



Rudimentarily, My Dear Watson

Nutmeg Dulcimer Festival November, 2026

51-Rudimentarily, My Dear Watson - Cliff Cole (BEG) Sat 1:15
We will explore some of the common percussion rudiments and see how they apply to the hammered dulcimer. Since the hammered dulcimer is a percussion instrument, understanding the basics of percussion "sticking" will help make the player's hammering become more accurate, cleaner and lead to faster playing. Among the rudiments presented will be single stroke rolls, double stroke rolls, paradiddles, and flams.

Access Cliff's Nutmeg 2026 Workshops from this Google Drive:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Dhk5fAZ0bdkWHRSBYmnOiogzrAV1OVRF?usp=drive_link

Also available on Cliff's Hammered Dulcimer page on the DayBreakfolk Website:
https://daybreakfolk.com/cliffs-hammered-dulcimer/

Drop and Bounce Method of Percussion

This will be demonstrated in the workshop:

- Hold the hammer with thumb and forefinger
- Relax your wrist and arm (If you are stiff and tight it won't flow)
- Hold your hammers 3 to 5 inches above the string
- "Drop" one hammer and let it bounce up
- Guide it back with your fingers and wrist to the starting position
- A "good bounce" is one that allows the string to ring
- Repeat with other hand: Try to make them sound the same
- Alternate left-hand and right hand, work on making it clean
- Work on making it so you can do this equally well with BOTH hands
- Go slowly and work the mechanics; do rudiment exercises

The physics of this is "simple harmonic motion"

- Its like bouncing a ball!

Rudiments We Will Explore

- Single Stroke Roll
- Double Stroke Roll
- Paradiddles – *Totally Fun!*
- Flams *(and "dulcimer flams")*
- PAS: Rudiments

Other Related Topics:

- Basic Syncopation
- Some Other Time Signatures
  - Most exercises are shown in 4/4 time



A Few Reason Why Rudiments Matter
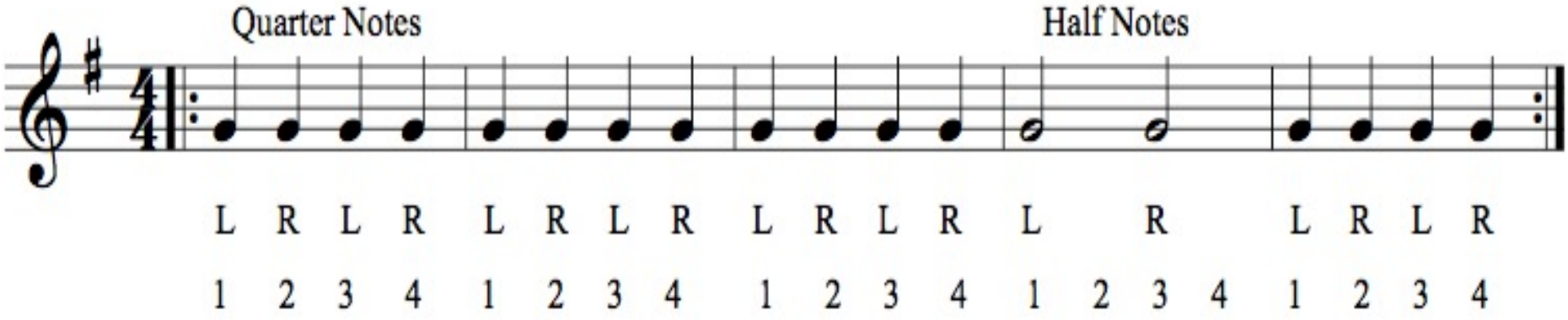
- The HD is a percussion instrument (end of story)
- Knowing the rudiments helps you with sticking patterns on the tunes you learn
- Knowing rudiments helps leads the player down the road of left and right hand independence; the “holy grail” of percussion
- Rudiments are fun to learn!
  - Words like “paradiddle” and “flam” are cool…



