

Dixieland Music Style - History And Development Drummers Guide

Dixieland combined earlier brass band marches, French quadrilles, ragtime and blues with collective, polyphonic improvisation. While instrumentation and size of bands can be very flexible, the "standard" band consists of a "front line" of trumpet (or cornet), trombone, and clarinet, with a "rhythm section" of at least two of the following instruments: guitar or banjo, string bass or tuba, piano, and drums. Dixieland gave birth to traditional jazz, and served as a bridge between New Orleans music and the Swing and Big Band era. Dixieland drumming is a somewhat simpler style of playing than busy (or improvised) Second Line drumming. In addition, Dixieland has more of a traditional swing feel rather than the "in the crack" feel of Second Line drumming. "Dixieland" refers to the music that developed in the Storyville (red light) District of New Orleans between approximately 1900 and 1917.

Musicians responsible for creating Dixieland include New Orleans natives Buddy Bolden, Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton, Joe "King" Oliver, and Louis Armstrong. Due to the shutdown of Storyville during World War 1, musicians migrated north on the Mississippi River and ultimately ended up in Chicago, where the music gained national popularity. It continued to thrive throughout the 1920s as the defining sound of the "Jazz Age". With the legalization of alcohol in 1933, jazz began to appear in more respectable establishments, giving rise to the Big Band era. This coincided with a diminishment of Dixieland's popularity. But the style has continued to thrive in traditional festivals and Dixieland venues throughout the world, as well as in the cities where it developed and gained popularity.

The configuration of the Dixieland trap set helps bridge the gap between the Second Line drum set up and those that followed. Usually, the trap set consisted of a large bass drum, a deep snare, and a variety of percussion devices (wood blocks, cowbells, whistles, bird calls). The toms, however, began to show modern features (deeper drums, drum hoops [usually wood], and lugs or tuning pegs) and somewhat smaller sized cymbals, which produced a crisper sound than in Second Line drumming. Normally, the pattern is to play a Jazz ride pattern on a tight, closed hi hat while playing beats 1 & 3 on the bass drum, and a strong snare drum rim click on beat 4 of the pattern. It is also quite common to hear variations of Second Line patterns played in Dixieland.

The only difference in the execution is that Dixieland has more precise, rolled passages in the hands, similar to those of a snare drum playing a march. In addition, in Dixieland the hi hat foot normally strikes on beats 2 & 4, rather than "splashing" the cymbals as in Second Line. Overall, Dixieland has more of a solid and definitive sound than the wide open sound of early New Orleans music. Also, note the role of wood blocks in Dixieland. In certain sections (sometimes even during a drum solo), it is quite common to play a snare march type solo on wood blocks rather than a normal snare drum. Dixieland patterns are played slightly faster than Second Line patterns at quarter note = one hundred and sixty to two hundred and sixty four beats per minute.

About the Author

By Eric Starg. Eric's [Drum Library](#) contains many solos performed on [Slingerland Drum Sets](#) and [Slingerland Snare Drums](#). Eric is an active member of Drum Solo Artist where he is answering drum related questions, and helping drummers with tips and advices.

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