

SOG General Survey 2011

1. The name Sambassadors Of Groove...do you like it? Would you prefer something else?

I like the name and wish to keep it: 62.5% (15)

I'd like to hear alternatives: 20.8% (5)

I have a suggestion for a new name: 16.7% (4)

All 4 Name suggestions were to shorten name to just 'Sambassadors'

2. There's a lot of work to do to keep the band moving forwards, and the Committee will be a little short-staffed until new members are voted in at the AGM in Feb. Should we take on temporary committee members in the interim to cover gigs, costumes etc, or wait till February to do it properly?

Yes, we should take on interim Committee Members: 29.2% (7)

We should delegate the duties, but exclude them from Committee votes: 37.5% (9)

We should wait until the AGM before making any official changes: 33.3% (8)

Other: 3

Of the 3 Others, 1 amounted to a vote for interim, and 2 for delegation.

3. Subs are currently £25 per month. Since the change of band leadership, do you consider this:

Too expensive: 41.7% (10)

About right: 58.3% (14)

Too cheap: 0.0% (0)

Other: 7

Suggestions revolved around separate rates for dancers and an optional higher per-session rate for those who don't want to commit to Direct Debit. One call for reassessment assuming no future band leader is appointed.

4. Should we offer discounted subs rates in special cases such as low income families, students, OAP's etc?

Yes, we should have these options available: 87.5% (21)

No, everyone should pay the same regardless of circumstance: 12.5% (3)

Other: (5)

Other suggestions included more requests for per-session rates for all members, and reduced rates for non-committee position holders (flag-meister etc)

5. Other than the usual tutor-lead Thursday evening sessions, what other learning methods, aids or materials would you like to be included on a regular basis? Eg, Paper transcriptions, demo recordings, demo videos etc

(No multiple choice) Responses were an equal amount of requests for paper transcripts, audio and video recordings all to be made available via the web and as e-mail updates.

6. The Sambassadors have historically done a range of gigs, from easy-going local busks to more high-profile corporate gigs. Bearing in mind the need for constant fund-raising to cover our rent and running costs, what kind of gigs would you like to work towards in future?

More just-for-fun gigs, we can raise money in other ways: 4.2%(1)

More corporate gigs, we need the money and I like the prestige: 8.3% (2)

The current mix of gigs suits me fine: 87.5% (21)

Other: 6

General statements of appreciation of the need for corporate gigs for financial reasons, but pref kept to a minimum as not so much fun. Calls for more busks/community gigs, and support slots for larger bands.

7. Are you happy with our current range of costumes?

Yes, I'm happy: 41.7% (10)

No, I'd like to see more carnival-style flair and make-up. 8.3% (2)

No, I'd like less make-up and a more contemporary style. 50.0% (12)

Other: 9

General response is that there is a place for the full-on carnival look sometimes but not as a default. For carnival gigs, both make-up and costume should be even more bold. At other times, something practical for both drumming and dancing that can be personalised and adapted for weather conditions.

8. We currently have a mix of groove styles and have a 'fusion' kind of sound overall. Would you like to see any changes or additions to our groove style?

More Afro Bloc 25.0% (6) More Batucada: 45.8% (11) More Maracatu: 37.5% (9)

More Fusion: 33.3% (8) More Candomble: 20.8% (5) More Cross-over: 33.3% (8)

I'm happy with the current mix: 58.3% (14) Other: 11

General responses were in support of variety and experimentation.

9. Before he left, two of the main duties Russ was covering were teaching and deciding the musical programme. Should these two roles continue to be held by the same person in future, or should the role of Musical Director be reinstigated as a voluntary Committee position, in charge of creating the musical programmes, themes and co-ordinating events such as the Bruhl exchange, leaving the tutoring to a separate, paid individual?

Split the roles: 83.3% (20)

Include the musical programme direction in the duties of our paid tutor: 16.7% (4)

Other: 10

Some responses slightly off-topic (obviously a badly phrased question!), but general support for musical direction and band-leadership to be split between Bo, Sam and Dawn, (if they are happy to do so) and for the programme direction to be a separate position.

10. Are you happy with the previous teaching format, namely regular weekly tutoring sessions by a particular paid individual?

