

Cadence - Music and Cycling share some technique

In cycling, one of the key techniques to make you a dynamic rider is the mastering of cadence. In music the same holds true. By applying different time signatures and stylistic tweaks such as “cut time” you can add an exciting dynamic to your songs.

As new musicians we are taught fundamentals. Hours and hours of learning to tap out 4/4 rhythm with a metronome to be able to nail down our meter.

tick-tock-tick-tock-tick-
tock

Now it is time to take things to a new level and excite your listeners with some different rhythms. As a fan of Alt Rock (or grunge as we called it back then) I'll cite Alice In Chains for my example. Let's use Them Bones from the album Dirt to illustrate how a modified time signature can really bring a new edge to your music. AIC guitarist Jerry Cantrell is known for using alternate time signatures, and as a fan of his playing style I've found that it separated the group from many others.

The song opens with a 7/8 riff that immediately pulls you in. The chunking guitar and slightly dragging chord changes under the vocals are incredibly well placed. To add to the dynamic, the chorus is in 4/4 so you can clearly jump in and out with nice stops to delineate the parts.

Another great technique I like to use is “cut time” where you change from 4/4 to 2/2. This takes the natural rhythm to a half speed and when used right it creates what I call a “musical tension” which is kind of like slowly drawing a bow and arrow and then the switch back to 4/4 gives the release.

Since I'm on an Alice in Chains kick today I'll use Sickman from the Dirt album. The song starts with a strong, quick rhythm followed by a short bridge to transition into the cut time chorus. The chorus closes with a clean stop and then back to the staccato attack of the verse rhythm.

By adding modified time signatures to your arsenal you will add new excitement to your songs and it will bring a great texture to your music. They do say that variety is the spice of life.