

Research Assessment # 11

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Subject: How To Write A Bassline

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Assessment:

For hundreds of years, basses have been used in all sorts of music. Their application can be incredibly diverse, though simple bass lines have supported some of the most moving and impactful music in history. In my experience as a music producer, the use of bass will be absolutely essential in creating pieces that effectively communicate what I am attempting to. Techniques and ideas such as syncopation, jumping octaves, chord inversions and repetition will constantly show up in my music, and their use will contribute to the song as a whole.

First and foremost, the function of the bass is to establish the melodic and harmonic foundation for the entire song (). As the songwriter, it is my job to ensure that the bassline works effectively with the percussion and melodies used in the song. An important aspect of doing this is utilizing silence as a musical tool (). If your bass track is constant, in fact, it will drown out the intended melody of the piece. If the bass is not meant to be the focal point of your song, this can take away from the listener's experience. In fact, it is a common occurrence in music to leave out the bass entirely for a period of time, which ensures that the song is not too repetitive and can accentuate a certain chord movement, lyric or melody.

Along with this, the bass and drums in a song must work together to establish rhythm and create energy. Specifically, syncing your kick drum with bass plucks (playing a bass note) accentuates both elements and creates rhythmic punch (). Utilizing this technique can

accentuate a particular beat or moment, as it adds power to the note through the syncopation of the kick drum. By repeating this phenomenon, a producer can create energy and anticipation around a specific part of the song, such as a build up to a “bass drop” or guitar solo. In the song “Another One Bites The Dust” by the band Queen, the use of syncing bass with drums is especially prevalent, and adds to the listener’s experience throughout. This song is especially “punchy” because of their use of this technique.

Further, a producer can add intrigue to a song through the use of passing notes. Ironically, passing notes aren’t meant to be played in the context of the chord, meaning that they may be out of the key entirely. However, surrounding a passing note with notes that are part of the chord being played avoids the dissonance that comes with notes being out of a key, and adds movement to the song. As an example, in the key of C, B-flat is out of key, though if the bass player were to “sandwich” the B-flat between an A and a B (two notes which are in key), they would make the bass line more interesting and surprise the listener without creating an overwhelming feeling of dissonance.

To conclude, as I continue working on my original work and final project, I plan to use my newfound knowledge regarding the silence, syncopation and passing notes of bass lines in order to ensure that my songs are the best that they can be. This research will contribute to both my abilities as a player and my knowledge as a musician.