Yes, we should appoint another paid weekly Band Leader to tutor us. 33.3% (8)

No, we should have intensive workshops with paid external tutors, then continue practice using our voluntary Deputy Leaders: 58.3% (14)

No, we should avoid those costs altogether and share the role of Band Leader among willing volunteers. 8.3% (2)

Other: 13

Responses converge on a combination of multiple paid/compensated internal band leaders for weekly consistency, and regular external tuition for fresh inspiration and technique.

11. The Committee is currently putting together a Welcome Pack for new members, including general information about the band and it's aims, subs, links to the online resources, Code Of Conduct, costume requirements etc Further ideas have been suggested, such as a designated 'buddy' to help with explanations and musical guidance. What other measures can be taken to make new members feel welcome, and help us retain them long-term?

(No Multi-Choice) Strong support for the buddy system, as well as group efforts at tea-break and pub sessions after to ensure a sense of inclusion early on. Also suggestions for the intergration of new members' initial instruction with ongoing individual assessment, and sectional sessions for all band members.

12. Do you have any suggestions for changes to the website, either the public-facing or members only content?

(No multi-choice) Generally everyone happy. All keen to keep the site fresh and updated, full of photos, personal detail and as much resource as possible, both private members only content and public links to other samba bands and resources.

13. Do you enjoy the singing element to our performances?

Yes, I'd like more singing 17.4% (4)

I'm not fussed either way: 56.5%(13)

No, I'd prefer that we didn't sing.: 26.1% (6)

Other:12

Common theme is that IF singing is included, it should be performed by a smaller, able and willing group of confident, well-rehearsed members.

14. Do you enjoy the choreography element of our performances?

Yes, we should keep working on expanding our performance choreography: 87.0% (20)

I'm not fussed either way: 4.3% (1)

No, I'd prefer to keep choreography to a minimum: 8.7% (2)

Other: 10

Comments centre around instrument-specific choreography to avoid unfair pressure due to practicalities, whilst keeping the focus moving and evolving.

15. Do you have any suggestions about how we can make better use of our talented dance team?

No real theme to responses, just general support for their continued inclusion and support, with the possible addition of audience participation to avoid the dance-line being so much of a physical barrier to the band.

16. Assuming our Thursday evening sessions are for group rehearsals, how best should we use our Sunday afternoon sessions? (Tick all that apply)

More group technique but working on problem areas: 65.2% (15)

Instrument-specific 'sectional' rehearsals: 56.5% (13)

Work on new grooves: 52.2% (12)

Work on choreography: 39.1% (9)

I can't make Sundays. 30.4% (7)

Other 9

General support for shorter, time-specific slot focussing on trouble spots and sectional rehearsal, as full-band stuff is difficult with reduced numbers.

17. Currently, new and slower-learning members, as well as those returning after prolonged absence are required to wait until they are deemed 'good enough' to be a part of our public performances. Do you think this is right?

Yes, we should maintain a minimum standard of ability for our performances for the sake of our reputation: 78.3% (18)

No, we should include everyone as soon as they are willing, and it should be our tutor's responsibility to provide simpler patterns or quieter instruments for those less able: 21.7% (5)

Other: 10

Responses show some support for the simpler/quieter patterns option, and raise the question of who would be the judge of 'good enough' as far as performance suitability is concerned.

18. Some samba bands feature individual soloists in sections of their grooves. Do you think this is something we should try out?

No, I don't think that would be appropriate: 0.0% (0)

Yes, I think it would make an interesting addition: 65.2% (15)

I'm not fussed either way: 34.8% (8)

Other: 8

General approval but only if done in suitable, pre-arranged places and not too often.

19. Are you happy with the current democratic system of a constitutionally-led, elected Committee?

Yes, this system works well: 60.9% (14)

Yes, but the system needs amending: 39.1% (9)

No, we need a different system: 0.0% (0)

No, we should use the following system: 8

Very little real criticism or comment, just a general vibe of keeping everyone educated about the system (constitution etc) and included as often as reasonable.

20. Do you have any other suggestions or criticisms concerning the Sambassadors that have not been raised in this survey?

Very little comment! Dancers felt much of this survey was pitched at musicians rather dancers, and that as dancers it wasn't their 'place' to comment on what was best for the musicians. A separate survey has been suggested aimed more directly at dancers. (perhaps a job for Dawn), and a general point highlighting the feeling of 'division' between the band and the dancers.