

RUNNING EFFECTIVE REHEARSALS

Planning The Rehearsal

1) Be prepared - it is an essential key to leading successfully.

- a) Know what you want to achieve** in the rehearsal. Have *correct music charts ready and enough copies* for everyone.
- b) Prepare the venue**. Have all the musos got their equipment set up and ready ? Is the soundman ready ? Does he have the sound system ready ?
- c) Make sure you have worked through what you are going to do yourself** so that you can successfully and confidently lead them in the rehearsal.

2) You must know clearly the purpose of the rehearsal

The content of the *rehearsal should be determined by the purpose and function of the worship team*. If the worship team are to lead others into God's presence (as they should be doing), then they will pray, worship, flow in the Spirit (prophecy on their instruments) as well as rehearse the chorues they play regularly working on rhythm, intros, endings, accents, dynamics and phrasing . You should be aiming not only to develop them in their craft to a place of excellence but to see them develop more and more as leaders in worship.

3) When learning new songs, make sure you have worked out the song enough to then be able to work with the other musicians.

It is a good idea to first establish the feel of the song with bass and drums then add the rest of the band. Remember that it is not always necessary to copy a song from CD. Sometimes you may be able to improve on the arrangement heard on some songs.

4) Practise various chord progressions having the band improvise over them.

This will not only develop their ear but open up many possibilities for God to move through your musicians in times of "spontaneous" worship. However, before you do this, it is important that you teach them theory so that they are aware of what scales or patterns are available to them when playing over certain progressions.

5) Everyone should be at the rehearsal

It is very important that every person in the band is at the rehearsal. It is very difficult to

achieve what you hope to achieve if any person is absent, especially a member of the rhythm section or if you are rehearsing the brass separately, one of the section players.

Working With The Band

i) **Charts** – make sure you *give your musicians clear charts to read*. *Apart from* when you're *teaching new songs*, it is good if you can *get your team into the habit of playing by ear*.

This is important especially when your changing quickly from song to song. It also helps you to interpret the songs with more feeling. Too many a time musicians who play with their heads buried in the music have a sterile sound to their playing and quite often miss important signals etc.

For your *frontline instruments* such as woodwinds, brass, lead guitar etc. it is best if you can *have written charts for them*. Leaving them to their own devices is dangerous and all of them playing melody is very boring. It is a good idea to write them in at the end of vocal phrases or to accent certain parts.

ii) **Drums and Bass** – these are the *foundation of the band*. They must be located in close proximity with each other.

Before you start each song, *establish what type of feel the song has* and what the kick drum and bass guitar will be playing. If you have a chorus manual with all the choruses that you sing regularly, it is a good idea to gradually go through the manual and write down next to each song a basic drums and bass pattern for each song and the type of feel you are after. This becomes a ready reference when you go to do the song each time. If you don't know how to write a bass or drum chart, list a song track from a CD that has the same sort of feel you are after. Try and get your bass player to start thinking of patterns for each song. In other words, setting up a groove on say three or four note patterns when you aren't moving quickly from chord to chord. eg. In the song "All Honour", here is the type of patterns the bass would play over the first few bars. Notice it is corresponding to the bass drum (kick) pattern in the drums chart.

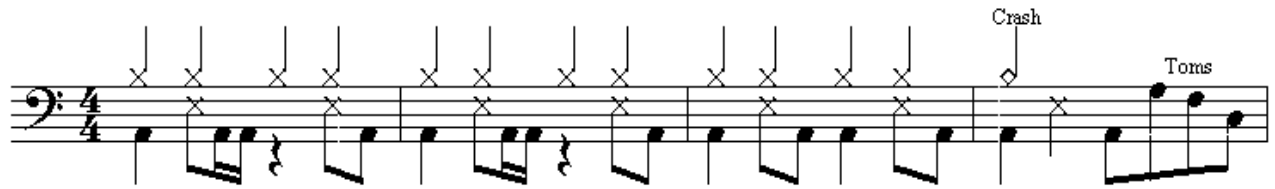
ALL HONOUR

BASS

The image shows a bass line for the song "All Honour" in 4/4 time. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The bass line consists of the following notes and rests across seven measures:

