

A Beat a Week

A TOTAL PERCUSSION APPROACH TO PLAYING THE DRUMSET

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Similar to the last beat from “Spiders,” the beat for “I’ll Fight” also has a constant eighth-note pulse throughout, except this time it’s on the snare drum. I’ve found that on certain types of songs and at the right tempo, reinforcing the traditional eighth note ride-cymbal pattern by doubling it on the snare drum can add a sense of solidity and strengthen the overall groove. It’s subtle enough that it might be more felt than heard, but in my experience it works and unifies everything.

Example 4A: I’ll Fight (Verse 0:18)

If you strip away the snare drum/ride double, you get a common beat.

Example 4B: Without Snare Drum Reinforcement

I tend to accent both the hi-hat and snare drum on counts 2 and 4, but it’s good to be able to accent the snare alone as well.

Example 4C: Hands Only

I was first exposed to the idea of a part being more felt than heard while learning big band drumming in college. It was common practice in the earlier days of big bands (the ’20s and ’30s) to keep a steady pulse on the bass drum and not just the ride cymbal. It has a unifying effect on the band and glues everything together by providing a subtle, low-end anchor. Here’s an example of what I’m talking about. This is the same idea, but just in a different style of music and on a different voice of the drumset.

Example 4D: Implied Bass Drum

There's something about the song and its playful elements, changing feels, and affected vocals that have always resonated with me. This is the groove from the bridge section of the song. The preceding verse is much more of a traditional waltz feel, with snare drum press rolls and a swung feel. For the bridge, I chose to straighten out the feel as a contrast, which is kind of what the bridge is all about anyway.

This beat might sound a bit odd or complex, but it's actually very straightforward and part of most drummers' vocabulary.

First, let's try the actual beat.

Example 25A: What I Don't Believe (1:15)
Full Beat

Now, let's break it down to just the right hand and right foot. You can see the bass remains constant on the upbeats, and the right hand just moves from two hi-hat notes to the floor tom on count 3.

Example 25B: Right Half of the Body

Next, just try what the hands are playing. First, play on one surface (the snare drum), and then with the proper voicings of the beat. Notice that in Ex. 25C, on count 2, we have double-stops and not flams. These need to remain tight in Ex. 25D so they don't dilute the driving aspect of the beat. And, keep in mind that your right hand will be switching back and forth between the hi-hat and floor tom in Ex. 25D.

Example 25C: Hands Only on Same Surface

Example 25D: Hands Only Voiced

The trickiest part of this groove will be the "+" of count 3. This is the only time the right foot isn't alone. Again, make sure the left hand isn't flammng with the bass drum but is perfectly locked in with it.

Example 25E: Bass Drum and Left Hand

If you can play Ex. 25E solidly, this beat will pose no problems for you.