Rudiment Exercises
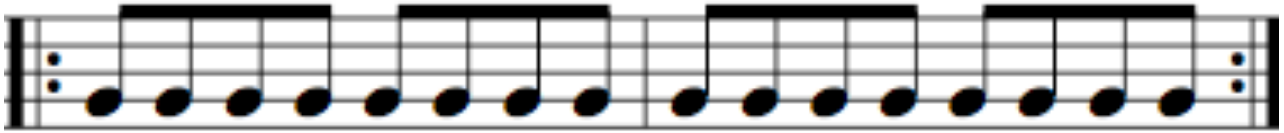


- Stay on one string to simplify things
- Go Very Slowly
- Alternate Left and Right hands (as a rule)
  - except when using patterns that use doubling (two notes in a row)
- **GO SLOWLY**; Speed comes with practice
- Work on your mechanics; strive for perfect percussion
  - The author advocates for using “drop and bounce” method
- Strive for Left and Right Hand Mechanics to be the same
- Make the exercises more interesting by moving to different strings
  - Or Integrate scale and chord exercises with rudiments



Rolls

- Carefully observe the sticking patterns
- Count out loud
- Go Slowly
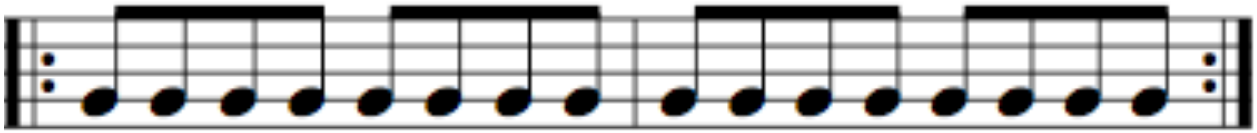
Single Stroke Roll



L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

Double Stroke Roll
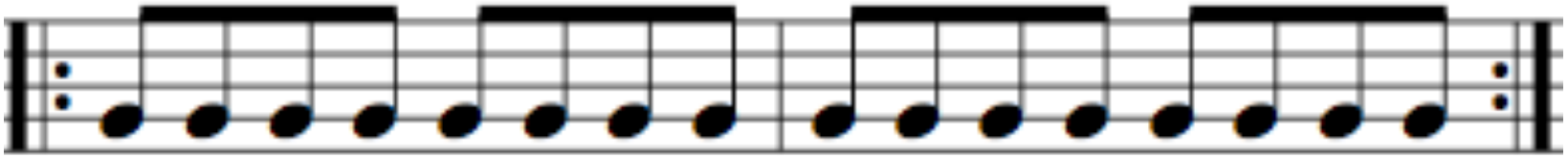


L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

Paradiddles
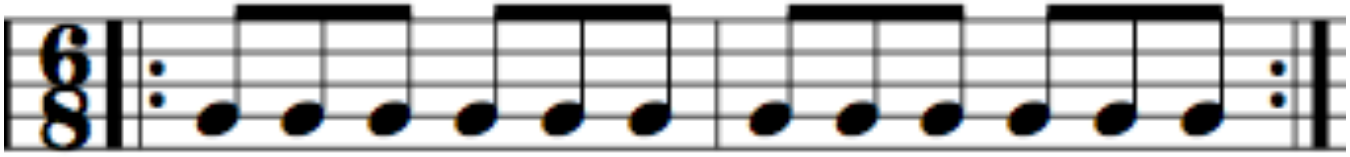
- Keep the timing even; the notes are still eighth notes
- Don’t speed up the “doubled” notes
- On a drum we say: “down-up-tap-tap, down-up-tap-tap”
  - The “doubled notes” have less emphasis, but are in proper time
- On the HD play notes on two sides of the bridge; Left and Right

Paradiddle



L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R

Double Paradiddle: Time Signature 6/8
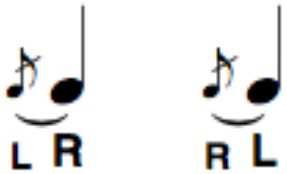


L R L R L L R L R L R R

Flams
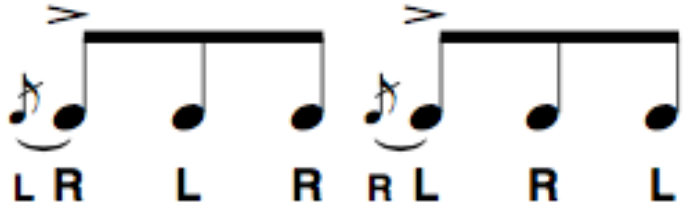
- A flam is a “grace note” that proceeds a “main” note
- The grace note has less volume and “accents” the main note
- Often on the HD a grace note is a separate note from the main note
- Sometime percussing a string in-between bridges to make two notes is called a ”flam” (will be demonstrated)
  - In the author’s opinion this is a misuse of the term; perhaps its a flim-flam ☺

