

Swing, Shuffle, Half-Time, Double: Beyond Traditional Time Signatures in Meter Classification for Popular Music

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Bates College

- **Meter is the pattern of accented (and unaccented) pulses in a piece of music**
- **Meter thus describes the rhythmic organization of music**
- **Time signatures are traditionally used to categorize the meter of music**

Typical Traditional Time Signatures

| | Simple (beat divides into 2 parts) | Compound (beat divides into 3 parts) |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Duple (2 beats per bar) | 2 4 | 6 8 |
| Triple (3 beats per bar) | 3 4 | 9 8 |
| Quadruple (4 beats per bar) | 4 4 | 12 8 |

Standard Traditional Time Signatures

| | Simple (beat divides into 2 parts) | Compound (beat divides into 3 parts) |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
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| Triple (3 beats per bar) | 3 4 | 9 8 |
| Quadruple (4 beats per bar) | 4 4 | 12 8 |

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

| Time Signature | | |
|----------------|--|--|
| 6 8 | | |
| 3 4 | | |
| 4 4 | | |

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| $\frac{6}{8}$ | Straight | |
| $\frac{3}{4}$ | Swung 8ths | |
| $\frac{4}{4}$ | Swung 16ths | |

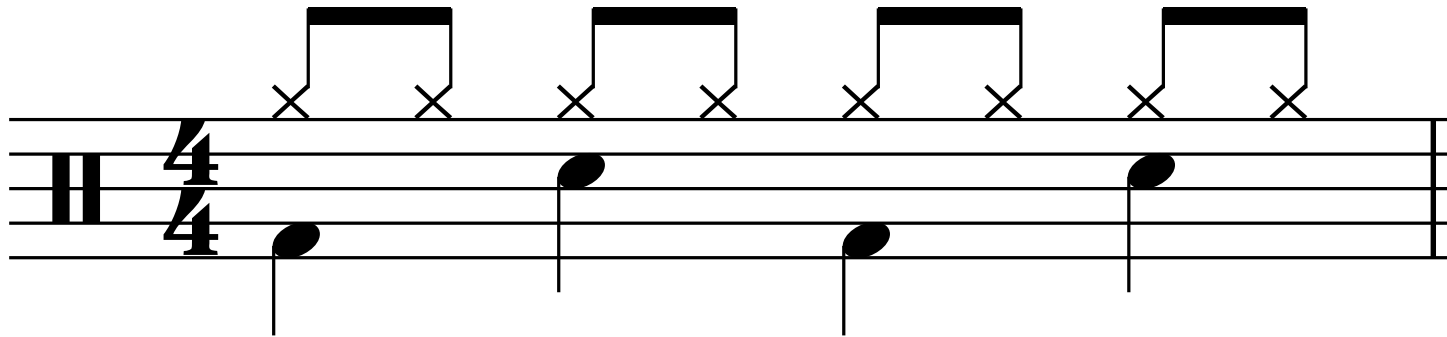
Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | Drum Feel |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| $\frac{6}{8}$ | Straight | Normal |
| $\frac{3}{4}$ | Swung 8ths | Half-Time |
| $\frac{4}{4}$ | Swung 16ths | Double-Time |

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

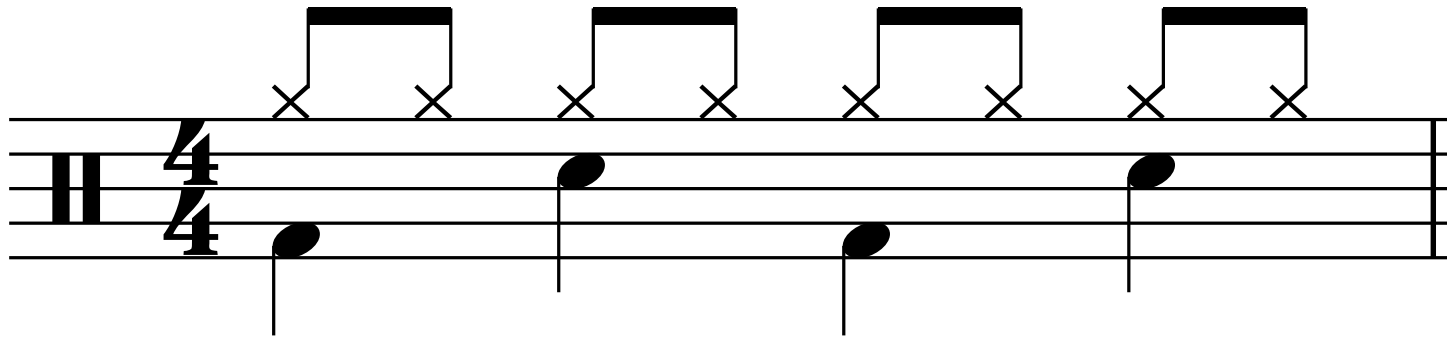
| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | Drum Feel |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 6 8 | Straight | Normal |
| 3 4 | Swung 8ths | Half-Time |
| 4 4 | Swung 16ths | Double-Time |

