms in Haley’s accompaniments was informed by Haley’s desire to introduce rhythm and blues rhythms (shuffle rhythms) in country and western musical style, the latter of which featured backbeat accompaniments.

## **6.2 Methodology and Implications.**

This study has shown that it is necessary to have exact definition of terms in order to distinguish rhythmic structures unequivocally. In particular, it was necessary to provide working definitions of terms that are commonly albeit indiscriminately used in common parlance to describe various aspects of rock’s rhythmic traits. Although the working definitions provided in this study were prerequisite to discussions of rock’n’roll’s style history, they might also be used in subsequent areas for further research, some of which are listed in 6.3 below, in order to provide clear communication about social and ideological aspects related to conclusions presented in this study.

Aside from clarifying terminology, the bulk of this thesis involved a broad survey of rock’n’roll and some pre-rock’n’roll musical styles. Through extensive empirical evidence presented above, I have demonstrated that many misconceptions abound in published accounts regarding the rhythmic qualities of rock’n’roll and its musical precursors. Subsequent results of my empirical approach have challenged our received

knowledge of the social and musical constituents and origins of rock'n'roll rhythm.

The following examples clearly illustrate that the methodological approach adopted here has caused us to revise notions of rock'n'roll rhythm and its roots.

- A lack of empirical evidence in various published accounts regarding the rhythm of pre-rock'n'roll musics has resulted in the misconception that snare backbeat, singled out by so many authors as the most characteristic and novel aspect of rock rhythm, derives mainly from rhythm and blues. My research has shown through extensive documentation that this is quite spurious. In point of fact, backbeats derive equally from country and western and gospel styles from a structural viewpoint.
- We have noted in Chapter 2.2 that Brown (1992: 43) considers drum beats containing snare backbeat variation 1 rhythms as “characteristic” of 1950s rock'n'roll. We have also noted in Chapter 2.2 that Porter (1979: 53) posits snare backbeat variation 2 rhythms as “early rock figures”. Given our statistical information regarding the frequency of occurrence of snare backbeat variations 1 and 2 in rock'n'roll, it would be reasonable to state that both Brown's and Porter's notions of rock'n'roll drum beat are not correct.
- We have noted in Chapter 1.2 that Hoffman (1983: 170), Moore (1993: 36) and Savage (1989: 104+) consider that even quaver cymbal rhythms are contained in rock drum beats. Our investigation of rock'n'roll drumming however, revealed that the aforementioned notion requires clarification: rock'n'roll drumming characteristically contains either swing or shuffle rhythms on cymbals; even quaver cymbal rhythms were only occasionally used in late 1950s rock'n'roll drumming.
- Gillett (1983: 135) and Shaw (1978: 103), as quoted in Chapter 4.3, state that Roy Milton's *R.M. Blues* exemplified a rock'n'roll beat. Contrariwise, our analysis of *R.M. Blues* revealed none of the characteristic drumming rhythms of rock'n'roll.

authors.

- I have noted in Chapter 3.3.1 that the extent to which snare punctuations occurred in late 1930s swing era drumming has not been subject to any systematic investigation by Schuller (1989), Modern Drummer (1982b) or Brown (1976) and, consequently, it is impossible to accurately pinpoint when this “major difference” (to use Brown’s terminology) in drumming technique was effected. Clearly, further research is required in this regard. Aside from furthering our understanding of swing era drumming, the need for such research is given added impetus because snare punctuations in swing era drumming are precursory to bebop snare technique.
- Our albeit brief investigation of swing era drumming revealed conflicting information in published accounts concerning, firstly, the existence of accented backbeat in snare roll rhythms, secondly, the existence of accented backbeat in swing rhythms on cymbals and, finally, the derivation of swing rhythms on cymbals. Such confusion largely derives from a lack of systematic investigation of drum beats in a large corpus of relevant recordings. For example, Brown (1976) mostly notates and subsequently discusses drum solos rather than drum beats in his doctoral study of jazz drumming to 1942 and his ideas concerning the existence of accented backbeats in swing era drumming might well have been coloured by his extensive study of Krupa. Indeed, Brown (1976: 308-397) devotes an entire chapter, around ninety pages, to a discussion of Krupa’s drumming style, mostly relating to Krupa techniques employed in drum solos. Despite this, Brown’s (1976) opinions concerning jazz drumming style and drum beats are consistently cited in Breithaupt (1995) and Owen (1995: 180), for example, thus propagating perceptions of jazz drumming that are unsupported by empirical evidence or systematic investigation.
- In our search for locating snare backbeats in rhythm and blues, we noted that Judge Riley, recording in Chicago during the late 1940s, is significant to the

- We have noted that drummer Fred Below's testimony regarding his establishment of the snare backbeat during the early 1950s is supported by Fish (1982a: 20, as quoted in Chapter 4.). Fish (ibid.) subsequently posits that Belows' performance practice was influenced by backbeat slap bass rhythms occurring in the output of Muddy Waters. An investigation of early Chicago rhythm and blues styles and also of double bass accompaniments in the repertoire of Muddy Waters revealed that Fish's impression is not true.

Aside from clarifying issues relating to the style history of rock'n'roll rhythms, this study has also revealed areas for further research, such as those listed below.

### **6.3 Further Research.**

- We have noticed above that Bo Diddley rhythms do not frequently occur in our rock'n'roll and rhythm and blues recordings sample. Before preceding to investigate why the Bo Diddley rhythm is singled out by so many authors in discussions of rock, one obvious area of research would be to undertake a thorough examination of Bo Diddley's output in order to determine the frequency of occurrence of Bo Diddley rhythms.
- Aside from Gillett (1983) and Shaw (1970, 1975, 1978, 1986), few writers have devoted themselves to a systematic study of rhythm and blues styles. Indeed, in comparison to that body of writing on jazz, rhythm and blues - as musical style - remains under-researched. Although this present study offers at least a partial step towards an understanding of rhythm and blues as musical style, further clarification of other stylistic characteristics of rhythm and blues is required. Only then will it be possible to align style characteristics of rhythm and blues to the predominately socio-cultural insights expounded by the aforementioned

authors.

