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Live Lesson #18

Polyrhythm Drum Beat Ideas

Featuring Schroeder

With Jared Falk & Dave Atkinson

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Sheet Music Included
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Lesson #18 – Polyrhythm Drum Beat Ideas
Polyrhythm Drum Beat Ideas

In this drum lesson Jared & Dave bring in Dean "Schroeder" Reimer (dean’s facebook/ dean’s youtube) to perform some polyrhythm and offset drum beats for you. He then explains how you can apply them to your drumming.

Schroeder also plays a Neurosonic "So Many People", a New Found Glory "At Least I’m Known For Something", and a Meshuggah “New Millennium Cyanide Christ” drum cover.

Understanding Polyrhythms

The grooves taught in this lesson are a great way to expand on the conventional ideas of drumming, and of changing the flow of a song. Playing straight is great, but when Schroeder is in the process of creating music, especially when doing so for an album, he looks at what he hasn’t already done in that album, so he can explore those possibilities instead of doing the same thing that he has already done. Before proceeding let’s take a look at what is an actual polyrhythm.

A polyrhythm is a rhythm in which two or more different meters are played simultaneously, while both are moving at the same linear tempo. A simple example of this is playing a 4/4 time pattern, where quarter notes are played on the bass drum while half-note triplets are played on the hi-hat. At the beginning of the second measure the notes on the hi-hat and the bass drum will coincide once again. This example you have just seen is called a 3-over-4 or 3:4 polyrhythm. This “3-over-4” is actually just a formula for understanding how to build this particular polyrhythm.

To play a X-over-Y polyrhythm, divide the Y beats in groups of X notes, and play every Yth note.

Understanding how this formula works will give you a further knowledge on how to distinguish and approach other polyrhythms; so let’s use the “3-over-4” example as a way to explain this formula.
Lesson #18 – Polyrhythm Drum Beat Ideas

Step 1
The first thing you have to realize is that the X-over-Y formula tells us exactly in how many beats this polyrhythm will have to be played. So for this you take Y, and use it as the number of beats over which you will play the polyrhythm. Since on a 3-over-4 we have, Y = 4, then this polyrhythm will have to be played over four beats. In this example, which is the one showed by Schroeder on the lesson, he plays the four beats on the bass drum, but you can play them wherever you want on your drum set.

![Image of a drum set with a 3-over-4 polyrhythm]

Step 2
We have seen what the Y on X-over-Y means; the X on the other hand, let’s know exactly in how many notes we will have to divide each beat. Thus, because X is 3 in this case, each beat will be subdivided into three notes, i.e., 8th note triplets.

![Image of a drum set with subdivided notes]

Step 3
For the final step you just have to take the Y once again, and play each Yth note of the subdivided notes. In this case this means each 4th note.

![Image of a drum set with subdivided notes]

You can add extra notes, dynamics, extra voices, split the polyrhythm between a different set of voices; the sky is the limit.

There is one last rule you have to keep in mind while playing around with these ideas. Generally, two rhythms are only considered a polyrhythm if they have no common divisor, other than one. In the example above, there is no whole number (other than one) that will divide evenly into both 3 and 4. Hence, things like for instance 4-over-2 are not polyrhythms.
Mute Math “Typical” – Intro

The first example given by Schroeder is not a polyrhythm but an offset beat. The hi-hat and bass drum are played together throughout this groove, while you perform the offsets with the snare drum.

While playing along to this song, Schroeder likes to use a china cymbal instead of a half-open hi-hat since it gives him a different feel. He also adds a 32nd note played on the snare just before the 1 on the next measure. He feels this really helps the turnaround of the groove between phrases.

Red Hot Chili Peppers “Ready Made”

In this song you can hear the Chili Peppers drummer, Chad Smith, playing this really straight half-time groove. Then on the 4th bar of the beat, instead of playing the snare on the 3 like he was doing beforehand, he hits it on the 4. After doing so he continues to push everything he plays one beat later, making this half-time groove sound really off.
So like the last one, this is another good example of an offset groove and how it can really change the feel of a song.

**Ten Dollar Thompson “A Thousand Eyes”**

This groove is in 6/8 and it is another good example of an offset beat. The first bar is played really straight with some ghost notes. In the second bar, instead of playing the bass drum on the 1 count, Schroeder plays it on the 6 of the first bar. Then on the AND of 1 he starts playing a hand-to-feet combination that ends on a snare hit on the 4 count.