4/4, straight, normal drum feel



**“Teardrops on My Guitar” — pop version
(Taylor Swift, 2006)**

4/4, straight, normal drum feel

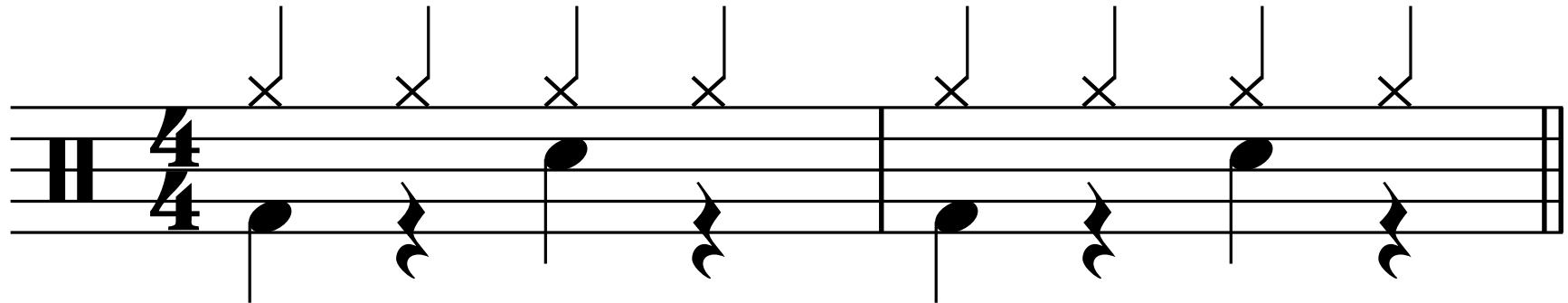


**“Teardrops on My Guitar” — pop version
(Taylor Swift, 2006)**

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

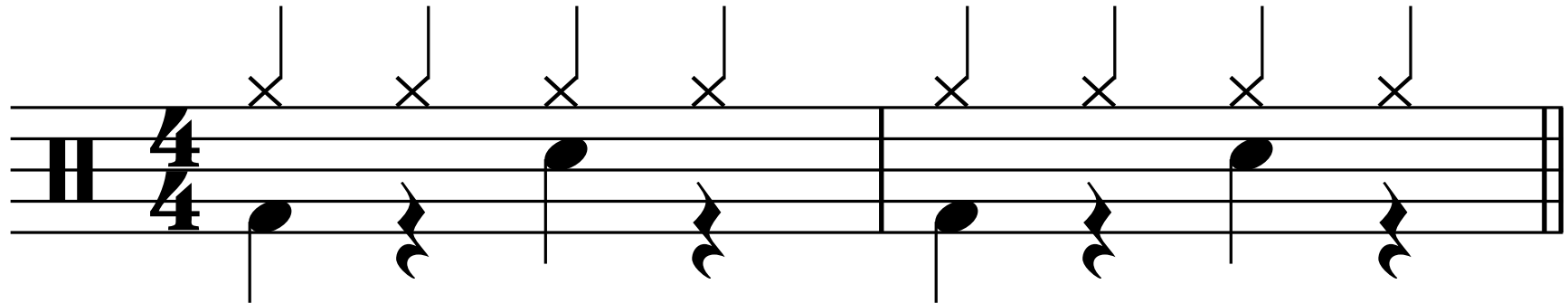
| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | Drum Feel |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 6 8 | Straight | Normal |
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| 4 4 | Swung 16ths | Double-Time |

4/4, straight, half-time feel



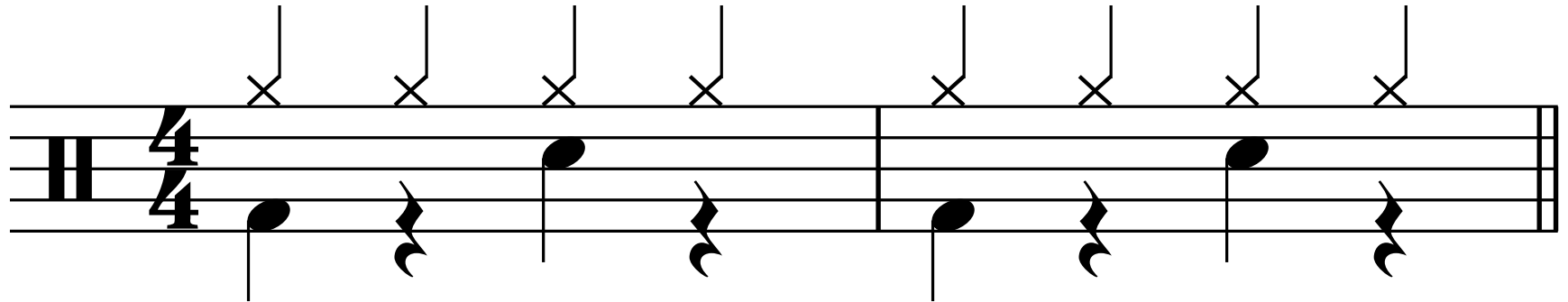
**“Teardrops on My Guitar” — single version
(Taylor Swift, 2006)**

4/4, straight, half-time feel



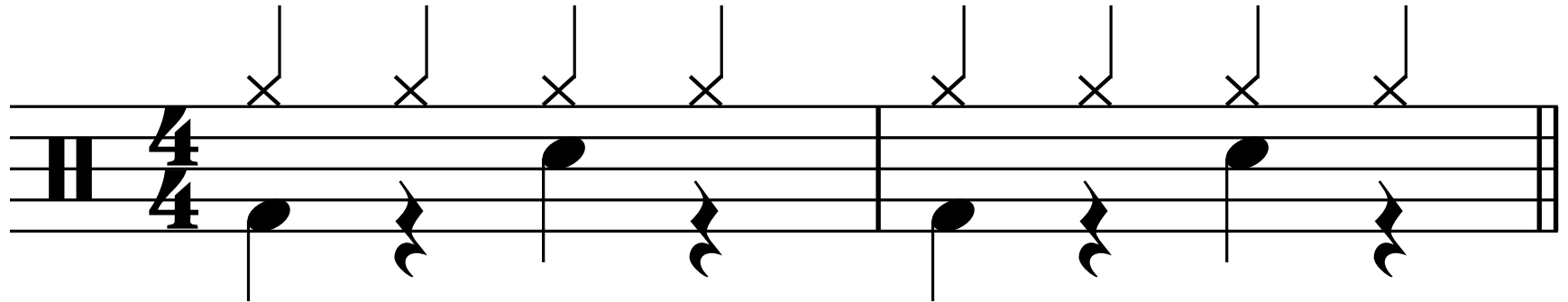
**“Teardrops on My Guitar” — single version
(Taylor Swift, 2006)**

