Rim Techniques

by Mark Shelton

The metal or wooden circle that fits over the flesh hoop of a drum head is technically called a counterhoop. Besides its chief role as part of the system that attaches the head to the shell and allows for adjusting the head's tension, the counterhoop provides additional sound sources. You usually hear the counterhoop called the 'rim.' (No one asks you to play a 'counterhoop shot.')

Are you aware of the various methods of using the rim in your percussion work? As you read my tips for performing four common rim techniques, remember that rim sound nomenclature is not standardized, so you might know these sounds by other names.

Standard Rimshot

Popping out a standard rimshot not only sounds good, it feels good! Upon mastering this one, you might be tempted to use it to excess. Strike the head and rim simultaneously to produce the standard rim shot. You will need to develop the
stick-angle muscle memory required to consistently impact both head and rim together. Striking the rim with the stick's shoulder or taper areas will produce higher pitched sounds than making contact farther back on the stick. Don't forget that you have both hands available for double rim shots!

Cross Stick Rimshot

Danny Seraphine's straight-ahead 12/8 groove on Chicago's recording of "Colour My World" includes a definitive cross stick rimshot sound. The choice for backbeats in many a ballad, this sound is produced with the stick laying across the drumhead with about 3.5 inches extending past the rim. I prefer to reverse the stick in my hand so that I am gripping near the taper of the stick and the butt is at the far end. When playing a left-handed cross stick rimshot, the far end of the stick will cross the rim at the 3:00 position (See photo on next page).

Check out my video on Worship Training for a detailed view of my preferred grip for playing the cross stick rimshot.

With the gripped end of the stick remaining in contact with the head, raise the far end up about two inches and bring it down to strike the rim. Listen for a wooden pop sound. Experiment to find the sweet spot on the stick that will produce an optimum cross stick rimshot when the stick strikes the rim. Mark that area with a felt tip pen so that I can hit a clear rimshot consistently.

Find my short video on Worship Training that shows how I mark the stick.

Rim Clicks

Simply tap the rim with the shoulder of the stick to produce the click. Check out the live video of Sarah and John Mark McMillan's "King Of My Heart" to catch an earful of rim clicks. Experiment with substituting rim clicks for high hat or ride cymbal rhythms.

Stick Shot

If you need a powerful pop, go for this one. The stick shot can deliver a mighty wallop as the drum resonates from the collision of wood.

One drum stick will remain stationary and receive the strike from the other stick. The striking stick is usually held in the dominant hand.

Position the stationary stick so that the bead is touching near the center of the head and the shaft is resting across the rim (See photo below). Use the other stick to strike the stationary stick near its shoulder. Experiment to find the optimum head and rim placement for the stationary stick and the sweet spot for the striking area.





As you learn to produce these rim sounds, listen to live and recorded performances to learn how to incorporate those sounds into your playing.

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Mark Shelton is a freelance musician and educational consultant based in Dallas/Fort Worth. Performance credits include North Carolina Symphony, Tin Roof Tango, Daystar Singers & Band, Gateway Worship, Dallas Wind Symphony, and Strata Big Band
www.marksheltonmusic.com