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# Kiko's Samba

BY JAMES DREIER

Several years ago I had the privilege of traveling to the city of Recife in Brazil's Northeast province of Pernambuco. There, while participating in a residency at the Conservatorio Pernambucano de Musica, I encountered José Francisco Bezerra de Oliveira, a wonderful local drummer known simply as "Kiko." He kindly sat down behind the drumset and proceeded to heat up the already tropical humid air with some amazing grooves.

One samba pattern he played incorporated an inverted paradiddle sticking. This pattern not only places the hands nicely around the set, but also produces the unique feel and articulation that gives Brazilian drumming such a great sound. It is a relatively simple pattern, but a very effective one when a single drummer is trying to recreate the full bateria sound of "Samba Batucada"—the big sound of Rio's "samba schools" (Escola de Samba).

Presented below is series of graduated steps towards learning Kiko's basic pattern, and some variations I developed. I think you will find it to be a very useful and an effective way of playing samba on the drumset.

Before you get started, it is very important to have the paradiddle and its inversions firmly under control. A good way to achieve this is to play patterns 5 through 8 on page 5 of George Stone's *Stick Control* over the basic samba bass and hi-hat pattern.

### DEVELOPING THE BASIC PATTERN

The first example shows Kiko's basic sticking pattern, which is an inverted paradiddle with a left-hand lead, played on the snare drum. This sticking naturally encourages a phrase that is not perfectly even (as opposed to single strokes). While staying in time and in control, allow the sticking to breathe by "compressing" the double strokes and slightly "reaching" for each downbeat. This produces the phrasing that is an important element of the Brazilian sound.

1 L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R

Now add the samba bass and hi-hat pattern.

2 L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R

The inverted paradiddle sticking makes an accent on the fourth eighth-note subdivision ("ah") of each beat easier. This is

a typical accent point for samba patterns and will make your pattern sound more authentic.

3 L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R

After you are comfortable with the sticking and the accents, move the right hand to the floor tom on the downbeat of beat two in each measure. This imitates the sound of the low surdo drum, and provides the strong beat-two accent that is critical to a good samba feel.

4 L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R

Now move the right hand up to your rack tom for the first note of each measure. This imitates the higher pitched surdos that balance out the lower and stronger sounding surdos. This is the basic pattern that Kiko used so effectively.

5 L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R

### VARIATIONS

A common characteristic of most Brazilian patterns is the two-bar phrase. In Example 6, an added left-hand rack-tom stroke in the second measure creates a two-bar phrase.

6 L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R

Example 7 features an additional right-hand stroke on the floor tom in measure one that creates an even more complex pattern.

7 L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R

Finally, by changing the sticking slightly and adding more floor tom strokes, a pattern is created that typifies the interaction between the low and high surdos of Samba Batucada.

8 L R R L R R L R L R R L R L L R

Once you are comfortable with the basic pattern and all the variations, practice going from one variation to another, in random order, concentrating on smooth transitions. You can then improvise freely around the kit and come up with countless new variations. The pattern also works nicely with the right hand on the ride-cymbal bell or hi-hat and the left hand on the snare drum.

Kiko's samba, like the music and musicians of Brazil, is rich in rhythmic heritage, easily adaptable and extremely effective in producing a great samba groove. Every time I play it, I can feel the heavy tropical air of Recife and hear the powerful rhythms that grow there. Kiko's samba is a little offering from this fertile region. Learn it, play it, and turn up the heat.

James Dreier is a performer and educator living in Iowa City, Iowa. He teaches percussion at Kirkwood College, where he directs the Annual Latin Drumming Workshop, and is the drumset specialist at Augustana College and the University of Iowa. He performs and records with the Latin group Orquesta Alto Maiz.



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44074**

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