

# 4: Motown (and the 60s)

## Style Background

In 1959 the Tamla Motown record label featured artists such as **The Supremes**, **Aretha Franklin**, **Smokey Robinson** and later **Stevie Wonder** and **The Jacksons**.

The interesting thing about these artists is that the backing band behind all of them consisted of pretty much the same players. Unsung heroes of their time, these session players crafted the backing for some of the greatest artists ever recorded. The players on this scene came from the Detroit Jazz clubs, where Motown boss, **Berry Gordy**, went to search for new players.

**The Funk Brothers**, as this group of musicians were known, featured: **Earl Van Dyke** on keyboard, **Robert White**, **Joe Messina** and **Eddie Willis** on guitar, **Benny Benjamin** and **Uriel Jones** on drums, and the now legendary **James Jamerson** on bass.

So much can be said about this renowned figure, and it is certainly worth checking out the book 'Standing in the Shadows of Motown' if you want an in depth read about **James Jamerson** and the Motown recording scene, including transcriptions of several of his bass lines.

James' influences from Gospel, Blues and Jazz can be heard in his very early playing, but he soon digressed

from the normal root / fifth note based bass playing of the R&B artists and replaced it with his own 8th (quaver) note syncopated style, incorporating passing tones. Over time his lines continued to develop with ever more interesting syncopated 16th (semiquaver) notes and dissonant pitches. Indeed, his style became more improvisational and at times he sounded like a featured soloist. The joy of his lines, however, is that they always maintained the groove and never got in the way of the artist.

In 'My Girl', recorded by **The Temptations**, he displays one of his greatest lines and shows how a bassline can be developed throughout a song.

The intro is a classic use of the root and the fifth notes, followed by the 1st verse of root notes on just beats 1 and 3. As the tune goes on, he introduces passing notes and develops the rhythm. It is all very simple, yet effective.

This tune is contrasted by tracks such as 'For Once In My Life' by **Stevie Wonder**, where he plays incredibly innovatively – great rhythms, leaps, passing notes and a groove that just makes you want to tap your foot.

Interestingly, for such an influential figure on the Rock and Pop scene, he described Rock and Roll as "*a lot of noise...that didn't make sense.*"\*

\* from *Standing in the Shadows of Motown* by Dr Licks

## Recommended Listening

Year	Track	Artist	Year	Track	Artist
1964	'My Girl'	The Temptations	1969	'Home Cookin'	Jr Walker and the All Stars
1965	'Nowhere To Run'	Martha and the Vandellas	1970	'Darling Dear'	The Jackson 5
1967	'Bernadette'	The Four Tops	1970	'Ain't No Mountain High Enough'	Diana Ross
1968	'For Once in My Life'	Stevie Wonder	1971	'What's Going On'	Marvin Gaye
1968	'How Long Has that Evening Train Been Gone'	Diana Ross and The Supremes			

### Getting The Sound

**D**on't change your strings...ever!! James Jamerson's bass was a Fender Precision '62 known as 'the Funk Machine'. He kept all the furniture (pickup cover and bridge cover) in place, and used heavy gauge LaBella flatwound strings which he

usually changed only if they broke. It wasn't unusual for him to be playing on strings that were several years old. His amps (an Ampeg B-15 and Kustom amp) were set with the bass control up full and treble control at half. The bass itself had the volume and tone at full.

## Checkpoint

### Just The Hook

**T**his simple 12-bar has a swing feel and I've played it with a strong 2-in-a-bar pattern. Note how the main pulse is on beats 1 and 3, and I use mainly the roots and fifths of the chords. You'll also see how I add in a quaver (and occasional crotchet on beat 4) to help with the overall feel of the piece, this serves to add a little bounce to the rhythm.

As the general pattern is fairly simple, the fills at the ends of phrase can also be fairly simple and still work. For example, in bar 4, I just vary the 2-in-a-bar figure to become a 4-in-a-bar figure. As the piece progresses I utilise a few triplet patterns as well (see bars 20 and

### One Time Ever

**I**n this piece I've tried to demonstrate several aspects of Jameson's playing, which are full of rhythmic variations. The simple backing gives the bass freedom to move around and play its own melodic line.

Most of the notes I have used are based around the pentatonic relative to the chord but I also use some of Jameson's devices such as passing notes to great effect. Have a look at bar 12 where I use the note B $\flat$  (which is not in the F major scale) to move from the B $\flat$  to the C. Also in bar 28 I've used a G $\sharp$  to approach the A and a B $\natural$  again to get to the C. One more example of this can be seen in bar 39 where I use a C $\sharp$  to approach the D in bar 40.