4/4, straight, half-time feel



**“Human Nature”
(Michael Jackson, 1982)**

4/4, straight, half-time feel

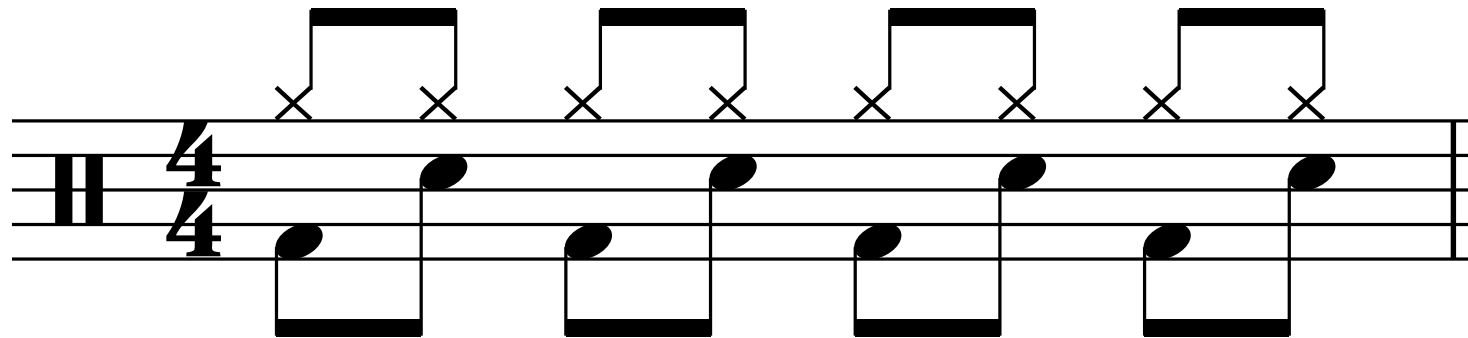


**“Human Nature”
(Michael Jackson, 1982)**

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

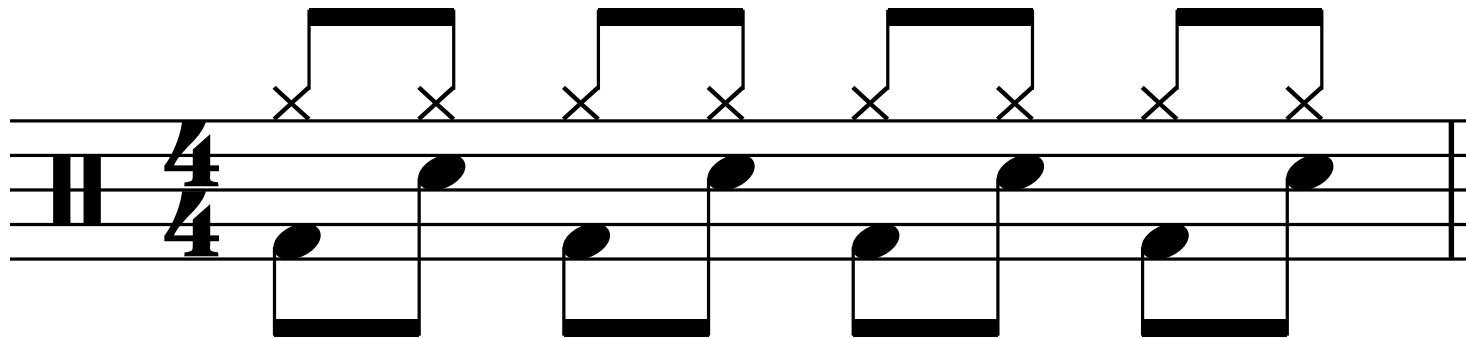
| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | Drum Feel |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 6/8 | Straight | Normal |
| 3/4 | Swung 8ths | Half-Time |
| 4/4 | Swung 16ths | Double-Time |

4/4, straight, double-time feel



**“Should I Stay or Should I Go”
(The Clash, 1982)**

4/4, straight, double-time feel



**“Should I Stay or Should I Go”
(The Clash, 1982)**

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | Drum Feel |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 6 8 | Straight | Normal |
| 3 4 | Swung 8ths | Half-Time |
| 4 4 | Swung 16ths | Double-Time |

4/4, swung 8ths, normal-time feel

The image shows a musical score for a 4/4 time signature. The top staff contains a melodic line with four groups of eighth-note triplets, each marked with a '3' and a bracket. The bottom staff contains a bass line with four quarter notes, each marked with a '7' (likely indicating a specific fingering or articulation). The piece concludes with a double bar line.

“1-2-3-4”

(Feist, 2007)

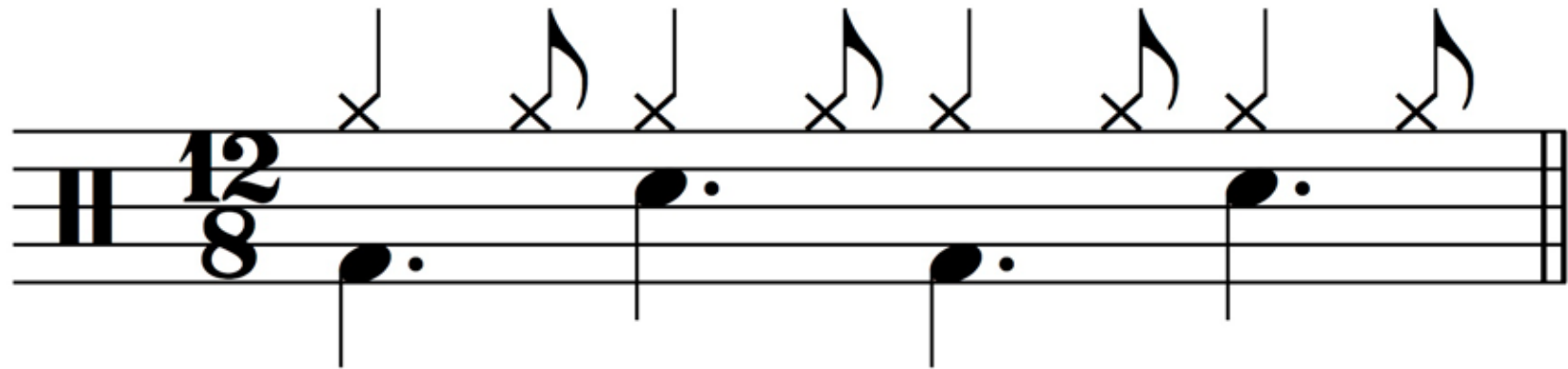
4/4, swung 8ths, normal-time feel

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of eight eighth notes, each marked with an 'x' to indicate a swung eighth note. These notes are grouped into four triplets, each indicated by a bracket and the number '3'. The bass line consists of four quarter notes, each marked with a '7' to indicate a swung eighth note. The notes in the bass line are G2, D2, G2, and D2. The piece ends with a double bar line.

“1-2-3-4”

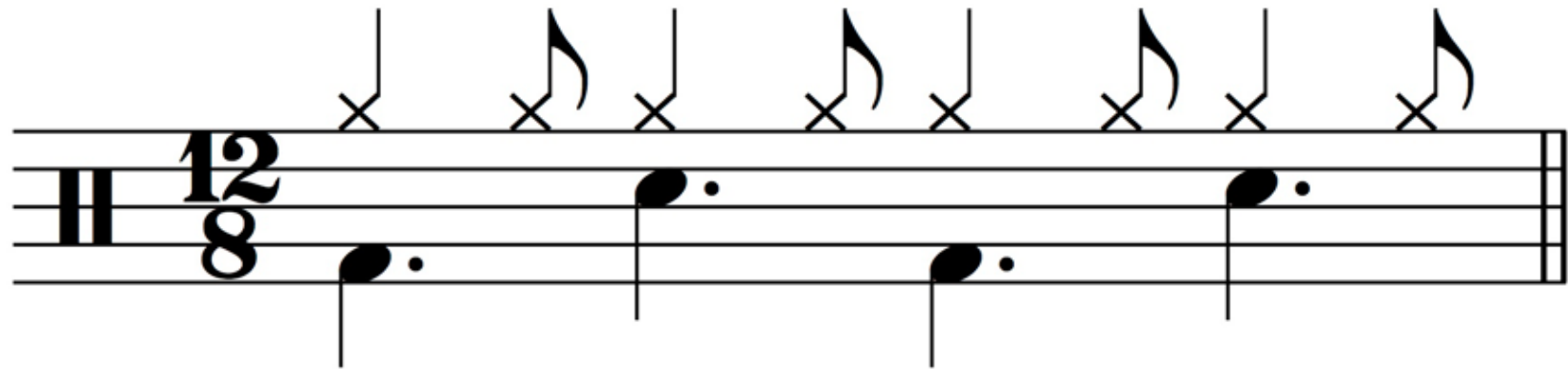
(Feist, 2007)

4/4, swung 8ths, normal-time feel



**“Girl They Won’t Believe It”
(Joss Stone, 2007)**

4/4, swung 8ths, normal-time feel



**“Girl They Won’t Believe It”
(Joss Stone, 2007)**

12/8?

