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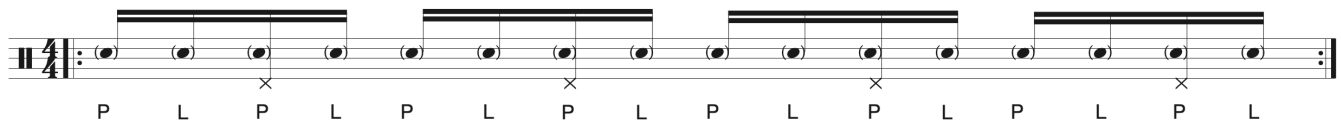
“Creative improvisation with single strokes”

When it comes to improvisation I feel there's no one proper way to explain, teach or learn it. It's strongly connected with how the artist feels at certain moment so it's very personal. The most frequent problem is that we lack tools to express our ideas. You may think that we need some complicated patterns and phrasing to make the improvisation sound mature and interesting but in fact with just simple tools we can do a lot!

In this lesson I'm gonna show you how to improvise and express ideas using just single strokes, so the very basic rudiment that you've learned during the first drum lesson ever! It's also very often the base of my improvisation that I develop and build other things on top.

Let's start with the very basic single strokes pattern played on the snare drum in 16th notes. We add the left foot playing on the hi hat on every "and". Try to feel comfortable here and care about an even sound of all the notes.

EXAMPLE 1 (0:00)



The next step is to play the same basic singles pattern in 16th notes where the left hand stays on the snare drum but the right one jumps in between the snare and the ride. Play everything softly but precisely at the same time - treat all the notes as ghost notes. Notice that the hi hat and the ride together create an 8th note rhythm.

Start with a comfortable tempo, for me it's around 85 bpm.

EXAMPLE 2 (0:26)



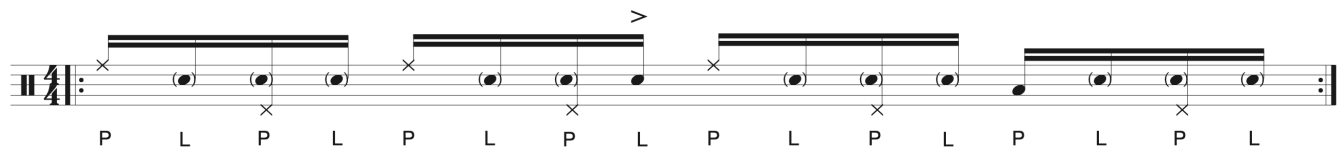
We've just created the base that we're going to develop by placing certain notes on different instruments from the whole kit and adding bass drum. Before that however let's prepare for operating with dynamics. We come back to the first example for a while and add two accents on certain notes on just the snare drum - coming on "a of two" and "four".

EXAMPLE 3 (0:55)



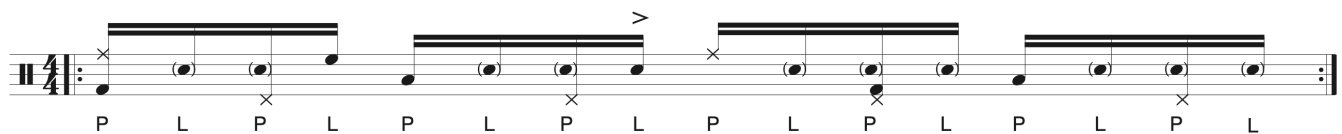
Let's place these accents within the rhythm from the second example. The first accent stays on the snare but the one coming on "four" will be played on the floor tom which gives us another sound. Feel free to use different orchestration if you wish. If you want to stay on the ride all the time, make sure you accent the fourth beat for example on the bell of the ride.

EXAMPLE 4 (1:23)



Let's develop that beat even more - orchestrate more notes on the kit and add some more bass drum just like in the example below. See that I still use only singles here.

EXAMPLE 5 (1:51)

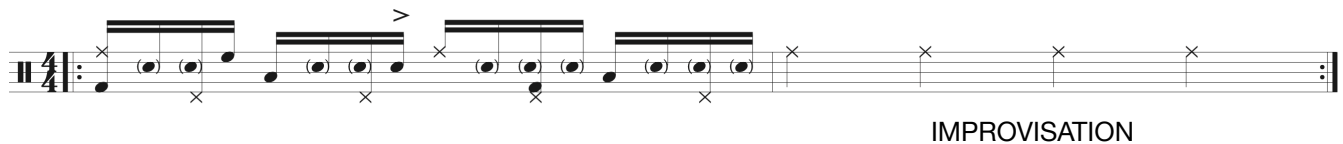


Take a look at the video part where I go step by step from the basic singles to the final beat that we've played.

Example 6 (2:19)

The final part of this lesson is improvisation! The idea here is to build a phrase where you alternate one bar of the beat and one bar of the improvisation based on the **single strokes**. In the video that phrase has four bars because every fourth bar I leave space for your improvisation, so we kinda trade solos in these spaces! Feel free to play along with the video!

EXAMPLE 7 (2:40)



It may seem that using just singles may be very boring and that we can't create anything interesting. But in fact it's exactly the opposite - try to be creative and operate more with a wide spectrum of dynamics, use all the instruments you have in the kit (also in very creative way sound wise). Create musical rhythms based on accents and sounds! Let's make all these tools boost our creativity!

WEEKLY CHALLENGES

WEEK 1

Try to think of your own rhythm that is going to be the base for your improvisation (in other words change EXAMPLE 5). Then try to think of another two examples that are going to be unique!

WEEK 2

Record yourself improvising using the concept from this monthly lesson. Listen back and try to look at it from a different perspective - as an audience that listens to the drum show. Is it interesting for you? When you hear great moments (but also those poor ones) try to remember how you felt when playing it. Make notes, draw conclusions and attempt to record again. The goal in this challenge is to notice the improvement (if there's no improvement, repeat the process again and again).

Recording yourself is extremely important for effective practicing and working on your craft. Since it's so easy nowadays let's just take advantage from it and introduce it in the daily practice routine!

Feel free to send me your thoughts or specific examples and concerns.

WEEK 3

Repeat all the steps from this lesson but changing only one thing - instead of playing singles use paradiddle (RLRR LRLL). Then it may come out that the accents and orchestrations are very hard to play the same way as in the singles version - then try to invent your own rhythms.

This kind of exercise and keeping yourself within a certain concept will surely develop your skills and allow you to freely express your thoughts in more complicated ways.

WEEK 4

Try to introduce improvisation to your daily playing and develop the concept from this lesson by allowing more rudiments and patterns. Now you're free from thinking just about singles, so you may use doubles, paradiddles, six stroke roll, flams, five stroke roll and all the nice things that are there for you to help express your ideas more precisely. However keep it simple, don't try to use all these rudiments at once! Keep the base of the improvisation still as singles, but this time don't feel limited by the concept from this lesson.

Give yourself time and don't rush things - not every day is a good day to improvise! However try to feel more and more confident in how you express your ideas on the kit. There are no limits, everything may mean something, even a mistake may be artistically correct. Care a lot about the sound and precision. It's not only about what is being played, but also how it's expressed.



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