There are some more Jamerson style 'wrong' notes in this piece. Most commonly I've played an open E string before returning to the F chords.

28 as a reference). This was a feature of Jameson's which he used in swing pieces like 'Baby Love' and 'My Guy'.

Another of Jameson's trademarks was to use open strings as a way of changing strings, even if those notes weren't normally in the key he was playing in. Somehow these 'wrong' notes seemed to work really well. I've put a couple of these notes into this piece, but in these cases the notes are diatonically correct (i.e. they are notes you would expect in this key). E.g. bars 26 and 38 where it's easier to use the open A string in order to move back to the chord of C.

Look at bars 18 and 34 for a quick reference. These have a certain harmonic correctness as I am coming from a chord of C – and the note E is the third of the chord C, so all is well there. Not so obviously, take bar 47 (which is based on a Dm7 chord), where I use the same idea to take me from the D and A (the root and the fifth) to the note F (the minor 3rd). Here the note E serves as a rhythmical way of getting to the F. See how many more you can spot.

Jameson also enjoyed creating tension and release by playing a pattern in an ascending direction and then suddenly dropping down low. I've put in a couple of simple examples of this for you to try, but listen to some of his recordings for some real feats of dexterity. One example of this can be seen in bar 62, where I play up to an A from an F and then drop down an octave to the low A.

# One Time Ever



**Dominic Palmer**

♩ = 100

Chords: F F F F F

5/4

5

Verse 1

Chords: F A7#5 Dm7 G7#5

9

Chords: Gm Gm(Δ7) Gm7 C7#5 FΔ7 C7#5 FΔ7

13

Chords: F F A7#5 Dm7 Dm7

1 1 1 3 3 0 3 3 1 1 1 3 0 0 4 2 4 5 5 5 0 5 5 5 0 1 2 3 3 3 5 5 X 5 3 4

5 5 5 5 5 5 3 3 5 5 3 3 5 3 3 5 3 3 3 0 1 1 1 0 1 3 3 0 3 1 1 1 0 0 0 1 2 2 3

3 3 X 3 3 X 5 3 0 3 3 0 0 0 4 2 4 5 5 X 5 5 5 5 5 0 5 5 1 1 3 3 3 5 5 1

# Discovering Rock Bass

17 Gm Gm(Δ7) Gm7 C7#5 FΔ7 C7#5 FΔ7

Fingering: 3 5 3 5 5 5 5 3 | 5 5 3 5 3 1 3 3 3 3 0 | 1 1 1 0 1 3 3 0 3 0 | 3 3 X 0 1 1 1 2 3 3 0

21 Verse 2 F F A7#5 Dm7 G7#5

Fingering: 1 X X 1 X 1 3 5 | 3 3 1 1 3 3 0 0 4 2 4 | 5 5 3 5 5 5 5 0 1 | 3 0 2 2 2 3 4 5

25 Gm GmΔ7 Gm7 C7#5 FΔ7 C7#5 FΔ7

Fingering: 3 5 3 5 5 5 5 3 | 5 3 5 5 5 5 3 3 3 3 0 | 1 1 1 1 0 1 3 3 0 3 | 3 4 5 5 2 3 3 3 3 0

29 F F A7#5 Dm7 Dm7

Fingering: 1 X 1 1 1 1 1 3 0 | 3 3 1 1 3 0 0 4 2 4 | 5 5 5 5 5 3 3 3 | 5 1 1 3 3 3 5 5

33 Gm Gm(Δ7) Gm7 C7#5 FΔ7 C7#5 FΔ7

Fingering: 3 3 3 3 5 5 5 3 | 5 5 3 3 5 1 3 3 3 0 | 1 1 1 0 1 3 3 3 0 | 1 1 1 3 3 3 5 3

37 **Middle 8**  
BbΔ7 BbΔ7 Bbm(Δ7) F D7

Fingering: 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 3 | 1 X 1 1 1 3 4 4 4 2 | 3 3 3 3 0 3 4 | 5 5 4 4 4 5 5 7 7 3 5

41 Gm Gm(Δ7) Gm7 C7#5 FΔ7 C7#5 FΔ7 Am Abm Gm

Fingering: 3 3 3 5 5 3 5 5 4 | 5 5 5 5 3 3 0 3 | 1 0 1 2 3 3 5 3 5 | 3 1 0 4 3 3 5 5 3 3

