

Cajon Essentials

PART 1 BY BYRON MARK



If there's just one groove that you have to master on the Cajon - '4-to-the-floor' would be a high contender! Whether you're playing soul, RnB, shuffle, reggae, funk or electronic dance music, this foundational beat is common through all styles...and of course hit the mainstream in the early 1970's in Disco music, with huge thanks to Earl Young's drumming in The Trammps.

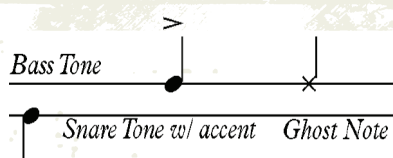
I have adapted this groove specifically for the Cajon, however, unlike most Cajon playing which is linear (making only one sound at a time),

4-to-the-floor on the Cajon requires layered drumming (making two different tones simultaneously).

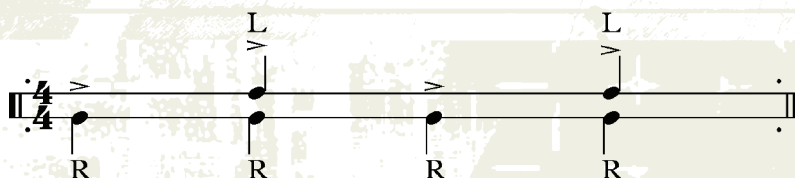
As the name suggests, the defining feature of this 4-to-the-floor rhythm is a strong constant bass - falling on beats 1, 2, 3 and 4. You'll get the strength in the bass by allowing the energy to come from your shoulders, travelling down through your arm and then onto the middle top third area on the Cajon (see illustration above).

The next important feature is a *strong backbeat* - mimicking the snare sound on beats 2 and 4. It is here you begin the *layered* playing, where beats 2 and 4 have the bass and snare sounding at the same time, meaning that *both hands* are striking the Cajon at the *same time*. The snare sound is made from hitting the top left or right of the Cajon, with the middle and ring fingers creating the attack.

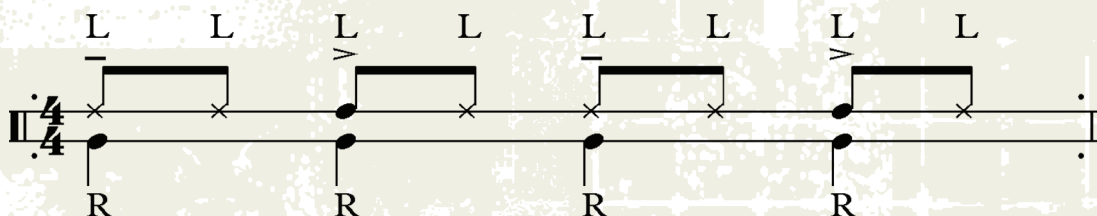
KEY



Layered Groove with Bass and Snare tones

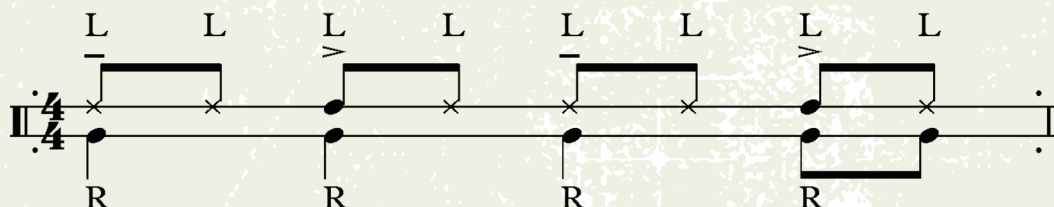


The final step is to add the hi-hat element into your groove (shown below). The hand playing the backbeat needs to play constant eighth notes/quavers as *ghost notes* throughout the entire groove, with accents on beats 2 and 4 for the backbeat.



This is an extremely versatile rhythm certainly worth mastering on the Cajon, with endless possibilities for funky variations once you're comfortable with this new *layered* style of playing. Enjoy!

Funky variation with extra Bass tone



Listening List: 'Disco Inferno' (The Trammps), "Master Blaster" (Stevie Wonder), "Teardrops" (Womack and Womack), "One More Time" (Daft Punk).

Stay tuned for the next edition of PERCUSscene where we'll be looking at innovative ways to play the Cajon using accessories, such as the shaker.

Have any comments or suggestions? Please share them with me at: byron@learncajon.com

Want to learn more about modern Pop & Rock Cajon playing? You can download a free video and PDF notation on '4-to-the-floor Grooves' at: www.learncajon.com/learn



Byron is a professional percussionist, drummer, pianist and composer based in Sydney, Australia. He has a strong interest in Flamenco and African drumming and has studied both at home and abroad (Spain, Africa) with artists including Juan Flores, Ramon Porrina and Sibo Bangoura. Byron is a sought after musician performing regularly with numerous groups including flamenco ensemble Pena Flamenca, artists from The Voice including Lionel Cole and Rosie Henshaw, and acoustic duo Kinetic Method. Byron is a passionate educator with a Bachelor of Music and a Masters of Teaching from University of Sydney and he loves to share his knowledge and skills with people in an inspiring and fun way.