

# Getting Your Rhythm Section to Play in Style

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Iowa Bandmasters Association Conference – May 10 – May 12, 2018

## 1. Set – Up

- Make sure that everyone can see each other. Eye contact is needed for communication.
- Make sure the section is in close proximity to one another and the rest of the band.
- Each rhythm section member should be able to hear themselves and the band clearly.



## 2. Jazz Timbres

- **Piano:** A real tuned instrument is always the dream. **Keyboard/Synthesizer:** Select one with a weighted keyboard. Then choose an acoustic piano sound. Here is a link for some excellent keyboards: <https://acousticbridge.com/best-portable-keyboard-reviews/> **FREE**
- **Guitar:** A good jazz sound is made using a percussive “dry” stroke or “chunk”. Part of creating a successful chunk requires the ability to mute certain strings while the desired notes ring. **FREE Swing** - <https://youtu.be/KqtbFg0RNI0>; **Brazilian /Afro-Cuban/Funk** - <https://youtu.be/87wrNIqB2Wc> The guitar should be FELT, almost more than HEARD.
- **Bass:** To swing, a good jazz sound comes from pulling the string just right in order to sustain each note (tenuto) so it flows seamlessly into the next. Short notes in swing and other jazz styles should have a clear musical purpose. **Amp set-up** <https://youtu.be/xMWSw8A3sqQ> **FREE Acoustic Bass set-up & technique** - [https://youtu.be/aJyeBx2b\\_gM](https://youtu.be/aJyeBx2b_gM) and [https://youtu.be/aJyeBx2b\\_gM](https://youtu.be/aJyeBx2b_gM). **Electric Bass technique** - <https://youtu.be/VJsnE14zpY8>, <https://youtu.be/wsKrMtAPTd0>. **Walking on Electric Bass** - <https://youtu.be/GoC04ko-r5A>
- **Drum Set:** An acoustic jazz sound comes from using open tuning and white-coat heads on the drums. It lets the instrument resonate and blend with other acoustic instruments. The cymbals should be medium or light in weight and have warm, somewhat dark overtones. Bass drum beater ball should be felt. I prefer a lower pitched tuning, especially for Big Band, in Perfect 4ths “ish” intervals - Here are a number of tuning opinions: **FREE** <https://www.moderndrummer.com/2013/07/md-education-team-weighs-in-on-tuning/>

### 3. What is Everyone Supposed to Do? & Who is the Section Leader?

#### A. The Drummer

- Identify and Establish the Groove (time, tempo, phrasing ) and Style
- Primary time keeper and “driver of the bus”
- Controls the dynamics of the band
- Kick the band (set up figures)
- Support and respond to the soloist
- Solidify the groove and create musical magic with section mates

#### B. The Bass Player

- Identify and Establish the Groove and Style
- Keep a steady pulse in sync with the drums
- Outline the harmony
- Solidify the groove and create musical magic with section mates

#### C. The Pianist

- Identify and Establish the Groove and Style
- Outline the harmony
- Create rhythmically supportive accompaniment (“Spark”) for the band (comping)
- Support and respond to the soloist (comping)
- Solidify the groove and create musical magic with section mates

#### D. The Guitarist

- Identify and Establish the Groove and Style
- Outline the harmony
- Lock-in the “time” between the bass and drums
- Create rhythmically supportive accompaniment for the band (straight rhythm or comping)
- Support and respond to the soloist (comping)
- Solidify the groove and create musical magic with section mates

