THE INFLUENCE OF JAZZ ON R&B ELECTRIC BASSISTS OF THE 1960s AND 1970s

by

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract: Many popular R&B recordings of the 1960s and 1970s prominently feature electric bass lines. The electric bass, first commercially available in 1951, has a compact physical design that allowed its early adopters to employ syncopation, chromaticism, and other idioms associated with jazz double bass performance in novel combinations and at rapid speeds. This unique, jazz-inflected R&B electric bass style was originally made popular by James Jamerson in the early 1960s and then developed further by bassists such as Chuck Rainey, Wilton Felder, and Nathan Watts. This thesis draws upon literature, interviews, and transcriptions to highlight the significant influence of jazz double bass techniques on these four seminal R&B electric bassists.

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FIGURES

Each transcription has an accompanying audio file available to download at this link:
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/y1lsrjc4almqkxx/AAC6aKelPZdgsLA0Ewvx_ovQa?dl=0
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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

When the electric bass became commercially available in 1951, it was marketed to musicians as an electric guitar that could be used as a substitute for double bass, since it was tuned one octave down from the four lowest strings of a guitar.[1] Initially, most record producers and musicians saw the electric bass as less legitimate than either of the more traditional instruments it was associated with. This unfavorable view of the electric bass meant that mainstream pop electric bass parts of the 1950s often served as decorative additions to double bass parts that delivered the primary bass lines.[2] However, the small size, capacity for amplification, and affordability of the electric bass enticed some jazz and R&B (rhythm and blues) musicians to become early adopters of the instrument. In 1952, Leonard Feather described hearing jazz vibraphonist Lionel Hampton's bassist Roy Johnson use an electric bass to "cut through the whole bottom of the band like a surging undertow" at a live performance.[3] Feather's description signified a growing fascination with the strong sound of the electric bass that developed throughout the 1950s. While most jazz bassists were slow to adopt the new instrument (with a few notable exceptions such as Roy Johnson's successor Monk Montgomery), the electric bass was eventually accepted as a substitute for the double bass in most pop, rock and roll, and R&B contexts by 1960.[4]

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[1] Tony Bacon, "Electric Bass Guitar," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2019–), accessed March 29, 2022, https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/omo/9781561592630.013.3000000234
[2] Marshall Crenshaw, "James Jamerson: 1938-1983," *Rolling Stone*, September 29, 1983: 60.
[3] Jim Roberts, *How the Fender Bass Changed the World* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2001), 36.
[4] Mike Facey, "Early Proponents of Electric Bass in Mainstream Jazz" (Master's thesis, University of Colorado Boulder, 2020), 7.
https://scholar.colorado.edu/concern/graduate_thesis_or_dissertations/1v53jx949

As the 1950s came to an end, most electric bassists identified as double bassists or guitarists whose playing styles reflected their primary instrumental backgrounds in pragmatic and functional, if uninspired, ways. A musical approach specific to the electric bass finally emerged in the early 1960s, combining chromaticism, syncopation, and other musical ornaments derived from the jazz bass tradition with the agility and clarity of sound made available by the unique physical characteristics of the electric bass. This approach was innovated in the early 1960s by jazz and R&B bassist James Jamerson to accompany the new music being created at Motown Records in Detroit.[5] Jamerson's style was developed further throughout the 1960s and 1970s by other electric bassists such as Chuck Rainey, Wilton Felder, and Nathan Watts. This thesis draws upon literature, interviews, and transcriptions of these four bassists to highlight the significant influence of jazz on R&B electric bass lines in the 1960s and 1970s.

Clearly defining musical genres is a difficult enterprise, and for the sake of this thesis, "pop" refers to all popular music, while "R&B" or "rhythm and blues", "soul", and "funk" serve as catch-all terms for broad swaths of popular Black musical forms of the 1960s and 1970s.[6] R&B uses elements of jazz and rock and roll, but it is distinct from the mainstream recordings of jazz and rock and roll during these years.

