

Creating beats Lesson 4. 15th May 2020

Hello, and welcome to another lesson, I really hope you are well and keeping safe. It is important to stay creative so let's do some studying today. I hope you had fun creating beats by shifting the kick a few steps from the examples we learnt on the last lesson.

We have been exploring the placement of the snare, hi-hat and Kick within a grid of 16 steps (4 divisions per beat). And we have learnt that by leaving placing the snare only on beat 2 and 4 (the back beat) and hihat in two divisions per beat, we could be very creative by creating grooves just changing where the kick is.

Today we will learn some cool tricks that we can borrow from an important musical style: **The Breakbeat**

Breakbeat is a broad type of electronic music that utilizes breaks, often sampled from earlier recordings in funk, jazz and R&B, for the main rhythm. Breakbeats have been used in styles such as hip hop, jungle, drum and bass, big beat, hardcore, and UK garage styles (including 2-step, breakstep and dubstep).

Let's look at some history: you could try out to find recordings, some songs you may have already available. Remember: Research is key. Type the songs in Youtube, ask your friends for recordings or find second hand vinyls or Cds that you may find at a very good price. You could even try your local library

Beginning in 1973 and continuing through the late 1970s and early 1980s, **hip hop turntablists, such as DJ Kool Herc** began using several **funk breaks** in a row, using irregular drum patterns from songs such as **James Brown's "Funky Drummer" and The Winstons' "Amen Brother"**, to form the rhythmic base for hip hop songs. **DJ Kool Herc's** breakbeat style involved playing the same record on two turntables and playing the break repeatedly, alternating between the two records. **Grandmaster Flash** perfected this idea with what he called the **"quick-mix theory"**: he would mark the points on the record where the break began and ended with a crayon, so that he could easily replay the break by spinning the record and not touching the tone arm.^[1] This style was copied and improved upon by **early hip hop DJs Afrika Bambaataa and Grand Wizard Theodore**. This style was extremely popular in clubs and dancehalls because the extended breakbeat provided **breakers** with more opportunities to showcase their skills.

In the 1970s, hip-hop was all about the break. Then, in the 1980s, the evolution of technology began to make sampling breaks easier and more affordable for DJs and producers, which helped nurture the commercialization of hip-hop. Through crude techniques such as pausing tapes and then recording the break, by the 1980s, technology allowed anybody with a tape recorder to find the breakbeat.

In the early 1990s, **acid house artists and producers started using breakbeat samples in their music to create breakbeat hardcore**. The hardcore scene then diverged into subgenres like **jungle** and **drum and bass**, which generally had a darker sound and focused more on complex sampled drum patterns. **An example of this is Goldie's album Timeless.**

Josh Lawford of Ravescene prophesied that breakbeat was "the death-knell of rave"^[5] because the ever-changing drumbeat patterns of breakbeat music didn't allow for the same zoned out, trance-like state that the standard, steady 4/4 beats of **house** enabled. **In 1994, the influential techno act Autechre released the *Anti EP*** in response to the **Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994**, deliberately using advanced **algorithmic** programming to generate non-repetitive breakbeats for the full duration of the tracks, in order to subvert the legal definitions within that legislation which specified in the section creating police powers to remove ravers from raves that "'music' includes sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats".

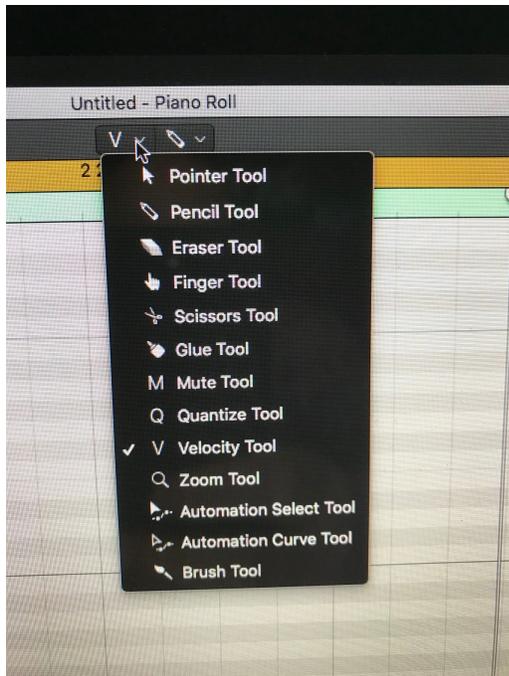
How Does it work? Well, to include that type of rhythms in your music you have two ways:

1- Sampling that means grabbing the audio from a favorite song in a part such as an introduction or break where you only have the drums. And then importing the audio into **Logic** to be used in your song. Fining the sample can be difficult and sometimes there may be copyright issues..

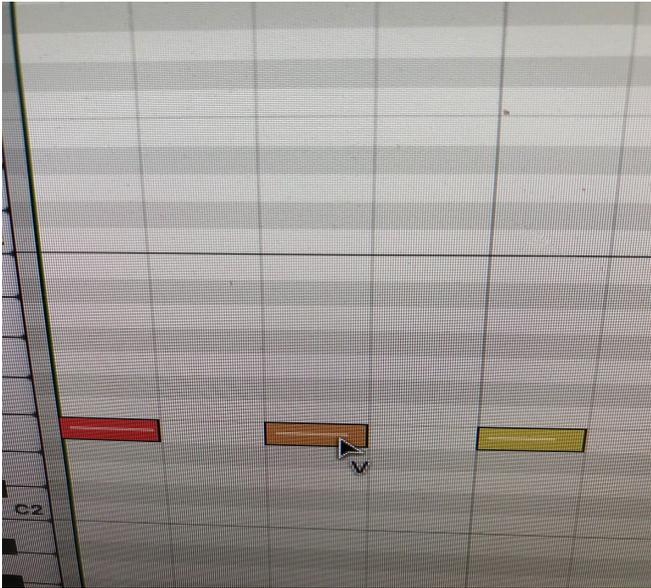
2- Programming (or Sequencing) the rhythm yourself in the computer. For that you must study what made those rhythms great. And this is what we will do today!

To make your drums more interesting and realistic you must learn about **Velocity**.

Velocity is the force with which a note is played, and it is vitally important in making MIDI performances sound human. When you play on the keyboard you can play soft or loud, but if you are drawing the midi notes on a **piano roll**, then the velocity tool is needed.



By using the velocity tool you can click and hold on a midi note and change its colour.



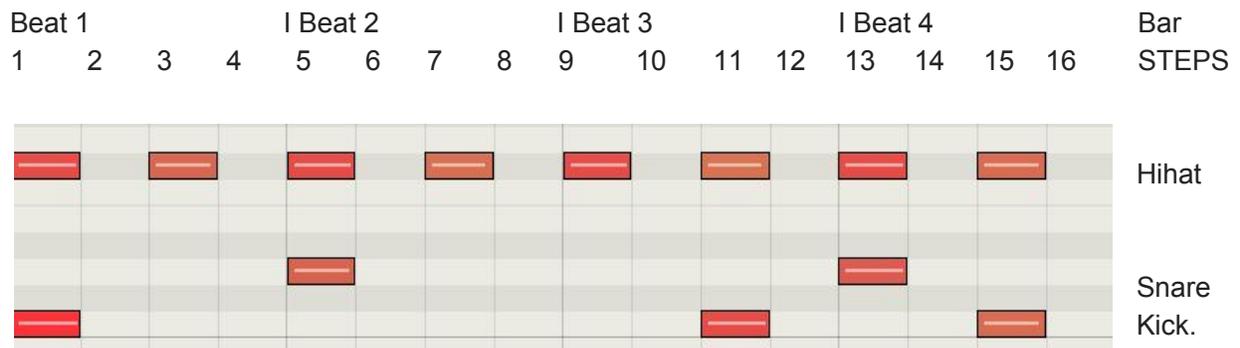
Red is the loudest, but if you continue sliding down you can make a note to be softer (louder if you slide up).