- I have noted in Chapter 3.3.1 that the extent to which snare punctuations occurred in late 1930s swing era drumming has not been subject to any systematic investigation by Schuller (1989), Modern Drummer (1982b) or Brown (1976) and, consequently, it is impossible to accurately pinpoint when this “major difference” (to use Brown’s terminology) in drumming technique was effected. Clearly, further research is required in this regard. Aside from furthering our understanding of swing era drumming, the need for such research is given added impetus because snare punctuations in swing era drumming are precursory to bebop snare technique.
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- In our search for locating snare backbeats in rhythm and blues, we noted that Judge Riley, recording in Chicago during the late 1940s, is significant to the



establishment and development of strongly and emphatically executed snare backbeat. However, the role of Judge Riley to the evolution of blues into rhythm and blues and rock'n'roll is often under-estimated or completely overlooked in rock and roll research. There is consequently a need to uncover biographical details about Riley's life as an adjunct to the stylistic descriptions of his drumming presented here.

- Although I have noticed that slap bass accompaniments occur in early jazz and county music, there is a need to identify the extent to which backbeat slap bass performances informed the development of snare backbeat in jazz and country music styles. In particular, two lines of research can be identified. Firstly, Pops Foster's slap bass performances in early jazz require documentation and his relationship to Chicago jazz drummers remains to be clarified. Secondly, Smokey Dacus' output produced during the 1930s requires analysis in order to determine the existence of slap bass performances in such and Dacus' subsequent performances in recordings where slap bass occurs.

#### **6.4 Final Thoughts.**

Although this study involved historical methodology, including consideration of the discursive level of popular music research, many misconceptions concerning the stylistic origins of such musical structures as snare backbeat have been identified through a process involving empirical techniques, including extensive mini-analyses of a corpus of recordings and subsequent discussion of analytic results. As noted throughout this study, the constituents and origins of rock rhythm are so persistent in published accounts that it was necessary to confirm or counter these assumptions through repeated listening to a large sampling of relevant recorded material. Having completed the task of listening to literally thousands of recordings, it is clear to me that the method employed

here is not that practical - much time consuming work was required to reveal the stylistic origins of one single musical parameter. Was this methodology really necessary?

I have noted above that a systematic empirical approach to popular music research does not inform much popular music commentary. Rather, our understanding of the origins and development of particular popular music styles is often informed by the testimony of various music practitioners and information concerning their cultural habitat. The problem here is that the testimony of musicians is often not correct. Indeed, it is obvious from the above that we can not rely solely on the testimony of music practitioners in firstly, formulating opinions about the stylistic development of popular music genres and, secondly, determining stylistic constituents of previous popular music genres. Analytic findings based on recorded evidence is also required in order to either substantiate or refute historical accounts provided by musicians. Excluding the work covered here, which includes mini-analyses of a considerable number of rock'n'roll and rhythm and blues recordings, there remains much analytic "donkey work" to be done, particularly investigating the stylistic histories of such genres as jazz, gospel, country and western, and nineteenth century marches. Regrettably, similiar amounts of mini-analyses to that presented in this study need to be carried out. Further, if we are to arrive at a clearer understanding of music genres, then mini-analyses need to cover not only rhythmic, including percussive, elements but also tonal, harmonic, perceptual aspects and so on. Surely, a combination of systematic empirically-based research and historical methodology is required if we are to gain a musically accurate and subsequently holistic understanding of the roots and development of rock'n'roll?

Given that only a few recordings of pre-rock'n'roll gospel and country and western musical styles were included in this study, I could be accused of skewing the findings relating to the origins of backbeat. This is a fair critique and I admit that an imbalance exists amongst the number of recordings included from each of the musical genres

discussed. This situation, however, raises another issue regarding reissuing policy and the current state of popular music research. Not only is there little available research on country music and gospel, even though there is much written material on rhythm and blues, there is also a dearth of reissues of early gospel and country and western recordings. What alternatives were there aside from including in this study every recording that was commercially available at the time of writing? Demarcating a finite corpus of rhythm and blues recordings and doing the same with reissues of country and western and gospel styles is prone with methodological problems, as I have pointed out in Chapter Two in relation to our sample of representative rock'n'roll recordings. Whatever shortcomings there may be in the methodology included in this study, at least researchers now have the findings of this thesis as a point of reference.

Upon reflection, I believe that this thesis has led to a reappraisal of what rhythm and blues and rock'n'roll is and where backbeats can be found. Conclusions relating to the aforementioned matters may have repercussions in the identification of our musical and cultural history. I have suggested above, for example, the European-American origins of backbeat and have alluded to the possibility that an alternative canon has developed out of a semi-false identification of stylistic origins. Why is it that many published accounts discuss rock'n'roll's rhythmic traits, including backbeat, in terms of "blackness"? Is such "cultural ownership" of a stylistic element propagated by black musicians in an effort to sonically affirm their "blackness" by adopting particular musical structures that have been falsely identified by whites as African in origin? Might the identification of popular music rhythm with African and African-American origins have something to do with the popular music "establishment" as it existed in the 1940s/50s, and the ideology of which continues to be propagated? Although I can not answer these questions here, it is clear to me that if anybody wishes to make conclusions about socio-cultural aspects of popular music genres, then the musical-structural evidence presented must not contradict the stylistic origins of that genre.

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