



Start Your Engines!

Building Confidence with Less Experienced Rhythm Section Players

Mike Kamuf, Clinician, Alfred Music Publishing

We can foster confidence in young rhythm section players by:

- providing the correct gear and encouraging them to purchase the higher quality instruments and accessories
- setting the section up physically so they can communicate with one another
- helping them understand and interpret alternate notation, groove, subdivision, and clarity
- addressing the importance of comping and deference
- encouraging listening!!

Instruments/Gear

- Guitar - hollow-body guitars are preferred - Ibanez Artcore AF75; solid body guitars are great for funk and more contemporary styles; appropriate guitar amp - DV Mark DV12, Roland Cube 60, Poly Tone Mini Brutes, Fender Champion 40
- Piano - acoustic piano is always preferred unless the arranger states otherwise. There are a myriad of good electronic keyboards that can produce appropriate sounds for contemporary tunes; appropriate keyboard - Kurzweil SP series keyboards; appropriate keyboard amp - Roland KC-550
- Bass - the traditional upright bass with a pick up is preferred; Underwood pick-ups are fantastic; electric bass guitars are great for funk and more contemporary styles; Hartke Kickback 12, Gallien-Kruger MB150S, Peavey Max 115

- Drums - a smaller "kit" is preferred for jazz (ex. Gretsch Catalina, Ludwig Breakbeats) - snare drums, 18" bass drum with pedal, one mount tom, floor tom.
- Cymbals should include the hi-hats (14"), one to two crash cymbals (16-18"), one ride cymbal (20-20") and others as desired for different colors (splash 10", china, 18-20", Good cymbals manufacturers - Zildjian, Paiste, Sabian. Other quality brands - Istanbul, Bosphorus, Meinl. If you're in the market for cymbals, check out the YouTube videos from Memphis Drum Shop.
- Aux Percussion/Vibes - if there are ample and able players, congas can add a driving pulse to a groove; Aux. parts should never overpower the rhythm section. LP (Latin Percussion) is the "go-to" manufacturer of aux. percussion/toys.

Set-Up

- Traditional set up allows for players to use eye contact to communicate. Amps should be a couple of feet behind the guitarist and bassist and should be off set so the players are not directly in front of the speaker.

Notation Concerns

- Rhythmic Notation - flat or diamond shaped note heads outlining the rhythmic figures desired by the arranger
- Slash Notation - the groove continues - keep groovin'!!!!
- Normal Notation
- Shortcuts in professional level writing

Working As A Team

(from the introduction to the Alfred text *Rhythm Section Workshop*)

- Groove - creating constant energy channeled into subdivision
- Subdivision - breaking down the pulse into a smaller portion
- Clarity
- Deference - a player yielding (or deferring) to someone else by leaving space in his or her own part
- Time - everyone's responsibility
- Comping - accompanying, composing & complementing
- Listen - to the masters and to your ensemble!

Approaching Different Styles/Grooves

- Swing - cornerstone of jazz, continues to evolve today, characterized by a triplet subdivision of the beat and a continual propulsion (forward momentum) derived from a subtle stress of beats 2 & 4.
- Bossa Nova - emanated from Brazil and immigrated to American jazz in the 1960s, Jobim was the godfather of bossa nova. Bossa feel relies on straight eighth note subdivision and a chordal accompaniment known as partido alto, should be flowing and peaceful
- Rock - offshoot of rhythm and blues, replaced swing as the dance music of choice, implies a straight eighth note subdivision, relies on a solid backbeat (a pronounced emphasis on beats 2 and 4) in the drums and pattern repetition in all of the other instruments.

Resources

- Rhythm Section Workshop For Jazz Directors (Shelly Berg, Lou Fisher, Fred Hamilton & Steve Houghton)
- Piano: Jazz Piano Handbook by Michelle Weir, Playing Jazz Piano by Bob Mintzer, Jazz Keyboard Toolbox by Bill Cunliffe; The Jazz Pianist by Fred Hughes
- Guitar: Jazz Guitar Harmony by Jody Fisher
- Bass: Bass: The Total Jazz Bassist by David Overthrow & Tim Ferguson
- Drums: Big Band Drumming at First Sight & Big Band Drumming Philosophy by Steve Fidyk