

Understanding Musical Placement

“Feel”

Today’s lesson is all about Rhythm, but not in the way you think.

We are so consumed with “what” something is and “how” to play it (the micro or “local” view) that we rarely ask the question “when” to play something (the global view).

We often want to relegate rhythm to being how something is played in time or against the beat, but rhythm is bigger than that. It is the sense of a song, or the motion of it. It is the reason why you don’t sing 5 verses back-to-back, but rather interject a chorus or bridge between these verses: It’s because the rhythm of the song demanded it.

Now before I begin, I want to say that this is a topic that I’ve been thinking about and studying for a while but is still a work in progress. I am working through every area of this because I’m trying to create a Codified Framework for this idea. So, me sharing this with you is helping me perfect this idea. Also, I want you to understand that the ideas presented here are not a “you-have-to-do-it-this-way”, but rather a way to understand and think about music.

3 Quick Disclaimers

1. I’ve wrestled with presenting this idea, because I’m trying to create a framework for music, and music does not fit in a box. So, I’ve been adjusting and re-thinking everything, and determining that the framework is constantly changing, moment-by-moment, and has to be re-evaluated always. Especially in live music.
2. Remember this is Music Theory not Music Truth.
3. But before we go on let me share this trump card. With all of that said, when I’m playing, I’m often praying, “God what do You want me to play” and I’m really just trying to hear from Him. And often I find myself playing stuff and only after I’m playing it do I realize what I played, and I’ll often find myself saying, “Wow, that was the perfect thing to play at the perfect time”

The Framework

So I have identified two main considerations in codifying musical placement or feel:

1) Establish the Baseline

This idea is establishing the uniqueness, musical fingerprint, style, harmonic rhythm, harmonic choices, or “sound” of what was played previously.

2) Axes of Placement

- Timing - in the Phrase and Against the Beat and High Leverage Moments
- Musical Effect
 - Sub-Axes
 - Loud/Quiet
 - High/Low
 - Fast/Slow
 - Left/Right
 - Thick/Thin
 - Dense/Sparse
 - Up/Down
 - Falling/Rising
 - Long/Short
 - Far Away/Close
 - Propel / suspend / end
 - ...Many More
- Length – The length of the musical idea you are trying to add.
- Level of Consonance / Dissonance
 - Harmonic Dissonance
 - Rhythmic Dissonance
 - In relation to the tone of the piece

Reference Links from Live-Training

Mike Bereal - <https://youtu.be/Frxe6GHmIO0>

Justin Savage - <https://youtu.be/hXxdeemwPKA>

Loren Dawson - <https://youtu.be/nikDDbkLSMM>