Table of Contents

Part One
Building Your
Funky Beat

Building Your Funky Beat

When I first heard David Garibaldi's groove to "The Oakland Stroke" by Tower of Power, or the unique feel and pattern Zigaboo Modeliste created and laid down for the song "Cissy Strut" by The Meters, I had to ask myself: How did these guys come up with these ideas? I would often analyze many great funky drummers. I realized most of their ideas came from three areas or concepts in creating beats that I would like to share with you. Hopefully you can use these ideas to create your own beat, and to help develop your own sound and style.

Three concepts for developing a funky beat:
1. Broken 16th-note patterns
2. Paradiddle sticking patterns
3. Linear sticking patterns

Lets take a look at each area in detail.

Broken 16th-Note Patterns

If we look at all the possibilities and variations of playing one, two, three, or four 16th notes to equal the value of one quarter note, we would have a total of 15 different rhythms (see example A). This is what I call the Rhythm Alphabet in 16th notes.

Example A: Rhythm Alphabet in 16th notes

When we look at a basic beat in this style, the bass drum and the snare are like the floor and walls of the groove. When we add the ride, hi-hat, cowbell, or crash cymbal, that's like the color of paint to the existing walls, or the choice of hardwood or carpeting to the floors.

If we take each of the 15 rhythms and create all the possibilities of voicing them between the bass drum and snare, we have a total of 80 combinations (see example B). With this type of vocabulary, there are endless options for creating beats.

Example B: Voicing possibilities, snare drum & bass drum