

# Creativity with Irregular Meters

BY GEORGE TANTCHEV

**M**usicians such as Dave Brubeck, Don Ellis, Frank Zappa, Rush, Bela Fleck, and other have applied irregular meters in their music. In many cases, this provides an opportunity for the drummer to be innovative. A good example is Rush's song "YYZ" where Neil Peart exhibits creativity in 5/4 meter.

Key

Hi-hat pedal   Bass drum   Floor Tom   Snare   Small Tom  
Ride   Open Hi-hat   Closed Hi-hat   Cowbell

Example 1  
Crotales

A few measures later Peart plays:

Example 2  
Drumset

A different feel can be explored if 5/4 is subdivided in short and long beats.

This metric articulation exists naturally in Bulgarian folk music. The eighth notes are articulated 3+2+2+3.

Example 3  
Mom Rosa — melody

The following examples demonstrate a few applications of 10/8 meter in several different styles.

Basic Rhythm

Rock

Swing

Funk

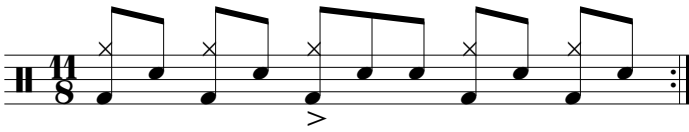
Samba

An interesting irregular metric subdivision can be heard in a recent album by Bela Fleck and the Flecktones. The entire song "Almost Twelve," from the album *Left of Cool*, is in 11/8. The bass line establishes the irregular feel from the beginning.

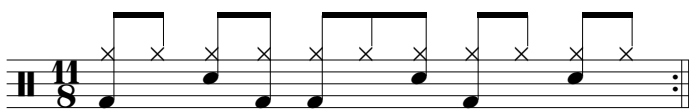
"Almost Twelve" bass line

This rhythm pattern is well known in Balkan folk music as Gankino Horo. Here are a few drumset applications of 11/8 with the eighth notes articulated as 2+2+3+2+2.

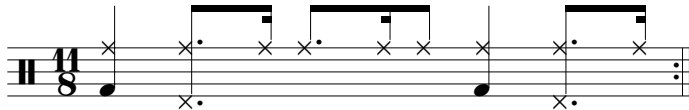
Basic Rhythm



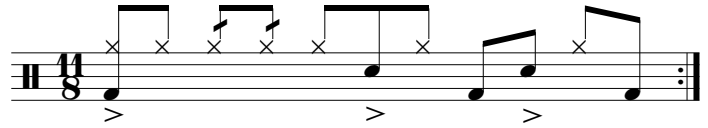
Rock



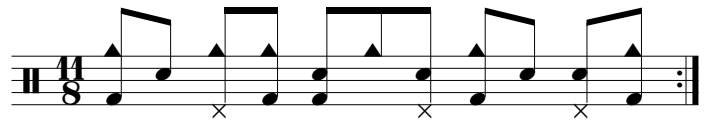
Swing



Funk



Samba



By practicing these and other irregular meters drummers can explore their creativity and also improve timekeeping.

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