While this thesis is focused exclusively on James Jamerson, Chuck Rainey, Wilton Felder, and Nathan Watts, there are many other important bassists from this era who are not discussed in depth in these pages. Bob Babbitt, Carol Kaye, Larry Graham, Jerry Jemmott, Bernard Odum, Tommy Cogbill, Andrew White, and their contemporaries made valuable contributions to electric bass styles in the 1960s and 1970s, and they could all arguably fall into

[5] Allan Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown: The Life and Music of Legendary Bassist James Jamerson* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 1989), 32.
[6] Howard Rye, "Rhythm-and-blues," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2002), accessed March 29, 2022. https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.J676400

the scope of this thesis. Some of these musicians pioneered other unique approaches to the instrument, such as Carol Kaye's use of a pick and Larry Graham's electric bass slap style. With respect to each of these significant musicians, they have been omitted from this thesis in order to focus on the jazz influence in R&B electric bass recordings that Jamerson, Rainey, Felder, and Watts best exemplify.

Section II of this thesis demonstrates the salient features of jazz bass playing that were carried into the new R&B electric bass style of the 1960s and 1970s. Section III describes the unique collision of musical genres and circumstances that led to Detroit session musicians synthesizing jazz with other popular genres to create the "Motown Sound", catalyzing Jamerson's innovation of a new electric bass style. Sections IV, V, VI, and VII examine the influence of jazz on the personal backgrounds and performance styles of bassists James Jamerson, Chuck Rainey, Wilton Felder, and Nathan Watts.

SECTION II

JAZZ BASS IDIOMS

The double bass was used in ragtime and jazz contexts as early as the 1890s, but came to the forefront in the late 1920s as the definitive bass accompaniment to jazz performances. Usually in 4/4 time signature, double bassists played either on beats one and three ("two feel"), or on all four beats ("walking"). In the 1940s and 1950s, bebop bassists such as Jimmy Blanton, Oscar Pettiford, Ray Brown, and Charles Mingus developed new approaches to the instrument that featured more syncopation, more use of the high end of the double bass's range, and more left hand articulations such as hammer-ons and pull-offs.[7] Beginning in 1961, this was the milieu of jazz double bass tradition that James Jamerson and his disciples brought to the electric bass, reinterpreting 70 years of stylistic development on double bass to create the iconic R&B style of the 1960s and 1970s. This section demonstrates the musical devices and idioms of jazz double bass playing that are relevant to this thesis.

Bassist John Goldsby says the primary functions of jazz double bass are "outlining harmony, providing a contrapuntal melodic line, and supplying a steady, repetitive pulse".[8]

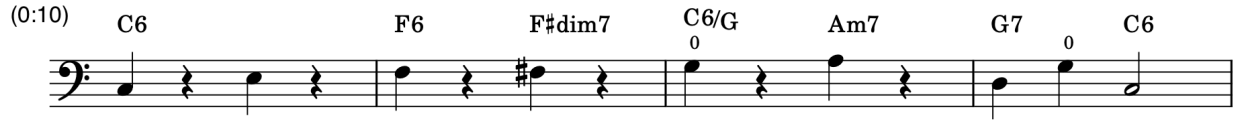

Figure 1: Excerpt of Wellman Braud on double bass. "Rockin' In Rhythm" by Duke Ellington, 1930.[9][10]

[7] Rodney Slatford, "Double bass", in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001), accessed March 29, 2022. https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.46437
[8] John Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2002), xi.
[9] Duke Ellington, *Rockin' In Rhythm*, Decca BM0239, 1931, Single.
[10] Open strings are indicated with the number 0.

The most fundamental jazz bass lines outline harmony with root motion played on beats one and three. This is sometimes known as a "two feel" or a "two beat pattern". In Figure 1, Wellman Braud plays the roots of each chord, with the exception of E, the third of C6, in the first measure, and D, the fifth of G7, in the fourth measure.

