

A Place To Stick Your Bass Drum

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Well, finally after about 2 years of saying I'm going to do something on this page here, I'm doing something!

I took a year off (kinda) playing the side and played the bass drum, and to tell you the truth, I quite liked it. In fact there were times when I managed to really get into it. However, lugging that bad boy around and trying to fit it in the tiny toyota tercel 2-door slightly put a damper on the experience. None the less, I learned a number of invaluable things.

#1: The key function of the bass drummer is to lay down the tempo.

Now you're thinking, well no kidding, that was obvious. The thing I found was that it may be obvious but it's very hard to do. Or should I say, very hard to do correctly. And by correctly I mean with finesse and grace and panache.

Not everyone in the band has metronome timing and therefore can have a tendency to wander from the beat. As the bass drummer, its your responsibility to keep them on schedule for finishing the tune(s).

There will also be times when the two corps (pipe and side) will be fighting for a tempo and it is the bass' duty to step in with the mediated or correct tempo.

#2: Another function of the bass drummer is to be more felt than heard.

This one is a little more difficult to comprehend. From my experience (playing and listening to others), the tone of the bass drum is soooo important. To use the metaphor Hoss used, the bass drum should be an umbrella of sound that encompasses the band.

Imagine if you will, that black, lowered pickup truck that drives down the street with its new chrome mags and tinted windows. And of course its blaring some rap/techno music but all that is audible to the rest of the world is that wonderful deep hum of the subwoofer. THAT is what the goal is. That is where its at. A nice, rich and full sound that is undescrivable but only as a feeling.

If the bass drummer can relay to the pipers and drummers the tempo and groove of the tune through strictly allowing them to feel the the beat, then they have no excuse not to follow it.

#3: Be groovy!

Once you have established a bass line and the rest of the band is comfortable with it AND you have perfected the concept of blending tone off the drum THEN (and only then) is it safe to venture into the realm of groove.

Now unfortunately I can't tell you how to do this. Everyone does this a different way and everyone has their own ideas as to what groove is. Take a peak at the groove article in the side drum section for a hint. I can only really say that groove is the music which is talking from the soul through the hands and feet and heart. Groove is strictly a feeling and that is that.

Listen to some Red Hot Chilli Peppers or Maceo Parker. Or for those with a little quieter tastes check out some Paul Simon (Graceland or Rhythm of the Saints) or maybe some Sting. Groove

can be found anywhere and everywhere. Try listening to the sound of the car going over the seams of a long bridge (keeping the speed constant of course). Groove is where you want to find it. It could be a conversation that you'll have tomorrow if you listen hard enough.

If you still need more things find groove in, listen to some Strathclyde Police, or 78th Frasers Highlanders, or Boghall and Bathgate... the list goes on.

Source: <http://www.canadianstandard.ca/wtsi/bass>

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