Copyrighted Material

Recorded by TEARS FOR FEARS
and featured in the Twentieth Century Fox Television Series GLEE

Everybody Wants to Rule the World

For SATB* and Piano with Optional Instrumental Accompaniment

Duration: ca. 2:40

Original *GLEE* Arrangement by
ADAM ANDERS and PEER ASTROM
Adapted for publication by KIRBY SHAW

Words and Music by IAN STANELY,
ROLAND ORZABAL and CHRIS HUGHES

Shuffle rock ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 112$) ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{ } \text{♩}$)

Drum intro

Piano (Opt. Rhodes)

F/B \flat E \flat /B \flat

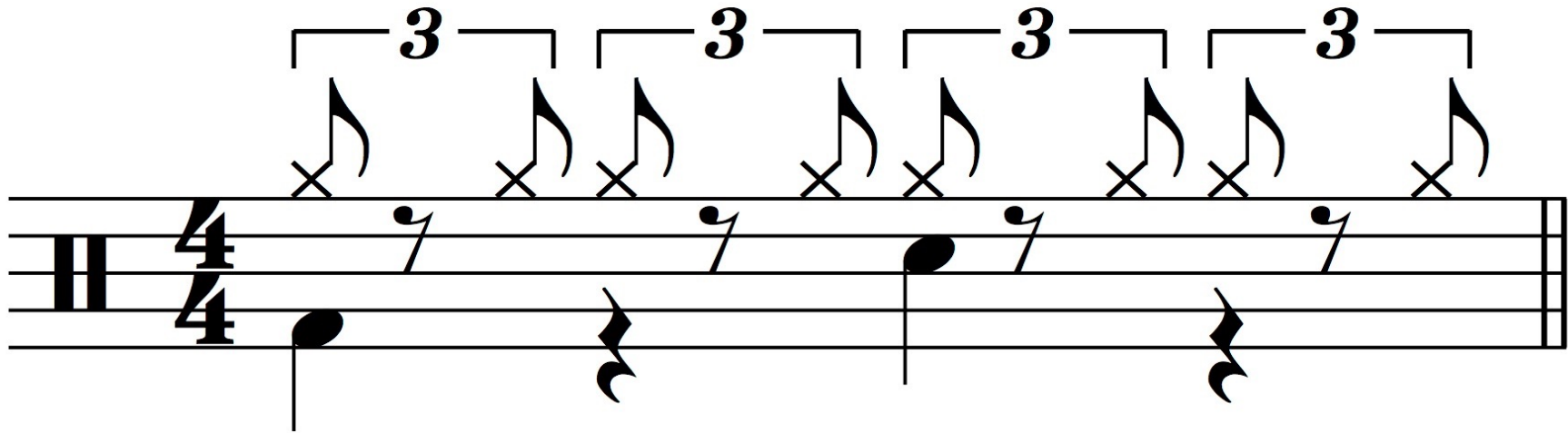
mf

“Everybody Wants to Rule the World”
(Tears for Fears, 1985)

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

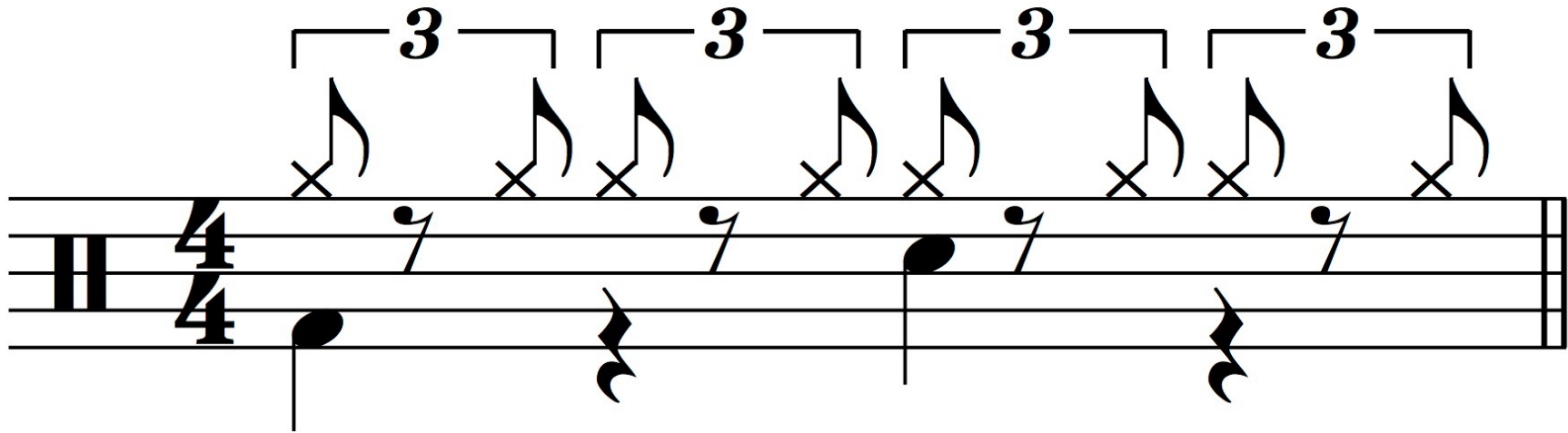
| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | Drum Feel |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 6 8 | Straight | Normal |
| 3 4 | Swung 8ths | Half-Time |
| 4 4 | Swung 16ths | Double-Time |

4/4, swung 8ths, half-time feel



**“Fool in the Rain”
(Led Zeppelin, 1979)**

4/4, swung 8ths, half-time feel

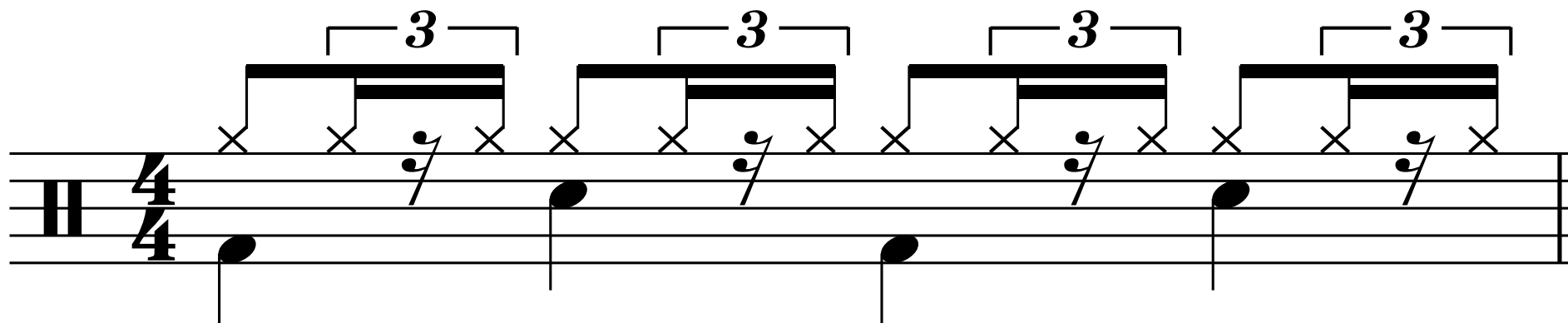


“Fool in the Rain”
(Led Zeppelin, 1979)

