

# GETTING STARTED

## The Rhythm Section

At this point, I'd like to explain a little about the roles of each instrument in the rhythm section. The rhythm section is comprised of piano and/or guitar, bass, and drums. Each instrument has a specific function.

The drums' primary job is to keep the beat. In swing 4/4 time, the hi-hat beats on the second and fourth beat of each measure while the ride cymbal plays a rhythm that brings out the quarter-note pulse (Ex. 1).



The bass usually plays quarter notes. This is called "walking bass." The pitches it plays are the notes of the chords as they are going by. Thus, its role is both to keep the beat and state the harmony.

The piano (or guitar) plays the chords with various rhythms. The rhythms may be syncopated or not. They may be short or sustained. Whatever combinations of rhythms the piano plays, they are intended to mesh with and complement the bass and drums. This is called "comping."



1 Play Track 1 for each of the following exercises. Practice every day until you begin to hear clearly each instrument fulfilling its role.

1. First time: try to identify and isolate the sound of each instrument.
2. Second time: concentrate only on the drums and listen to the hi-hat on 2 and 4. Listen to the ride cymbal suggesting the quarter-note pulse.
3. Third time: focus on the bass "walking" quarter notes.
4. Fourth time: listen only to the piano "comping" and hear how it fits in with the bass and drums.

## Hearing Where "1" Is

Now, before you play along with the accompanying audio tracks, it's important to be able to hear where the downbeat (1) of each measure is. This will prevent you from getting lost and help you to create logical melodic ideas.

To develop ability in this area, practice the following exercises with Track 1:

1. Listen to the beginning audible count, "1-2-3-4," and as the music starts, count out loud 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, and so on, along with the beat. The numbers should feel as if they naturally belong with the pulse of the music. Continue practicing until it feels comfortable.
2. Next, start the track somewhere in the middle and see if you can hear where 1 of each measure is. Try counting the beats (1-2-3-4). If you're not sure whether you're right or don't know where to start, go back and practice Step 1. It's simply a matter of trying it repeatedly until you get it.