45 **Verse 3**  
F F A7#5 Dm7 G7#5

Fingering: 1 1 X 1 1 1 1 3 0 3 | 3 3 X 3 0 0 0 0 4 2 4 | 5 5 3 5 5 5 0 1 | 3 3 5 5 2 3 3 4 5 X

# Discovering Rock Bass

49 Gm Gm(Δ7) Gm7 C7#5 FΔ7 C7#5 FΔ7

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 5 5 5 5 3 3 2 3 3 3 3 0 1 3 3 0 3 0 3 3 3 3 0 0 5 3 3 0

53 Verse 4 F F A7#5 Dm7 G7#5

1 1 X 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 3 3 0 0 4 5 7 4 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 X 3 3 X 5 1 1 2

57 Gm Gm(Δ7) Gm7 C7#5 FΔ7 C7#5 FΔ7

3 3 1 1 3 3 3 5 3 4 4 5 5 5 5 5 3 3 3 X 0 1 1 1 1 0 1 3 3 0 3 0 3 3 0 3 3 3 0 3 0 3

61 F F A7#5 Dm7 Dm7

1 1 1 1 1 1 0 0 3 3 3 3 3 3 5 6 7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5 3 3 5 5 3 5 5 1 1 1 3 3 5 5

65 Gm Gm( $\Delta$ 7) Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup>#5 F $\Delta$ 7 C<sup>7</sup>#5 F $\Delta$ 7

Fingering: 3 x 5 3 5 5 1 1 | 3 3 1 1 5 1 3 3 3 2 | 3 3 3 0 1 3 3 0 3 | 1 1 1 1 0 0 3 3 0 3

69 **Middle 8** B $\flat$  $\Delta$ 7 B $\flat$  $\Delta$ 7 B $\flat$ m( $\Delta$ 7) F D7

Fingering: 1 1 1 1 1 3 1 3 | 1 1 1 3 4 4 4 6 5 2 | 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 4 | 5 5 X 2 3 3 3 5 3 5

73 Gm Gm( $\Delta$ 7) Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup>#5 Am Am( $\Delta$ 7) Am<sup>7</sup> D7#5

Fingering: 3 3 3 1 1 1 1 3 X 5 | 5 5 3 5 5 3 3 3 0 | 5 5 3 3 3 5 7 5 7 | 7 7 5 5 5 5 5 5 0

77 **Verse 5** G $\Delta$ 7 D7#5 G $\Delta$ 7 G G B7#5

Fingering: 3 3 2 3 5 5 2 5 | 3 3 7 6 5 X 7 7 5 | 3 3 3 3 5 5 5 5 2 5 | 5 3 3 0 1 2 2 2 4 2

# Discovering Rock Bass

81 Em<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>#5 Am Am(<sup>Δ</sup>7) Am<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup>#5

Fingering: 2 2 2 2 2 0 3 3 | 5 5 4 4 5 5 6 7 | 5 5 5 0 0 0 3 X 4 0 | 5 7 7 7 2 5 5 3 5 2

85 G<sup>Δ</sup>7 D<sup>7</sup>#5 G<sup>Δ</sup>7 G G B<sup>7</sup>#5

Fingering: 3 3 2 3 5 X 5 5 5 | 3 3 2 2 5 5 5 5 2 4 | 5 5 X 5 5 5 5 2 5 | 0 3 3 3 3 3 5 2 2 2 2

89 Em<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>#5 Am Am(<sup>Δ</sup>7) Am<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup>#5

Fingering: 0 0 3 3 3 2 2 0 0 2 2 1 | 0 0 5 7 7 7 5 7 7 7 | 5 X 7 7 7 0 3 4 4 | 5 5 5 3 7 5 5 5 5

93 G<sup>Δ</sup>7 D<sup>7</sup>#5 G<sup>Δ</sup>7 Bm B<sup>b</sup>m Am G<sup>Δ</sup>7 Bm B<sup>b</sup>m Am G<sup>Δ</sup>7 Bm B<sup>b</sup>m Am G<sup>Δ</sup>7

Fingering: 3 3 3 2 3 5 5 5 0 | 3 3 7 6 5 5 7 7 5 | X 3 7 6 5 5 7 7 5 | X 3 7 6 5 7 3 3