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

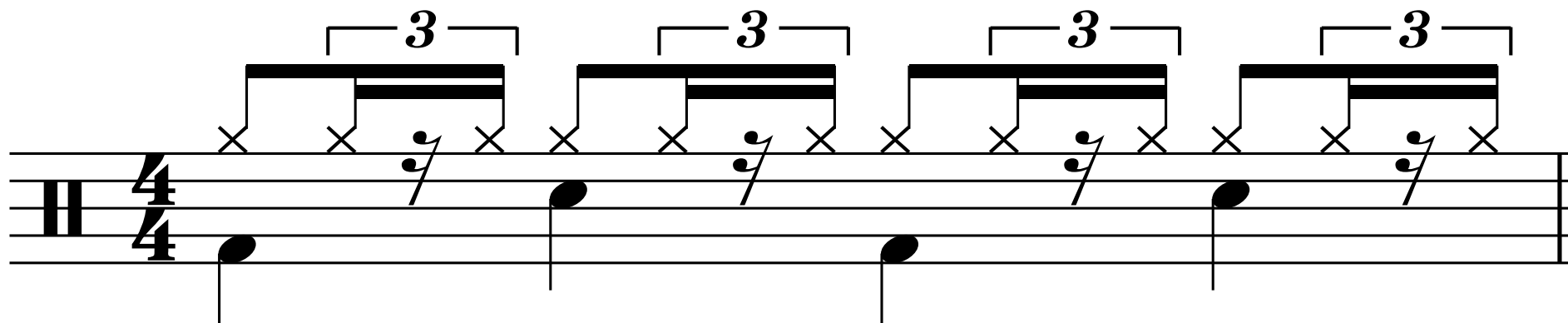
| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | Drum Feel |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 6 8 | Straight | Normal |
| 3 4 | Swung 8ths | Half-Time |
| 4 4 | Swung 16ths | Double-Time |

4/4, swung 16ths, normal-time feel



**“Love On Top”
(Beyoncé, 2011)**

4/4, swung 16ths, normal-time feel

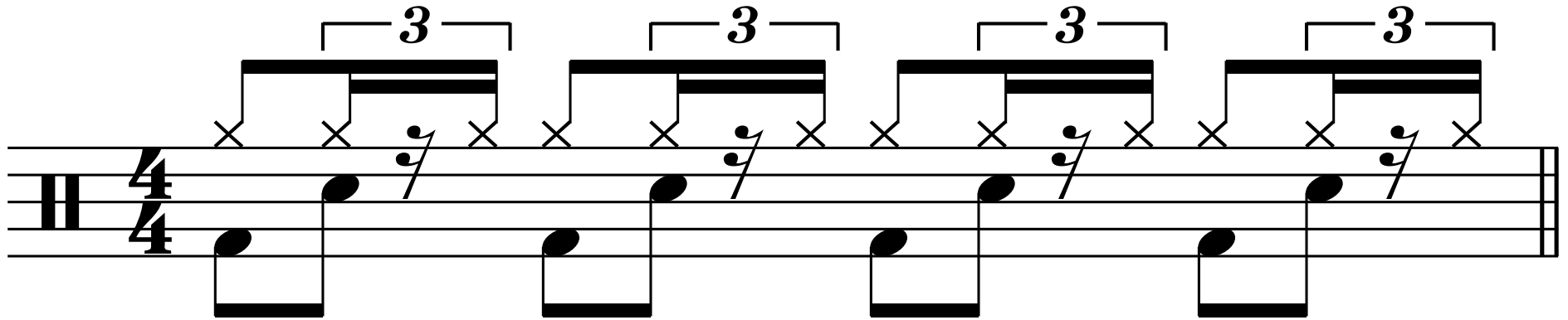


**“Love On Top”
(Beyoncé, 2011)**

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | Drum Feel |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 6/8 | Straight | Normal |
| 3/4 | Swung 8ths | Half-Time |
| 4/4 | Swung 16ths | Double-Time |

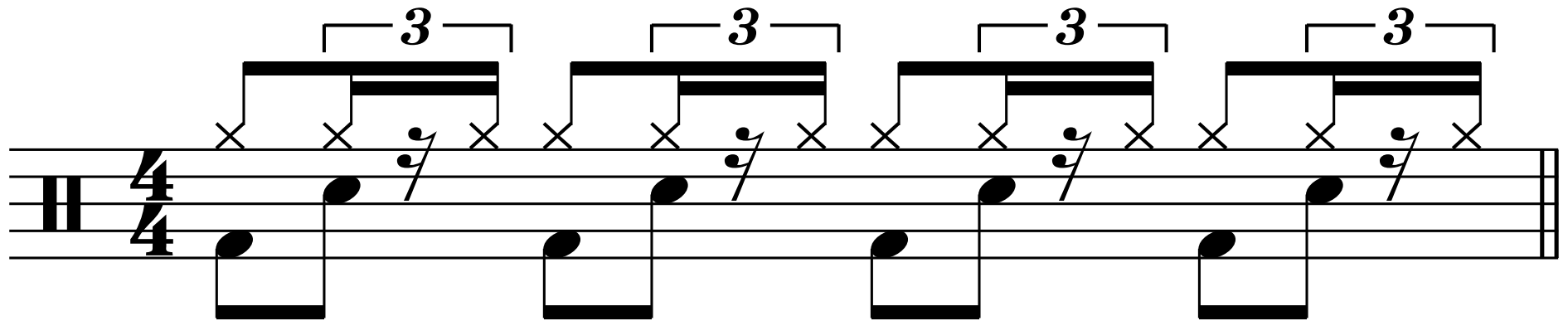
4/4, swung 16ths, double-time feel



“Up From Below”

(Edward Sharpe & the Magnetic Zeros, 2009)

4/4, swung 16ths, double-time feel



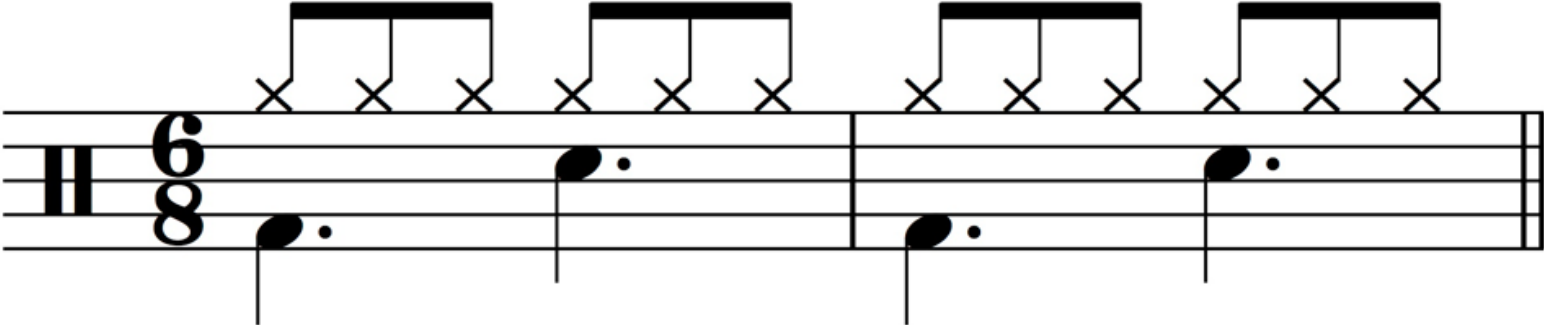
“Up From Below”

