

# Playing In a Big Band Versus A Rhythm + Blues Combo

I have always had a thing for playing in big bands and it is my preference as the type of music I like to listen to. I get a charge out of the intricacies of telling a story with ensemble passages, solos and the breakdowns to smaller groups of instrumentation within the larger band. In many ways it is a unique experience compared to blues and Rhythm & Blues music.

In a big band, charts are written out note-for-note for all the musicians, including the bass player. His part will not always be the standard harmony. Often the chord changes will be different from the way a song was originally written. According to the flavor that the arrangers want to hear, the part for the bass player may harmonize with the horns, for instance. The harmonic interpretation will vary tremendously with a big band. There is a beauty in seeing how the bass part makes the whole arrangement swell and dissipate, and come back in again while changing the mood.

Playing in a big band is like a power trip, not only in terms of volume, but of using dynamics and subtleties. After experiencing the big band, you can try to capture the same feeling with a smaller group. I still try to do that in my music now where I incorporate a lot of the same concepts.