**Meshugga “New Millennium Cyanide Christ” – Verse & Outro**

Through this song Schroeder teaches two actual polyrhythms that make a fairly heavy use of double kick. The first one is sort of the verse groove. The hi-hat and snare are played as quarter notes; the hats are played on all four counts while the snare is always played on the 3 of each
measure. For each 4 bars of 4/4 time you play with the hands, you will have 4 bars of 3/4 time and one bar of 4/4 time to play with your feet. Hence, you will have 16 beats to play with both hands and feet; at the end of the 4 measures, the 1 on both hand and feet patterns will meet again.

The second polyrhythm is taken from the outro of this song. While you still keep playing in 4/4 time, the kick pattern will be played in 6/4. This time you will have 2 bars of 6/4 time and 1 bar of 4/4 time.
Extra Tips

Counting Polyrhythms
Usually on a polyrhythm, Schroeder counts in regards to the time signature of the song. One thing that really helps him concentrate on playing a polyrhythm is thinking of it as a really big phrase instead of only focusing on playing a 3 over a song that is in 4 for instance. One other good tip is to think of the polyrhythm as a syncopation that just carries through and recycles at the end of a certain number of bars. Like everything in drumming, practice is the key, so you have to first learn how to focus on two or more time signatures at the same time.

Improving Weaker Foot Strength
For a warm up Schroeder likes to alternate single strokes between the right and left side of his body. During this exercise he favors the weaker side of his body (i.e., left foot and left hand), playing for instance 8 or 16 hits with it, while playing 4 with the right side. This exercise should be played with a metronome, starting at a slower speed. It’s super important to play things at a slow speed, because by learning this way when you get to higher speeds you won’t rush the strokes and will be able to play it cleanly. This will not only improve foot strength but improve your overall coordination.

One other option you have is to play a basic rock groove with 16th notes on the bass drum. Start at a slower tempo and work your way up.

One other idea you can use, is to lead with your left foot on the bass drum.
Improving Accuracy
For the most part, toms have a wide area where they are going to sound good when hit. So you can start by focusing on the snare drum, since all the way from the edge into the center you have a great variety of sounds. Start by finding where your snare sounds the best for you. Take a sharpie and draw a circle on that spot; or if you don’t want to use a pen on your drum skin, you have other options like duck tape or electrical tape. Watch yourself play as you try striking that area of your drum. Start slow and work your way up. Eventually, if you continue doing this for long enough time, your arm will always find a way to come back to the same position. Try listening closely to the sound that comes from your snare because you will definitely be able to listen to the differences between hits.

Improving One Handed 16th Note Grooves Speed
Schroeder learned the technique he uses for playing one handed 16th note grooves on the hi-hat, like on the play-along “Ever Done Before” by Sterr, from a drummer named Bryan “Brain” Mantia. Bryan called it the shank-tip method, which is actually like Moeller. When you make a stroke with on your hi-hat you use the shank of the stick on the edge of the cymbals. When you lift the stick up, you add an extra hit with the tip of your stick. His wrists are just moving up and down, and with every up or down movement there is a stroke. You have to practice this regularly and preferably to a click track, so you can get consistent with it. Remember that speed comes with consistency and diligent practice.

Writing Drum Parts
As far as writing drum parts for Sterr and all the other stuff he has done, Schroeder tries listening for syncopation on the other instruments, to be able to complement that with his drum parts. “New Millennium Cyanide Christ” from Meshugga is a good example of complementing syncopated guitar parts with the drums. Try to surround yourself with musicians that challenge you as a drummer. Push your band members to always improve themselves as players. Even us as drummers are never done learning; there is so much to learn and improve, even the top drummers are always improving and learning new stuff. Try learning and listening to new styles of music, it can help you to keep inspired and to get new ideas.

Drum Set Set-Up
For Schroeder, the positioning of every instrument on his drum kit is based on his snare drum. This drum has to be in a very comfortable position, one that enables the performance of a full Moeller stroke without hitting the leg. From there, his toms sit 2 to 3 inches above the snare, angling towards him. There are some drummers that play traditional grip and angle their toms away from them; which for some reason works well for them.

This type of positioning used by Schroeder enables the stick to hit the drums in the most parallel angle possible without hitting the rim. This works for the floor toms as well; Schroeder leans them towards him and positions them close enough to make minimum movement.
FreeDrumLessons.com Live Broadcast

Polyrhythm Drum Beat Ideas by Schroeder

1) Mute Math "Typical" - Intro (Original Version)

2) Mute Math "Typical" - Intro (Schroeder's Version)

3) Red Hot Chili Peppers "Ready Made"
4) Ten Dollar Thompson "A Thousand Eyes"

5) Meshuggah "New Millennium Cyanide Christ" - Verse

6) Meshuggah "New Millennium Cyanide Christ" - Outro
7) Independence Between Hands and Feet

RH  RF  RH  RF  LH  LF  LH  LF ...

8) Increase Left Foot Strength