(Edward Sharpe & the Magnetic Zeros, 2009)

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

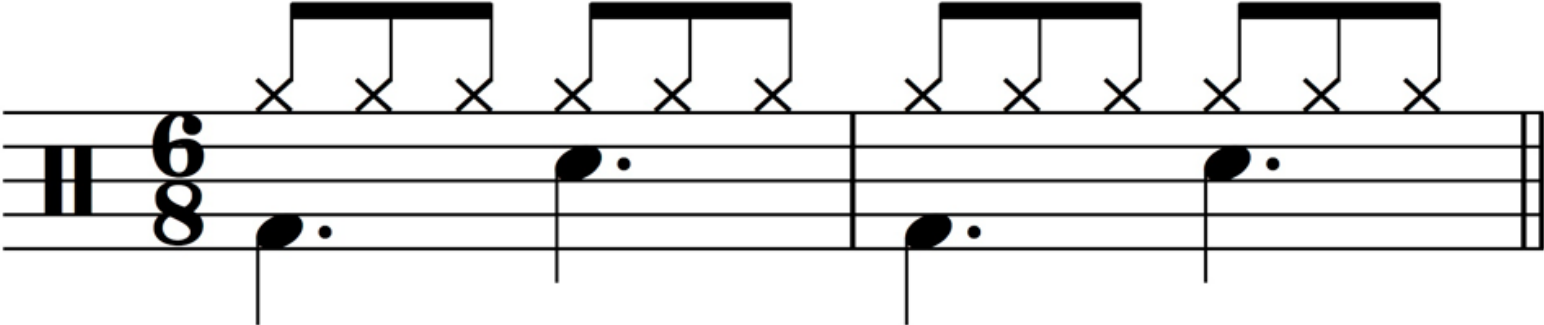
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| $\frac{6}{8}$ | Straight | Normal |
| $\frac{3}{4}$ | Swung 8ths | Half-Time |
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6/8, straight, normal-time feel



**“Nothing Else Matters”
(Metallica, 1991)**

6/8, straight, normal-time feel



“Nothing Else Matters”
(Metallica, 1991)

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | Drum Feel |
|----------------|---------------|-------------|
| 6 8 | Straight | Normal |
| 3 4 | Swung 8ths | Half-Time |
| 4 4 | Swung 16ths | Double-Time |

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | Drum Feel |
|----------------|---------------|-------------|
| 6 8 | Straight | Normal |
| 3 4 | Swung 8ths | Half-Time |
| 4 4 | Swung 16ths | Double-Time |

6/8, swung 16ths, normal-time feel

The image shows a musical staff with a 6/8 time signature. The notation consists of two staves. The upper staff contains four groups of triplets, each marked with a bracket and the number '3'. Each triplet consists of three eighth notes. The lower staff contains a series of dotted eighth notes, with a vertical line connecting each dotted eighth note to the first note of the triplet above it. The first note of each triplet is marked with an 'x' above it. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

“Trouble”
(Ray LaMontagne, 2004)

6/8, swung 16ths, normal-time feel

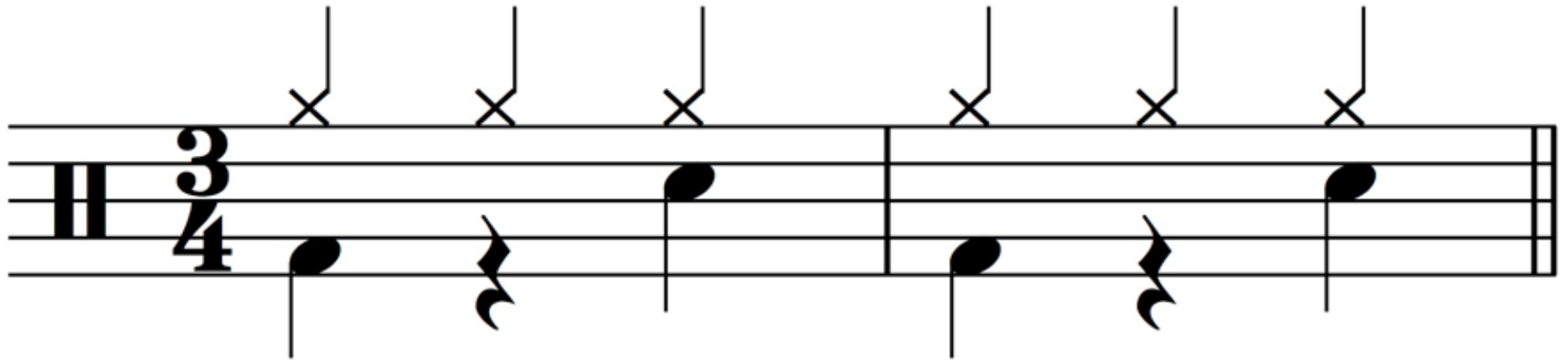
The image shows a musical staff with a 6/8 time signature. The notation consists of two staves. The upper staff contains a sequence of four triplet groups, each marked with a bracket and the number '3'. Each triplet group consists of three eighth notes. The lower staff contains a sequence of four dotted eighth notes, each aligned with a triplet group in the upper staff. The first note of each triplet group is marked with an 'x' above it. The time signature '6/8' is written at the beginning of the staff.

“Trouble”
(Ray LaMontagne, 2004)

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | Drum Feel |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 6 8 | Straight | Normal |
| 3 4 | Swung 8ths | Half-Time |
| 4 4 | Swung 16ths | Double-Time |