- Measure 1: Dm chord. Notes: D2 (quarter), F2 (quarter), G2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), Bb2 (quarter), C3 (quarter), D3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), Bb3 (quarter), C4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
- Measure 2: Bb chord. Notes: Bb2 (quarter), D3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), Bb3 (quarter), C4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), Ab4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter).
- Measure 3: Gm chord. Notes: G2 (quarter), Bb2 (quarter), D3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), Ab3 (quarter), Bb3 (quarter), C4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), Ab4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter).
- Measure 4: Am chord. Notes: A2 (quarter), C3 (quarter), D3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), Ab3 (quarter), Bb3 (quarter), C4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), Ab4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter).
- Measure 5: Dm chord. Notes: D2 (quarter), F2 (quarter), G2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), Bb2 (quarter), C3 (quarter), D3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), Ab3 (quarter), Bb3 (quarter), C4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
- Measure 6: Bb chord. Notes: Bb2 (quarter), D3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), Ab3 (quarter), Bb3 (quarter), C4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
- Measure 7: C chord. Notes: C2 (quarter), D2 (quarter), E2 (quarter), F2 (quarter), G2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), Bb2 (quarter), C3 (quarter), D3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), Ab3 (quarter), Bb3 (quarter), C4 (quarter).

DRUMS



REMEMBER: *If bass and drums are tight the rest of the band will fit in without much trouble.*

The hardest thing for many worship drummers and bass players is to keep a pattern going for a whole verse or more without changing the pattern somewhat and thereby confusing each other with what they are doing.

Try and get your drummer and bass player to keep things simple without trying to get too sophisticated. It is better to have a simple tight sound than a technically impressive, but loose sound.

The drummer in a worship band is so important that if he plays correctly the other instruments can make some mistakes and the song and performance will still survive. However, no matter how good the other musicians are, if the drummer plays poorly, you cannot save the song

iii) **Guitar and Keys** – once you have established the style of the song you must work out what the piano, keyboards and guitar will be doing. **Keep parts simple with complementing rhythms and contrast in sounds** ie. If using keys, you wouldn't have two piano sounds together. You would possibly use an electric piano sound or a synth brass sound (especially if you want to reinforce what the brass section are doing) or if a ballad, then a pad sound (strings).

Depending on the style of the song it is sometimes good to have the rhythm guitar accent on the offbeat ie. 2nd and 4th beats (especially if the song has a Reggae feel). This helps to accentuate what the snare drum is doing.

Always be aware of the type of song and whether it lends itself more to a solid rhythm from guitar or from keys. If you want to achieve a drive rock sound by using distorted guitar, then the keys would back off and play underneath the guitar.

Also, don't be afraid to shift away from always using piano for intros and if you are using a synth with different sounds try certain organ sounds or synth effects to add certain colour to songs.

Points To Remember With The Band

The following points are very important, not only for the worship service, but in your rehearsals:

a) ***Make sure you can see each member of the band and they are able to see each other.***

This is especially important if the drummer is bringing the band in or bringing the final accents at the end of a song. It is amazing how much better you can play together as a unit when you are physically located in a position to see each other.

b) If you have a song with a number of ***accents or certain dynamics, every player should play them***, with the possible exception of the drummer whom you may wish to stay playing straight time.

c) ***Don't overplay.*** Impress upon the band the ***importance of keeping things simple and leaving plenty of space*** so that you have somewhere you can take the music.

It is probably best to work out in your rehearsals who is going to fill some of the spaces and where. This saves the confusion of the guitarist or vocalist for instance, doing one of their favourite lines in the spot where you propose to have some brass phrasing. **Make sure the team sees the importance of listening to each other.**

d) ***Work on intros, bridges, endings, any musical transitions into the next song and any special accents or phrases.*** Spend time on any trouble spots.