Flams from the PAS Rudiments List
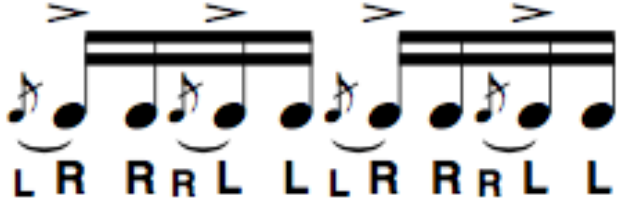
20. Flam *



21. Flam Accent *

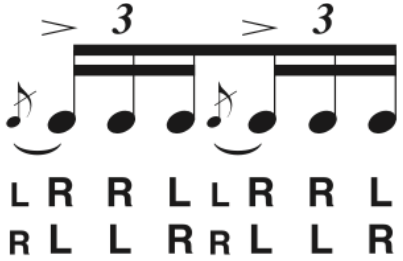


22. Flam Tap *
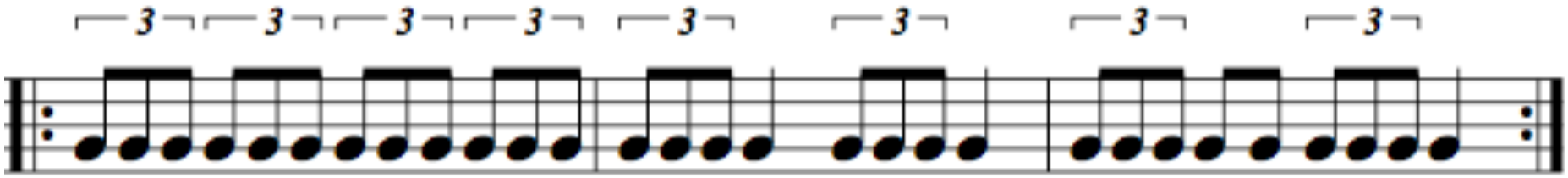


More Advanced

28. Swiss Army Triplet



Triplets
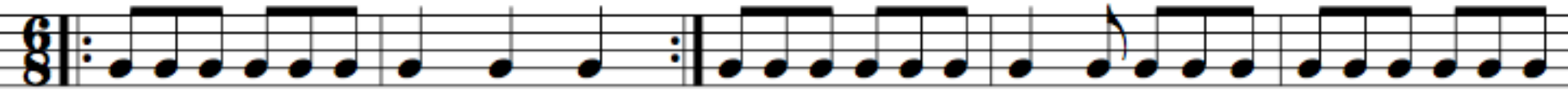
In 4/4 time



6/8 Time

6/8 Time (Jig Time)

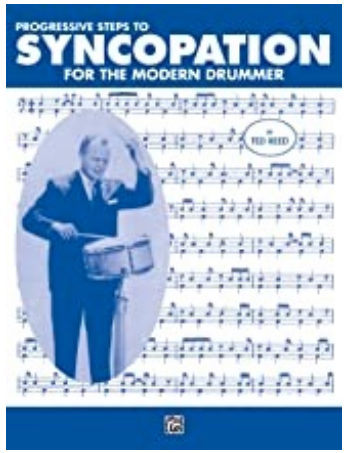
Alternate ways to count: Two sets of three; or count in twos



1 2 3 4 5 6 1 3 5

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 3 1 2 3 1 2

Basic Syncopation



- According to Wikipedia, Syncopation is "a disturbance or interruption of the regular flow of rhythm"
- Put another way, syncopation helps make the timing in music much more interesting…
- "Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer" by Ted Reed is a classic book used to teach drum students rhythm
  - This book is highly recommended

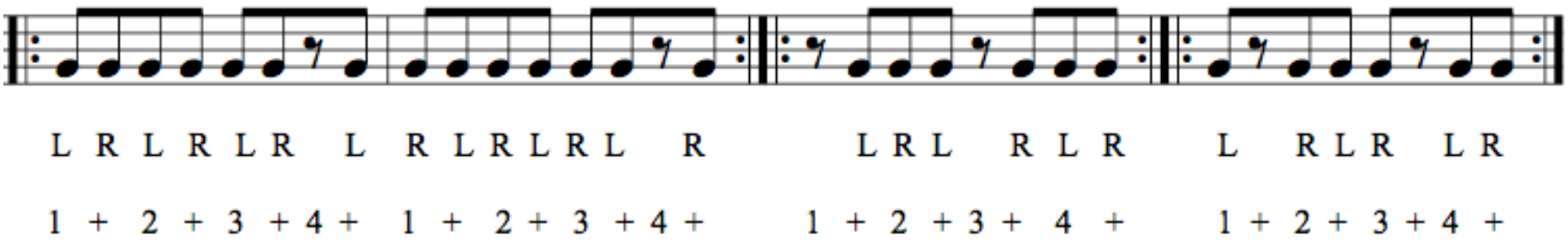
Some Basic Syncopation Exercises

- Count: one and two and three and four and …
- Alternate sticking Left Right Left Right hands