3/4, straight, normal-time feel



**“No Other One”
(Weezer, 1996)**

3/4, straight, normal-time feel

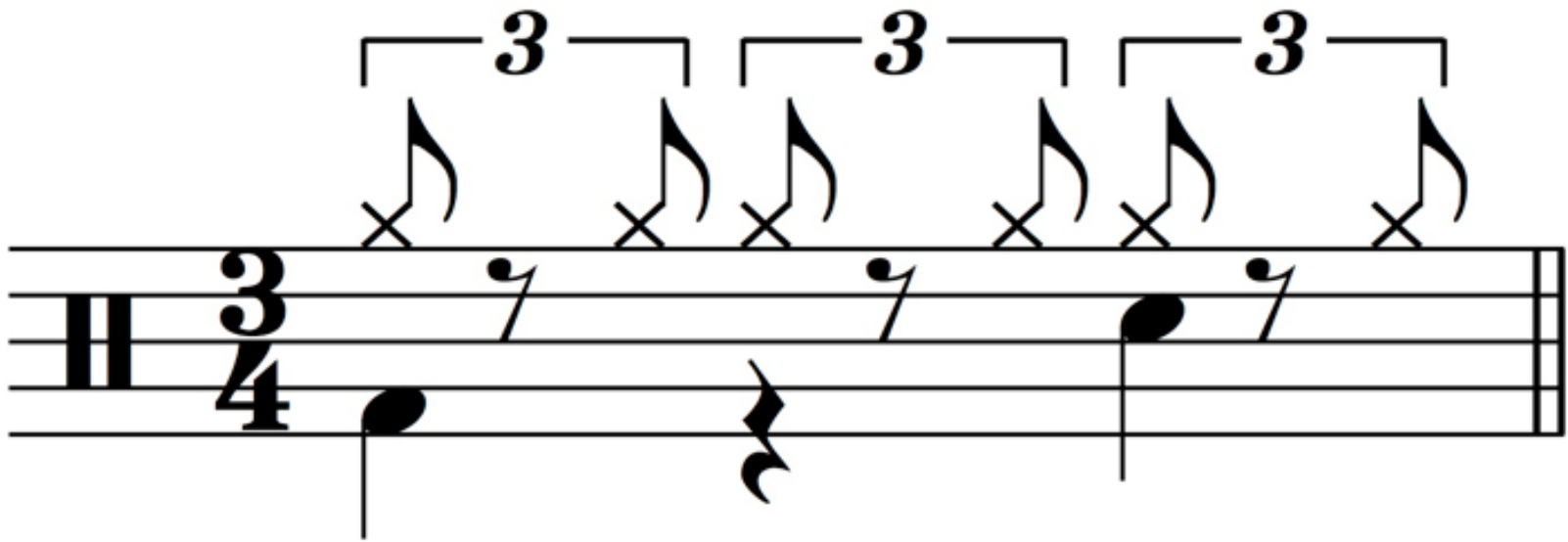


**“No Other One”
(Weezer, 1996)**

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | Drum Feel |
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| 6 8 | Straight | Normal |
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3/4, swung 8ths, normal-time feel

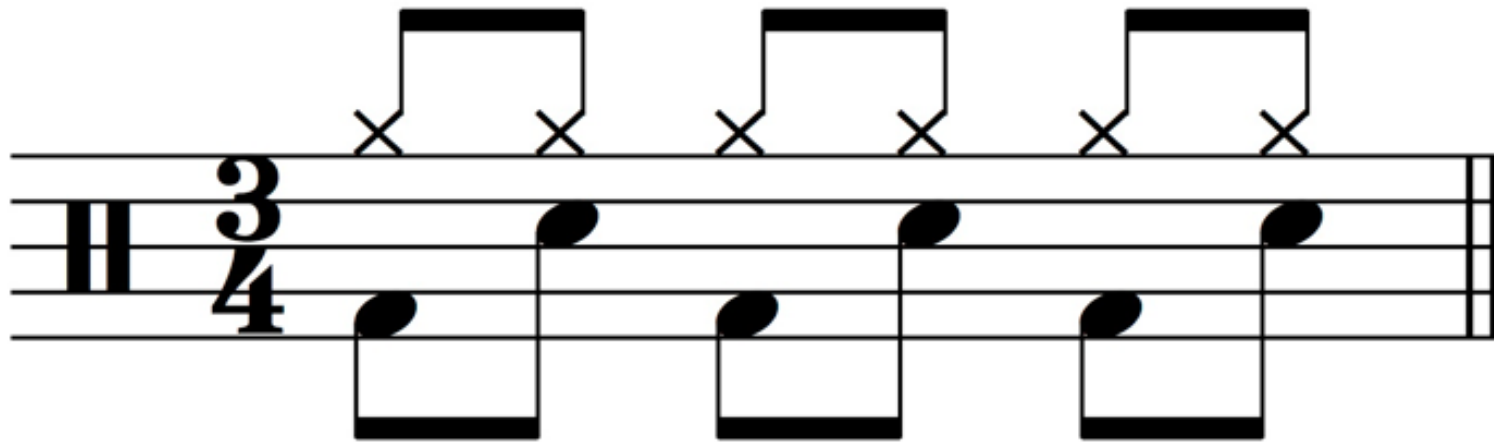


**“Hollywood Waltz”
(The Eagles, 1975)**

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

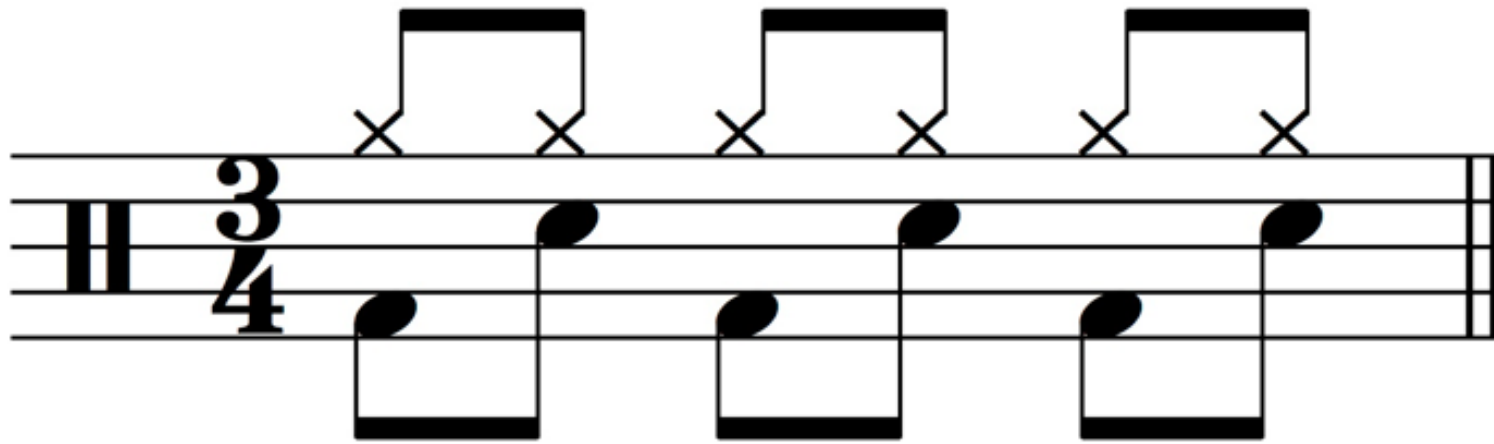
| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | Drum Feel |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 6 8 | Straight | Normal |
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3/4, straight, double-time feel



