

Start with dead center time and go from there.

Practicing Time-Placement

Time-placement is learned by listening to the masters, and they don't always play dead-center metronomic time. Instead, they often focus on locking into the drummer's ride cymbal, for example. Individual artists' rhythmic stylistic approaches vary greatly. Some Harlem black bands' horn players consistently play even eighth-note feel over a swing rhythm section style. On the other hand, Joe Henderson and Kenny Durham would often use a swing feel over an even eighth-note rhythm section feel. All other variant approaches in between are done as well—often within a given phrase by a single player. There are also a variety of styles in which you lay back a bit, or play on top of the time. However, in your practicing, start with *dead center* time and go from there. If one can do this consistently, you can then easily learn to control your placement further by placing lines ahead or behind the time at will.

Placement consistency can be improved systematically in the woodshed in a relatively short time with a little *metronome treatment* in swing subdivision. Jazz rhythm shares an important characteristic with African rhythm: duple against or within triple meters. There are always several such dualities co-existing in any master jazz performance. It matters little how these rhythms are written, since that is arbitrary, inaccurate and non-essential. In improvising lines, we place notes dependent upon which of these dualities we wish to be in at a given moment, which can change on a dime.