Skipping beat "4"

Skipping beats "1" and "3"
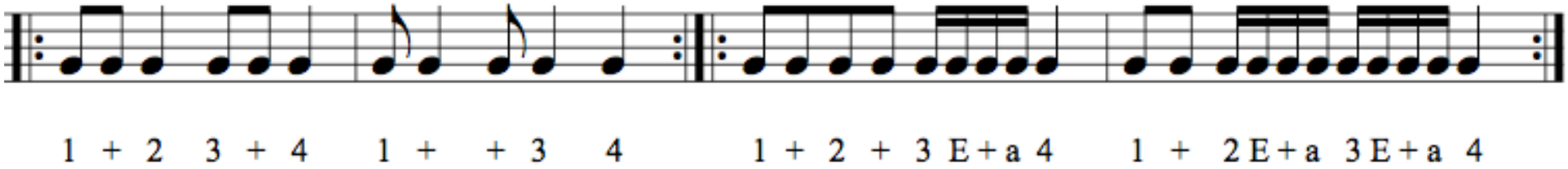
Skipping "and" beats
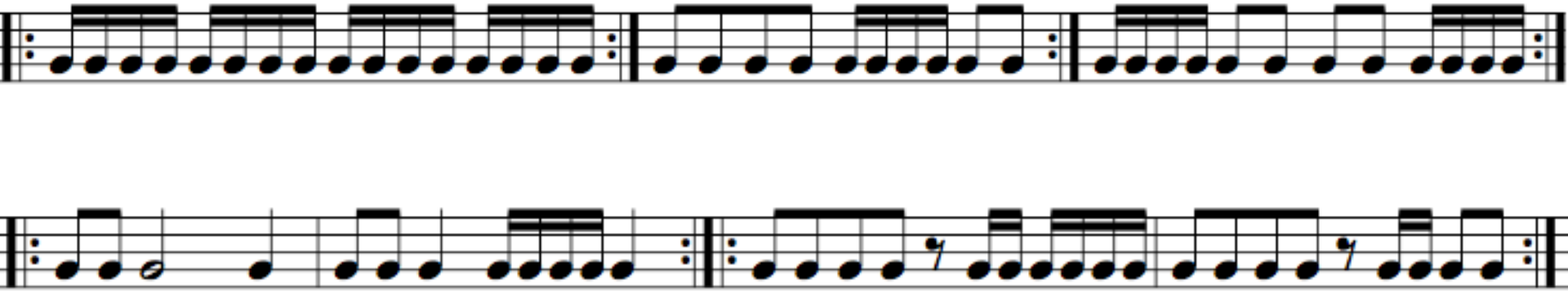


More Advanced Syncopation

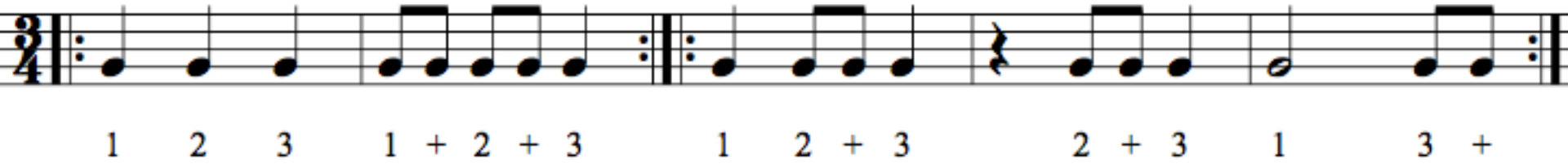
”and to and”