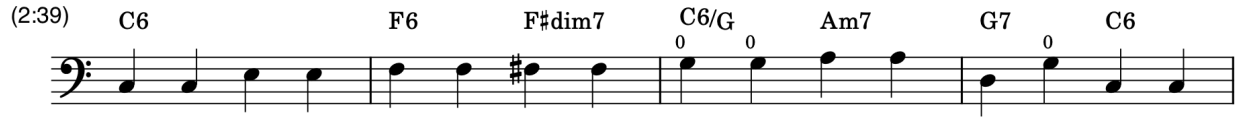

Figure 2: *Excerpt of Wellman Braud on double bass. "Rockin' In Rhythm" by Duke Ellington, 1930.*[11]

Expanding upon the "two feel", a "four beat pattern" or "walking bass line" is also very common in jazz bass lines. In Figure 2, Braud keeps the same pattern of pitches as in Figure 1, changing the rhythm by re-articulating each note. Beats one and two of the fourth measure remain unchanged from Figure 1.

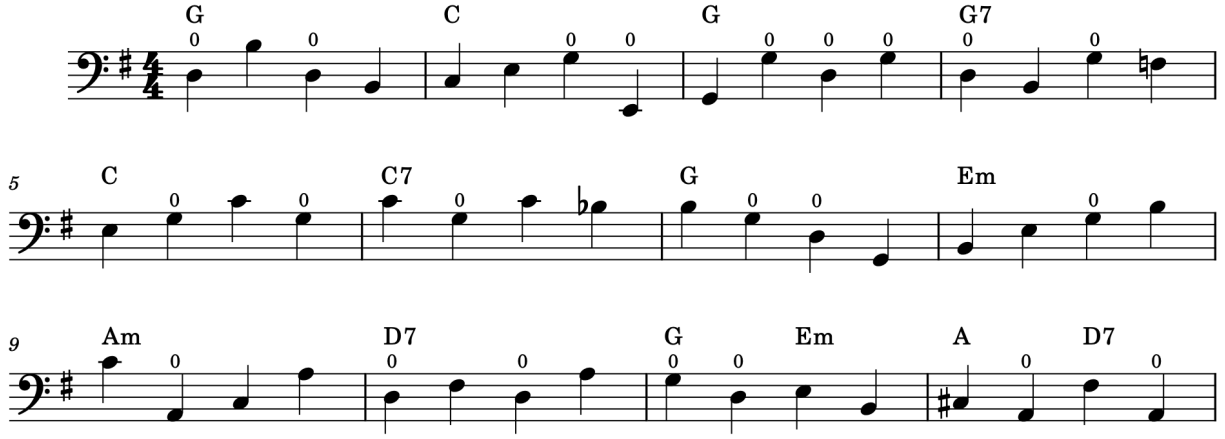

Figure 3: Ron Carter's demonstration of a walking bass line using chord tones.[12]

[11] Duke Ellington, *Rockin' In Rhythm*, Decca BM0239, 1931, Single.

[12] Ron Carter, *Building Jazz Bass Lines* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 1998), 24.

Jazz bassists will sometimes play other chord tones instead of pure root motion. In Figure 3, Ron Carter plays the fifth degree of the chord on the downbeat of measures 1, 4, and 8. He also plays the third degree of the chord on the downbeat of measures 5, 7, 9, and 12.

Beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, bassists intentionally and carefully incorporated more dissonance into their walking bass lines. These dissonances usually occur on the weak beats of a given pattern, with the strong beats often reserved for chord tones. As jazz bass mainstay Milt Hinton once said, "I must identify the chord for everyone, and only after that can I play the other notes."[13]

Double bassists such as Milt Hinton and Walter Page were well known for their masterful incorporation of dissonances in between chord tones. These dissonances are often classified as chromatic passing tones, leading tones, or approach notes. In The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition, Goldsby explains that "some passing tones emphasize an important chord tone by leading to it; others lengthen the line so a chord tone lands on the next bar's downbeat."[14]

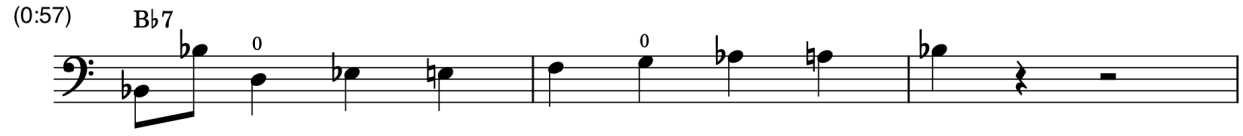

Figure 4: Excerpt of Ray Brown on double bass. "Mack The Knife" by Barney Kessel, Shelly Manne, & Ray Brown, 1959.[15]