#### E. Resources

- *Rhythm Section Workshop for Jazz Directors*, Preview and Purchase info for Full Book <https://books.google.com/books?id=VqvCiTbPk8QC&lpg=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- *Groove Essentials* – Drummers (**FREE** video) <http://vicfirth.com/tommy-igoe-groove-essentials/>
- *Big Band Bass* by John Clayton, Book Preview and Purchase info for Full Book <https://books.google.com/books?id=6OfboivSTcEC&lpg=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- *Bass Lessons* with Christian McBride: <https://www.openstudio.network.com/project/fjb-overview/>
- *Jazz Keyboard Harmony* by Phil DeGreg: <http://jazzbooks.com/jazz/product/JKH>
- **FREE** online: <https://docslide.us/documents/phil-de-greg-jazz-keyboard-harmony-aegersoldpdf.html>
- *Piano Lessons* with Mike Hartigan **FREE** Jazz <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShBwjMPbVH4> and Latin <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sG6RI7aYVQ>
- *Beginner's Guide to Jazz Guitar* **FREE** PDF: [http://www.jazzguitar.be/ebooks/The\\_Beginners\\_Guide\\_To\\_Jazz\\_Guitar.pdf](http://www.jazzguitar.be/ebooks/The_Beginners_Guide_To_Jazz_Guitar.pdf)
- *Jazz Handbook* by Jamey Abersold. **FREE** PDF: <https://www.jazzbooks.com/mm5/download/FQBK-handbook.pdf>

## 4. Four Essential - Basic Styles

Here are 4 general categories of “STYLE” rhythm sections must be able to identify and execute

- **Swing** – Dixieland, Swing, Be-Bop & Beyond
- **Brazilian** – Bossa Nova, Samba, Baiiao, etc.
- **Afro-Cuban** – Cha Cha, Mambo, Salsa, Songo, etc.
- **Rock** - Funk, R & B & other popular music genres

The written parts for the rhythm section should be used as a guide. They should not be read literally like concert band music, especially the drum set part. While the written piano, bass and guitar parts are certainly helpful (especially for young bands) the “thing” that makes rhythm sections groove is their creative responses to each other, the band and the soloists. In other words, the elements of music you can’t notate. Of course there are written parts that must be adhered to within the ensemble, but encourage your students to use their ears, emotions and creativity as equal and crucial elements to play with style.

Let’s play this basic “F” Blues in the some of the styles/grooves above and identify the musical elements that define the style. There is space on page 4 for your notes.

The image shows three staves of musical notation for a blues progression in 4/4 time. Each staff contains four measures of music, represented by diagonal slashes. Above and below the staves are chord symbols and Roman numerals.

Staff 1: F7, Bb7, F7, I7, IV7, I7

Staff 2: Bb7, F7, IV7, I7

Staff 3: G7, C7, F7, C7, II7, V7, I7, V7

### Resources:

*Jazz Style Periods* by Sharp, Snyder & Hischke, pub. Kendall/Hu

**FREE** Pdf: <http://lmsmusic.org/jazzdialogue/JAZZ%20STYLE%20PERIODS.pdf>

*Essential Elements for Jazz Ensemble* by Mike Steinel

<https://www.halleonard.com/dealers/bin/PromoBandOrchestraEejazzsampler.pdf>

*It's All About the Rhythm Section* by Jerry Tolson **FREE**

<https://www.midwestclinic.org/downloads.aspx?type=clinic&src=077ed78c...pdf>

*Latin Rhythms Unraveled* by Victor Lopez **FREE**

Free PDF: [https://www.midwestclinic.org/user\\_files\\_1/pdfs/clinicianmaterials/2005/victor\\_lopez.pdf](https://www.midwestclinic.org/user_files_1/pdfs/clinicianmaterials/2005/victor_lopez.pdf)

## 5. Defining Factors of Musical Style for the Rhythm Section

Clinic Notes...

### A. Swing

Drums \_\_\_\_\_

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Bass \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Piano \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Guitar \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### B. Brazilian

Drums \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Bass \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Piano \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Guitar \_\_\_\_\_

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### C. Afro-Cuban

Drums \_\_\_\_\_

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Bass \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Piano \_\_\_\_\_

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Guitar \_\_\_\_\_

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### D. Rock & Funk

Drums \_\_\_\_\_

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Bass \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Piano \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Guitar \_\_\_\_\_

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