Watch out for sixteenth notes





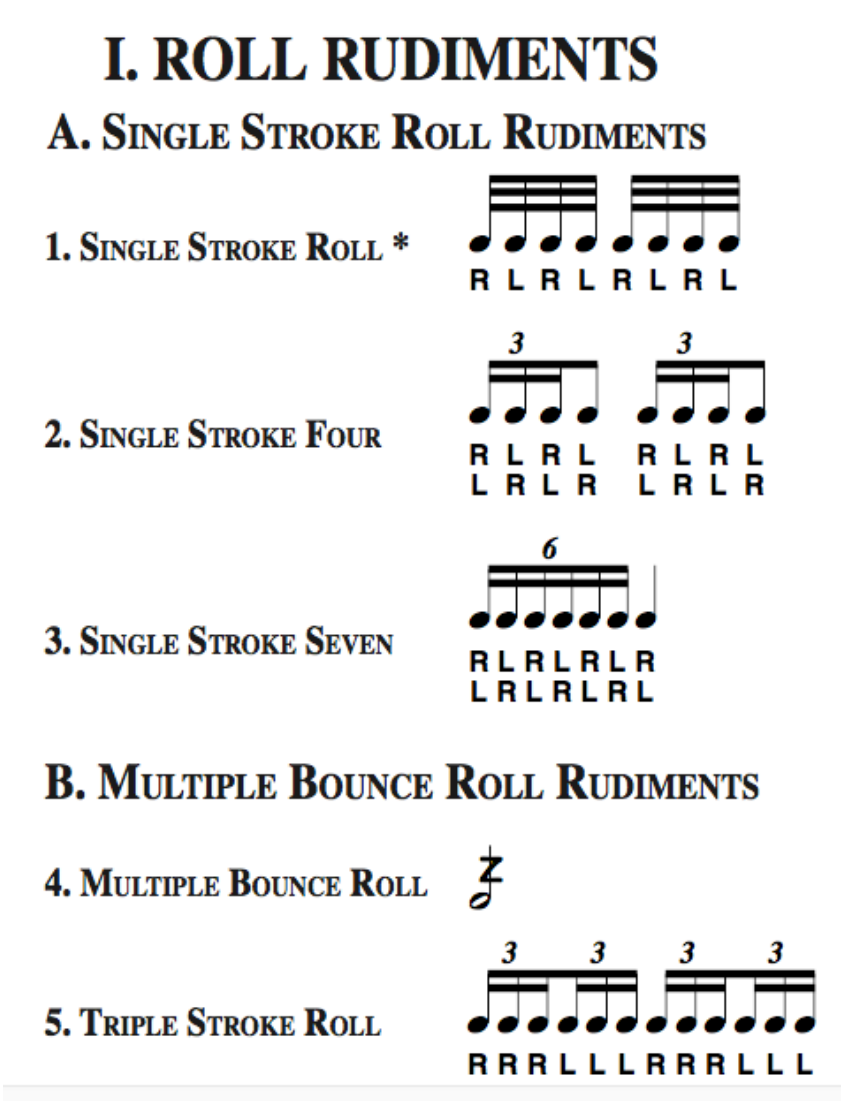
3/4 Time



Furthere Study: Percussive Arts Society Rudiments

https://www.pas.org/resources/rudiments

A sample of the first few



Tuning Chart and String Gauges

James Jones - Custom Performance

3/16/18/7 Four Octave Electric Hammer Dulcimer



Treble 2		Treble 1		Bass 1		Bass 2	
4	F6	E6	A#5 (Bb) 5	D#5	6	A#3(Bb)	10
5	D#6	D6	G#5 5	C#5	6	F3	.030W
5	C#6	C6	F5 6	A#4(Bb)	7	C3	.036
		B5	E5 7	A4	7	G2	.040
		A5	D5 7	G4	8	F#2	.040
		G5	C5 7	F4	8	E2	.042
		F#5	B4 8	E4	9	D2	.042
		E5	A4 8	D4	9		
		D5	G4 8	Middle C4	9		
		C#5	F#4 9	B3	10		
		B4	E4 9	A3	10		
		A4	D4 9	G3	.028W		
		G#4	C#4 9	F#3	.030		
		F#4	B3 10	E3	.032		
		E4	A3 10	D3	.036		
		D#4	G#3 10	C#3	.038		
				B2	.038		
				A2	.040		

Flight of the Heron

https://www.jamesjonesinstruments.com/

This material and other workshops Cliff has presented are on "Cliff's Dulcimer Page"

http://daybreakfolk.com/cliffs-hammered-dulcimer/

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Also, Please Visit: **Tachyonmetry.com**



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