In Figure 4, Ray Brown plays a low Bb, plays a high Bb, and then drops down to D, the third degree of Bb7, before climbing back up to the high Bb. He uses passing tones to move from D to G, and finally up to the octave of Bb. Beats three and four of the first measure do not

[13] Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition*, 46.
[14] Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition*, 4.
[15] Barney Kessel with Shelly Manne and Ray Brown, *Poll Winners Three!,* Contemporary C3576, 1960, LP.

contain chord tones, but rather chromatic passing tones that create dissonance and tension as they lead to the chord tone F on the first beat of the second measure. This technique of dropping down from the upper octave and climbing back up from the third degree appears in many walking bass lines.

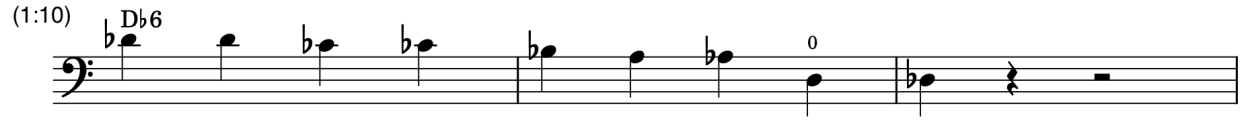

Figure 5: Excerpt of Ray Brown on double bass. "Up There" by Howard McGhee and Teddy Edwards, 1961.[16]

Jazz bassists sometimes imply or superimpose harmonies that are not initially played by others in the ensemble. In Figure 5, Ray Brown uses Cb, the flatted seventh degree of a Db6 chord that does not contain Cb in its spelling. This superimposition creates a Db7 sound for the ensemble, even though the other musicians are not playing the Cb.

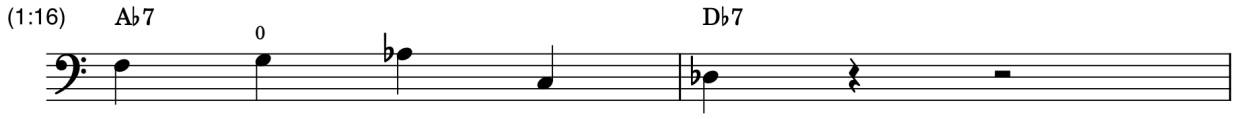

Figure 6: *Excerpt of Ray Brown on double bass. "Up There" by Howard McGhee and Teddy Edwards, 1961.*[17]

In Figure 6, Ray Brown plays F and then a G passing tone to Ab before leaping down to C, outlining an F minor triad instead of the Ab7 chord played by the other musicians. Since Fm

[16] Howard McGhee and Teddy Edwards, *Together Again!!!*, Contemporary M3588, 1961, LP.
[17] Howard McGhee and Teddy Edwards, *Together Again!!!*, Contemporary M3588, 1961, LP.

and Ab7 share many notes in common, superimposing Fm creates the overall effect of an Fm7 or Ab13 chord.