Introductions

You can devise your own special intros such as the start of “Church On Fire”, “Friends In High Places” or “All Things Are Possible” or you can use the last line of the song as an intro. The main thing to remember with intros is that they establish the tempo and the style of the song and they must be played confidentially so everyone has the cue when to come in. Make sure that the count in is correct and that someone is responsible for the count in. This can either be the Chief Musician or the drummer. Think of the tempo of the song before you count in because it is difficult to pull a song back in speed if it is started too fast.

Also, try and look at variety with your introductions, ie. bass and drums starting by themselves or just acoustic guitar or maybe just a synth pad. Let us get out of the mentality that the whole band must always come in together or that the song must be introduced by the piano.

Endings

The important thing with endings is that the band finishes together. The ending can be a sustained chord or a sharp staccato accent. Usually the drummer is the one to lead the rest of the band in on the last note so it is important that you have good sight lines to the drummer. Remember that the ending is the last impression people will have of the song,

so it must be tight.

Musical Transitions Into The Next Song

The importance here is to change from one song to the next as smoothly as possible. To achieve this, it certainly helps if you change to a song in the same key and same underlying meter. Eg. “The Lord Almighty Reigns” changing to “The Lord Reigns”. If you are changing key, use the V chord (also called the Dominant) of the key you’re going to. For example, if you are in the key of C Major and the next song is in the key of G Major, you would use a D chord (Vth of G Major) to get to the new key. The chord you use as your pivot chord to the new key can be any variation of the Vth chord. In other words, it could be a triad chord, a 7th chord, a 9th chord, an 11th chord or a 13th chord. If you are changing to a song which has a different rhythm and tempo, it is best to have the drummer lead you in to the new tempo and rhythm. ***The most important thing*** to remember with musical transitions is **flow**. Try and avoid stop/starts because people will think the time of worship has finished.

Developing Your Musicians

Develop your musicians by giving them some basic theory each week. eg. Intervals, common scales for improvisation, chords built on the major scale, how to read chord charts including various symbols used in charts etc.

Improvisation

- i) Giving your musicians set chord progressions and getting them to improvise over them. It is important that as you do this you also give them some of the basic theory mentioned earlier so that they have some understanding of chord symbols and what scales and scale patterns to play with each chord given.
- ii) Improvisation over familiar choruses. Take a section of a song at a time and have them improvise over the established progression of the song.
- iii) Over common chord progression used in free worship.

With improvisation it is important that your musicians practise scales and scale patterns regularly. It is also good for them to sing the improvised line as they play it. They should be able to get to a place where they can quickly interpret what they hear in their heads.

Ear Training

To develop their ear further you can try the following:

- i) Let your musicians know what key you are in, then play some mystery chords - the other musicians then have to name them.
- ii) One musician plays a simple 2 bar phrase and another musician repeats it then vice versa.
- iii) Get individual players in the brass section to make up their own improvised line over an easy progression or well known song. One person would establish the phrase then the other players play it.
- iv) After giving them an established key, play various intervals and get them to sing the interval then quickly find it on their instrument.

Separate Rehearsals For Your Brass and Rhythm Section

It is always good to try and have separate get togethers for your bass players and drummers. When you practise as a full rhythm section (piano, bass, drums, guitar), it is very hard to sometimes get to the nitty gritty of what the bass and kick drum are doing. I suggest that they get together separately and listen to CDs of great players and work out patterns together for the various choruses or hymns they may be playing. Start off with simple patterns aiming at a tight sound where both bass and kick drum lock into the same patterns. Many drummers try to complicate what they play and don't listen to what the bass player is doing. It is far better to have a simple pattern and have it sounding tight than to complicate and not quite be together. Also teach your drummer to play with dynamics, and if he is only used to playing one style eg. rock, broaden his outlook by getting him to play all different styles and rhythms.

Just as this is important, so too is it good for keyboards and guitar to work out what they will play so that they complement each other. Look at a contrast in range of playing ie. keys playing mid range and guitar high up the neck or guitar playing mid range and keys playing up high. Like bass and drums, you should work on accents, dynamics etc.

If time permits also rehearse your brass section separately and work on such things as phrasing, dynamics, accents etc. Take each phrase at a time, at a slower tempo if necessary, until all parts are sounding together.