**“Synchronicity”
(The Police, 1983)**

3/4, straight, double-time feel

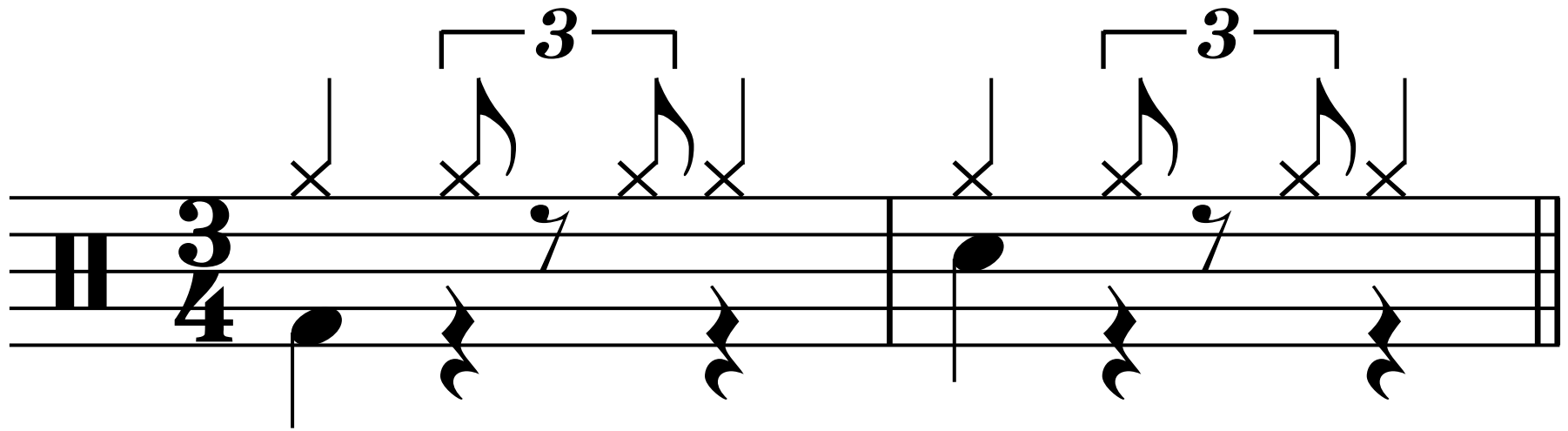


**“Synchronicity”
(The Police, 1983)**

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

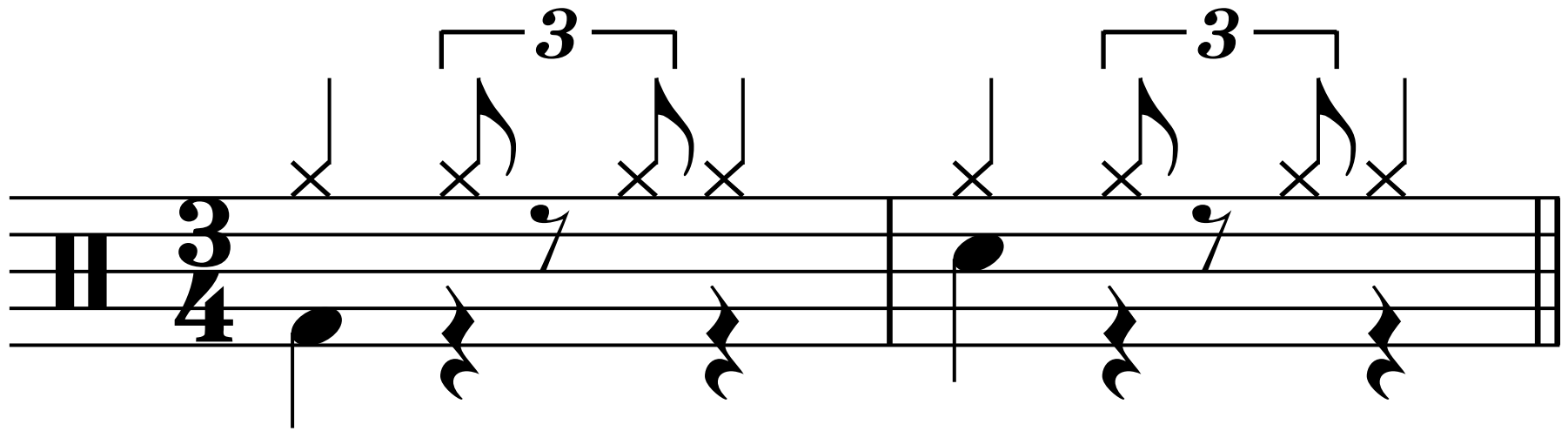
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| 6/8 | Straight | Normal |
| 3/4 | Swung 8ths | Half-Time |
| 4/4 | Swung 16ths | Double-Time |

3/4, swung 8ths, half-time feel



**“Sometimes I Cry”
(Chris Stapleton, 2015)**

3/4, swung 8ths, half-time feel



**“Sometimes I Cry”
(Chris Stapleton, 2015)**

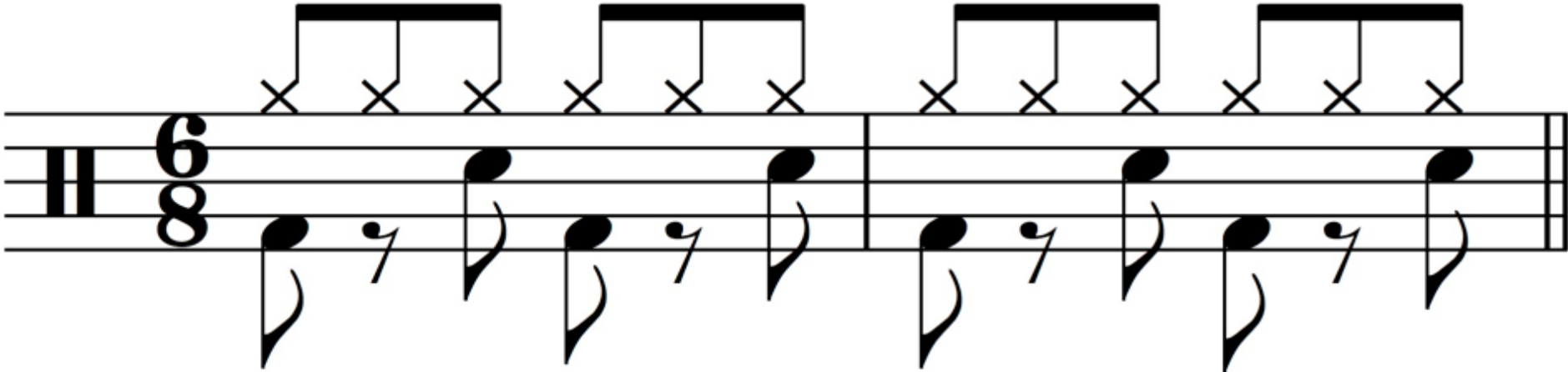
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Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

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| 6 8 | Straight | Normal |
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| 4 4 | Swung 16ths | Double-Time |

6/8, straight, double-time feel



“Lorelai”
(Fleet Foxes, 2011)

6/8, straight, double-time feel

The image shows a musical score for the song "Lorelai" by Fleet Foxes. It consists of two staves. The top staff is a guitar line, and the bottom staff is a double bass line. The time signature is 6/8, and the key signature is one flat (B-flat). The guitar line features a repeating rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with the first three notes of each measure beamed together. The double bass line features a repeating rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with the first note of each measure beamed together. The music is in a straight, double-time feel.

“Lorelai”
(Fleet Foxes, 2011)

Beyond Traditional Time Signatures

| Time Signature | Swing Rhythms | Drum Feel |
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| $\frac{6}{8}$ | Straight | Normal |
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| Triple (3 beats per bar) | 3 4 | 9 8 |
| Quadruple (4 beats per bar) | 4 4 | 12 8 |

THANK YOU!

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