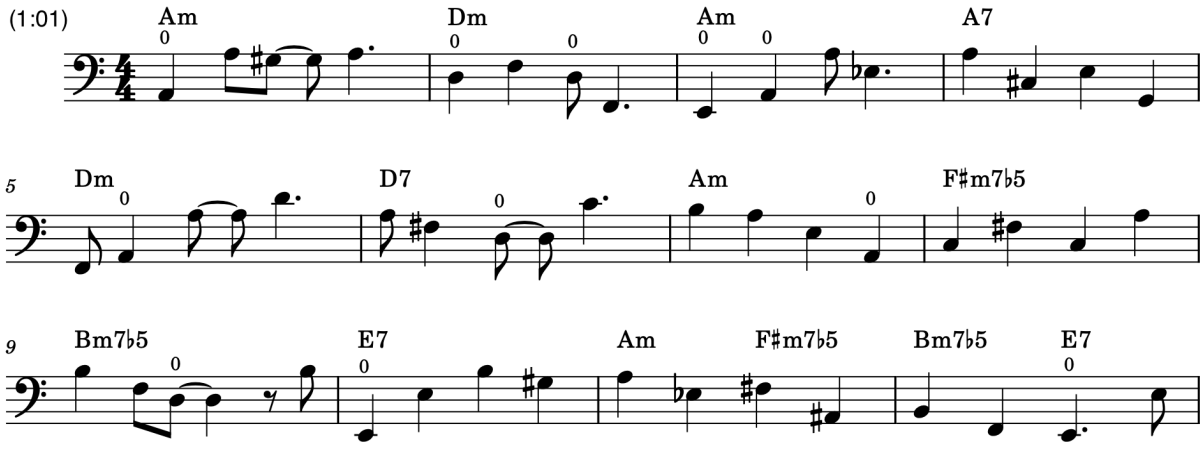

Figure 7: Ron Carter demonstrating syncopated rhythms and passing tones over a minor blues progression.[18]

Chromaticism and superimposition are harmonic and melodic devices, but changing the rhythm of a bass pattern is also very effective. In Figure 7, Ron Carter plays syncopated figures that begin on upbeats and last for various durations. He uses a variety of chord tones on strong beats, not just the roots of the chords. He also uses passing tones and angular dissonance to create a more aurally striking bass line.

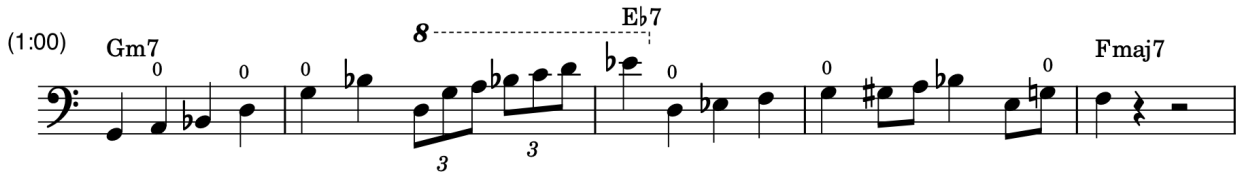

Figure 8: Excerpt of Ray Brown on double bass. "The Days Of Wine And Roses" by The Ray Brown Trio, 1992.[19]

[18] Carter, *Building Jazz Bass Lines*, 43.
[19] Ray Brown Trio, *Black Orpheus*, Paddle Wheel KICJ 109, 1992, LP.

The double bass is a large instrument that requires considerable travel up and down the fretboard for the left hand. To effectively play large intervals, jazz double bassists often tailor their lines to make use of the notes E, A, D, and G on the open strings. In Figure 8, Ray Brown ascends through a G minor arpeggio before switching to thumb position and reaching a high Eb near the end of the fingerboard on the Eb7 chord at the beginning of the third measure. Immediately afterwards on beat two, he plays an open D string more than two octaves below, giving his left hand time to return to half position and resolve the dissonance of the non-chord tone D with a low Eb.

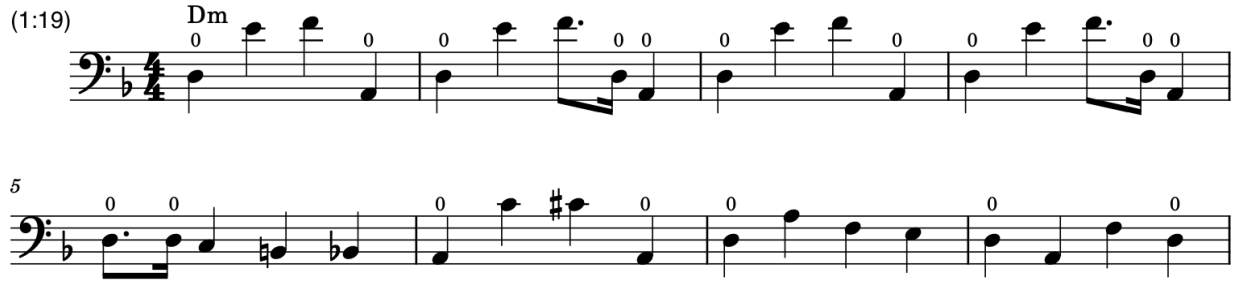

Figure 9: Ron Carter demonstrating the use of open strings in contrast with higher notes on the double bass.[20]

In Figure 9, Ron Carter uses open strings to play chord tones. Carter's line is angular but physically feasible due to the open strings providing the left hand sufficient time to shift positions. The confident timbre of open strings is idiomatically appropriate in jazz double bass playing and desirable in most walking bass lines.