Here is how it looks like if you make the hi hats softer and softer

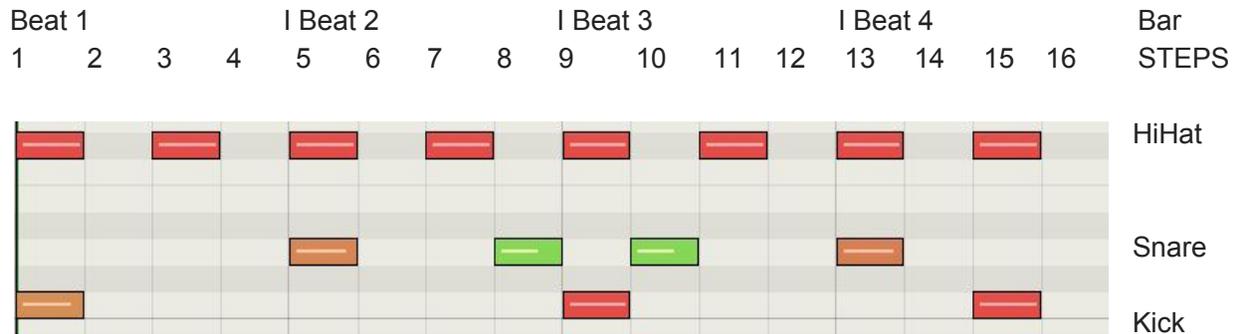


One of the most important tricks of breakbeat music is to add extra snares which are softer than the back beat.

1st Let's make a basic beat: 2 hi hats per beat, snares on beats 2 and 4 and a simple kick pattern.



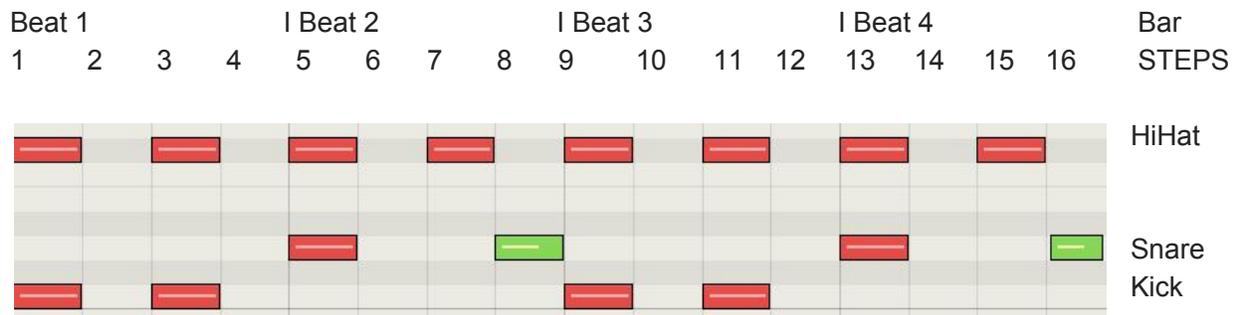
Then, by adding softer snares (green) we can get the Drum beat of **Unwind Yourself** by Marva Whitney (bpm 126)



Please, search the song. I am sure you know it! And try out to beatbox the rhythm. If you have access to logic try to sequence this in Logic using the template given above.

Another well known song is: **Youthful Expression** by A Tribe called Quest.

Look at the double kick in beats 1 and 3 The Loud Back beat of the Snares on 2 and 4 and the extra snares, green.



Well done for making it to the end of today's lesson.

Next week we will focus on another trick from Breakbeats, adding extra kicks!

I hope you enjoyed this Lesson. Keep focused and positive and enjoy your time listening to great music. Everything you listen, analyze and understand will quickly form part of your tool box as a music producer.