



Year 9 Music: Funk Bass lines

Key Information

Funk music originated in America in the 1960s, from within the African American city communities. It has strong links to the rhythms of Western Africa. The **bass line** and the **rhythm** are more important than the melody.

James Brown, the “Godfather of Soul”, produced a song called “Cold Sweat” with a **Groove** that kickstarted **Funk**.

To play **Funk** you must “feel” the **Groove**, emphasising the first beat. Bass lines are played on bass guitar or on electric keyboard, where you must use your left hand, leaving the right hand free for chords! This can be a little tricky! The notes should be played short – staccato.



Keyword	Meaning
Bass line	Lowest pitched part/layer of the music. In Funk it is a 4-beat pattern, and the first note is most important.
Syncopation	Emphasis on a weak beat.
Groove	A catchy bass line (often electric) and syncopated drum patterns. More important than the melody.
Improvisation	Making music up on the spot.
Horn Section	The wind and brass instruments in Funk music.
Staccato	Short notes

Stretch and Challenge: Try this Funk bassline!



M	A	D	T	S	H	I	R	T
Melody	Articulation	Dynamics	Tempo	Structure	Harmony	Instruments	Rhythm	Texture
The main tune	How the music is played	The volume of the music	The speed of the music	The sections of the music and their order	The chords used	What instruments are used and the sound produced	The patterns of sounds with the beat	Layers of music – how many and what each does

Analysis

[How James Brown Invented Funk - YouTube](#)

Identify the rhythmic features of Funk explained in this video. What do you observe about James Brown’s singing style? How can you describe the melodic phrases?