[20] Carter, *Building Jazz Bass Lines*, 46.

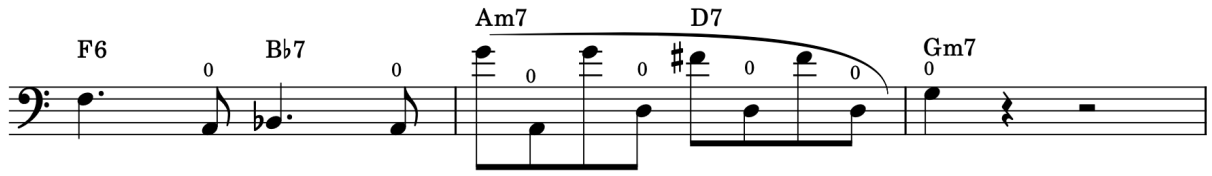

Figure 10: Excerpt of Ray Brown on double bass. "Have You Met Miss Jones" by the Oscar Peterson Trio, 1964.[21]

Another device used by jazz bassists is the "double stop", or the sounding of two notes at the same time. In the second measure of Figure 10, Ray Brown pianistically plays the roots of Am7 and D7 with open strings while playing the guide tones G and F# above them, letting two notes ring simultaneously to create "double stops" that outline chordal movement. The extreme distance between the intervals is made possible by the use of open strings.

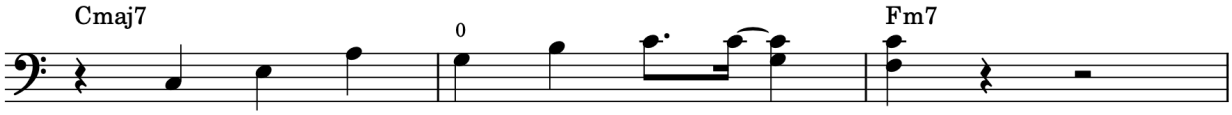

Figure 11: Excerpt of Percy Heath on double bass. "Lazy Susan" by Miles Davis, 1954.[22]

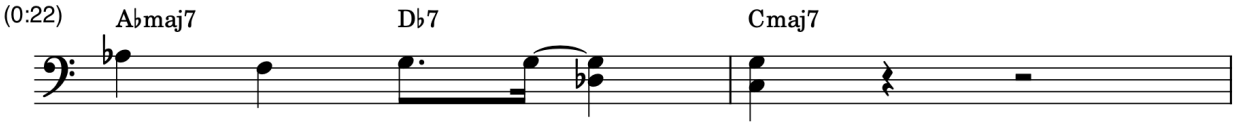

Figure 12: Excerpt of Percy Heath on double bass. "Lazy Susan" by Miles Davis, 1954.[23]

In Figures 11 and 12, bassist Percy Heath uses two types of double stops. In the second measure of Figure 11 and the first measure of Figure 12, Heath plays the upper note of a double

[21] Oscar Peterson Trio, *We Get Requests*, Verve V8606, 1964, LP.
[22] Miles Davis, *Relaxin' with the Miles Davis Quintet*, Prestige 7129, 1958, LP.
[23] Miles Davis, *Relaxin' with the Miles Davis Quintet*, Prestige 7129, 1958, LP.

stop and sustains the upper note as he articulates the lower note on the next beat. In the third measure of Figure 11 and the second measure of Figure 12, Heath plays the upper and lower notes of the double stops simultaneously.

