

Five Ways To Play Like Dave Grohl

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Since coming to fame as the drummer for Nirvana, Dave Grohl has remained one of the most influential musicians in rock and roll. Although he's best known today as a singer, guitarist, and songwriter thanks to his band the Foo Fighters, Grohl is still an outstanding drummer. His simple, hard hitting style has made him one of the best respected drummers in rock and roll.

#1. Hit the drums like you mean it!

Find a video of Grohl and you'll quickly notice that he only knows one way to play: LOUD! There's no doubt that hitting the drums hard is a defining factor of Grohl's style.

#2. Bucket of Fish

One of the staples of Grohl's drumming is the classic 'bucket of fish' lick. Named after its sound, this is a classic lick that can be used in many different ways.

Grohl He uses it several ways. First, as a tight ruff between the toms and ending on the bass. The first and second examples below demonstrate different three and four note variations. Grohl uses this riff frequently to punctuate and end phrases, so be sure the bass drum note lands in time.

He also plays it with an open, defined triplet rhythm. When playing it this way he occasionally reverses the lick to end on the snare. See examples three and four below. Grohl uses this variation of the lick throughout "A Song for the Dead" from *Songs for the Deaf* by Queens of the Stone Age.

Example 1 – bucket of fish



#3. Snare and bass drum interplay

Another trademark of Grohl's playing is tasty patterns between the snare and bass. During the chorus of "A Song for the Dead" by Queens of The Stone Age he uses a simple three note pattern against a steady eighth note cymbal pulse to switch from single to double time.

Example 2 - "A Song for the Dead", Queens of the Stone Age, *Songs for the Deaf*



Grohl uses the same pattern again in the bridge of "Bandoliers" from Them Crooked Vultures eponymous debut. It compliments the syncopated guitar riff and John Paul Jones' synthesizer melody.

Example 3 - "Bandoliers", Them Crooked Vultures, *Them Crooked Vultures*





#4. Play across the bar line

Like the bucket of fish lick, playing straight time across the odd time signatures is another classic drummer trick that Grohl uses to great effect.

In "New Fang" from *Them Crooked Vultures*, he plays a simple two beat pattern across a repeating ostinato of 4/4 and 7/8. One repetition shifts the snare to the downbeat. After a second repetition the pattern is reset.

Example 4 - "New Fang", Them Crooked Vultures, Them Crooked Vultures



In the bridge of "Hangin' Tree" from *Songs for the Deaf* Grohl plays straight across 5/4. This clever device creates rhythmic tension while driving the song forward.

Example 5 - "Hangin' Tree", Queens of the Stone Age, Songs for the Deaf



#5. Learn another instrument

Dave Grohl is a very rare musician to have switched bands *and* instruments successfully. As a drummer however, a large part of his brilliance can be attributed to a sharp awareness of his role. There is no doubt his familiarity with other instruments and musicians guides everything he plays.

Take the time to learn to play another instrument. Understanding harmony, and melody will make you a more informed drummer.

Dave Grohl suggested listening:

The Colour and the Shape, Foo Fighters

Probot, Probot

Songs for the Deaf, Queens of the Stone Age

Them Crooked Vultures, Them Crooked Vultures

... Like Clockwork, Queens of the Stone Age

Tenacious D, Tenacious D

The Pick of Destiny, Tenacious D