

# Roles of the Instruments



Lesson 3

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# Each Instrument's Responsibility

- Horns
  - The saxophone, trumpet, and trombone (as well as any other single-note instrument, including the human voice) are responsible for playing melodies, both written (the head), and improvised (their individual solos).
- The Rhythm Section
  - The piano, bass, and drums comprise the *rhythm section*; their primary role is to accompany and provide support for the horn players as well as each other; they may also improvise solos.
    - The pianist's primary job is to play chords (the music that accompanies the melodies) in a lively, rhythmic fashion.
      - This is called *comping*
      - Notice how it comes from the word "accompany."

# Each Instrument's Responsibility

- The Rhythm Section (cont.)
  - The pianist's primary job is to play chords
    - The pianist also improvises melodically; when doing this, he/she improvises a melody by playing single notes in the right hand while comping the chords in the left hand (pretty cool.)
  - The Bassist's primary job is to play the roots of the chords and “lay down a great groove;” the bass is the foundation, the bottom, the pulse, the “glue” that keeps everyone together.
  - The drummer's primary job is to keep the beat steady and complement what the soloists (improvisers) are playing; by introducing rhythmic accents and laying down a great groove with the bassist, the drummer adds excitement to the performance.
- Guitar
  - The guitarist is versatile -- he/she can be like a horn player (that is, playing single note melodies), or like a pianist, that is, comping chords.

# Jazz - A Perfect Democracy

- Democracy
  - *Democracy* is a government in which power and responsibility are vested in the people and exercised by them; according to Abraham Lincoln, democracy is a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”
- Democracy and Freedom
  - Although the terms *democracy* and *freedom* are often used interchangeably, they are not the same; democracy is individual freedom but with responsibility to the group.
    - In a democratic society, individuals have the freedom to do whatever they wish as long as it doesn't *interfere* with anyone else.
    - In a perfect democratic society, what the individuals happen to freely choose to do enhances the whole group.
    - If all people freely chose to work hard, not commit crime, be fair, and not discriminate, we would have a perfect democratic society.
      - Unfortunately, not all people think this way
      - Things like greed, people wanting power, and racism get in the way.

# A Jazz Combo as a Society

- A jazz combo is an example of a perfect democracy.
  - Each player has the freedom to play whatever he/she wants.
    - But, at the same time, each player wants to play something that will not only please himself/herself, but make the whole group sound better as well, enhancing the overall sound.
    - Jazz musicians work together on this, supporting each other while not compromising their own artistic individuality.
  - The best jazz bandleaders (e.g., Miles Davis) want their fellow musicians (AKA sidemen) to express themselves the way they want and not just do the bandleader's "bidding."
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    - This is the same for the rhythm section and soloist – the rhythm section players want to support, complement, excite, spur on, interact with, and enhance the soloist; the soloist, in turn, wants to interact with, inspire, and be inspired by the rhythm section.

# A Jazz Combo as a Society

- A jazz combo is an example of a perfect democracy. (cont.)
  - Jazz musicians realize that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.
    - Each individual part is enhanced by the group, i.e., each individual player gets better and comes up with more musical ideas because of the others in the group.
    - Together the musicians can do so much more than they could ever do individually.
    - They need each other to accomplish their individual and collective goals.
    - Jazz musicians realize the music is better because each player is different – it brings something new to the music.
    - If everyone in the band were the same, the music would probably be boring (there wouldn't be much give and take, learning from one another, or enjoyment).
    - In a jazz group, it doesn't matter what color you are or what your ethnicity is; what matters is who you are inside and how you play.

Just imagine how it would be if our society  
worked like a jazz group . . . .