

Getting Your Best Groove On  
Bass & Rhythm Section – (A Lifelong Journey in 50 minutes!)  
*It Don't mean A Thing, If It Ain't Got that Swing!*

**Bass Role**

1. *Swing and groove – see below*
  2. Responsible for keeping a steady pulse (an extension of the drums)
  3. Expand and outline the harmony
  4. Lock up with fellow rhythm section mates, band, soloists
- ❖ Create a Big sound/tone
  - ❖ Dig in. This is where *groove* comes from
  - ❖ Pull strings downward, low on board but not below board. Find sweet spot on board
  - ❖ Use “meat” of side of finger R.H. – ‘click’ sound production
  - ❖ Strong L.H. Curl/claw
  - ❖ Make electric sound like acoustic
  - ❖ Low volume on amps
  - ❖ No tuba sound except if you are playing ‘traditional’ jazz
  - ❖ Create smooth bass lines, not too busy
  - ❖ Long connected quarter notes, not too busy

**LISTEN**

- ❖ To each other in rhythm section
- ❖ To what you are doing – interactive
- ❖ To lead players in group
- ❖ To soloist(s)
- ❖ To professional musicians – Live and recordings - *EMULATE*

**LOOK**

- ❖ Get your head (eyes) out of the music
- ❖ Conductor/soloist(s)/ensemble/ at each other rhythm section

**READING THE PAPER (CHART)**

- ❖ Dialogue with soloist(s) or ensemble
- ❖ Play what's on the paper
- ❖ Play what's not on the paper! (interpretation, look at lead trumpet/alto/conductor score for kicks...)

**TIME...What is it and why does the bassist/R.S. get blamed?!**

- ❖ *Everyone* in group should ‘feel’ time – it is not one section/person's responsibility...
- ❖ Styles - Swing, swing, swing...bebop/hard bop/Latin styles (oh, so many!) funk...
- ❖ Playing ‘behind the beat/laid back’ ‘flat on the beat’ ‘ahead of the beat/on top’
- ❖ The “2 Feel”
- ❖ DIG IN...
- ❖ Listen to recordings

SET UP... in relation to each other and the ensemble

- ❖ Line of sight – eye contact
- ❖ Proximity – close to ensemble
- ❖ Aural clarity – hear yourself, and all members of ensemble
- ❖ Don't stand/sit in front of your amp

GOOD EQUIPMENT - TOOLS

- ❖ *Your job* to take care of/clean/fix...
- ❖ *Your job* to get the Right Sound, not necessarily volume (strings, amps, sticks...)
- ❖ YOU are your best equipment, be strong to play strong.
- ❖ Practice smart. Build muscles. Playing the bass is physical. Practice

**BIG BAND VERSUS COMBO**

- ❖ More similarities than differences
- ❖ Know the chart. Arranged vs lead sheet
- ❖ Respect styles
- ❖ Rhythm section literally plays consistently for entire chart. *Improvisation*
- ❖ Communicate with soloists. Generate energy and excitement with soloists
- ❖ *Don't get in the way*
- ❖ Lock in with fellow rhythm section mates
- ❖ Combo within large group
- ❖ Be a bassist, not too busy!

“RELATIONSHIPS”

- ❖ Bass & drums - drive band
- ❖ Walking lines - match with ride cymbal and high hat
- ❖ Funky grooves - match kick

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Underwood pickup  
GK – Gallien-Krueger amps/combos  
Strings – Thomastik Spirocore (sometimes Weich) Pirastro Jazzer...

Books – Rufus Reid *The Evolving Bassist*, Ray Brown, F. Simandl...  
BOOKS/VIDEOS/PLAY ALONGS. Too many to write down...

*Now go out and listen, practice, play and enjoy music!*