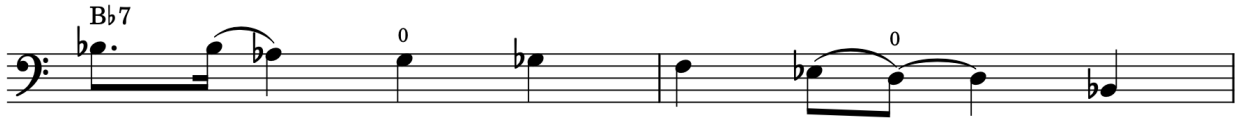

Figure 13: John Goldsby's demonstration of pull-off technique.[24]

In Figure 13, John Goldsby uses the "pull-off" technique twice. This technique requires the bassist to remove fingers from the fingerboard in the left hand, "pulling off" of the initial note and giving way to the second note without a second pluck from the right hand.

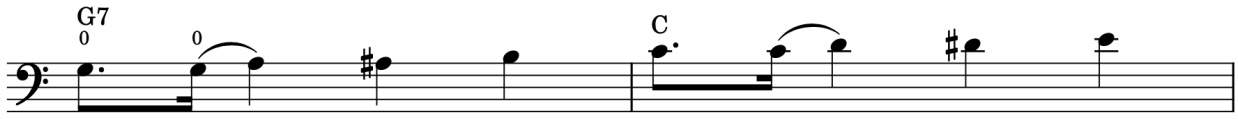

Figure 14: John Goldsby's demonstration of hammer-on technique.[25]

In Figure 14, John Goldsby uses the "hammer-on" technique twice. This technique requires the bassist to add fingers to the fingerboard in the left hand, "hammering on" to the initial note to sound the second note without a second pluck from the right hand.

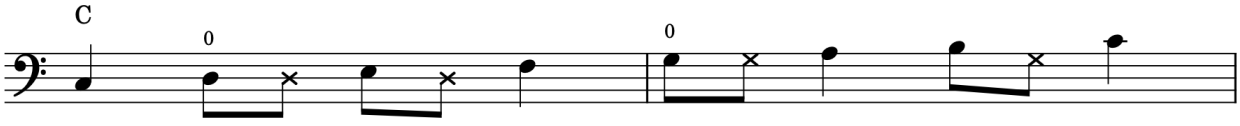

Figure 15: John Goldsby's demonstration of muted notes.[26]

[24] Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition*, 177.
[25] Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition*, 177.
[26] Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition*, 177.

In Figure 15, John Goldsby demonstrates how jazz bassists mute notes by deadening the sound of a string with their left hand while plucking with their right hand, creating a percussive "thump" that adds texture and rhythm to bass lines.

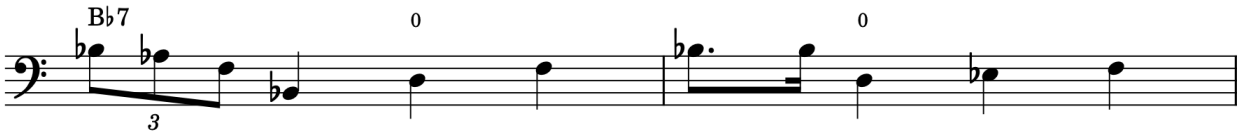

Figure 16: John Goldsby's demonstration of raking technique.[27]

In Figure 16, John Goldsby demonstrates the use of "raking", in which the right hand plucks a string and immediately follows through to the next string (or strings) in its path, allowing jazz double bassists to play two, three, or even four notes with one right hand stroke. The Ab, F, and Bb in the first two beats of the first measure are all played on adjacent strings with one right hand rake. Similarly, the Bb and D in the first two beats of the second measure are played on adjacent strings with one right hand rake.

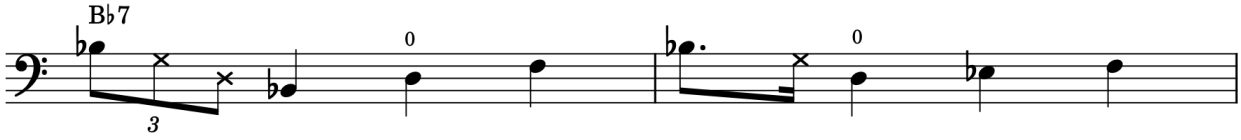

Figure 17: John Goldsby's demonstration of raking technique combined with muted notes.[28]

[27] Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition*, 177.
[28] Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition*, 177.

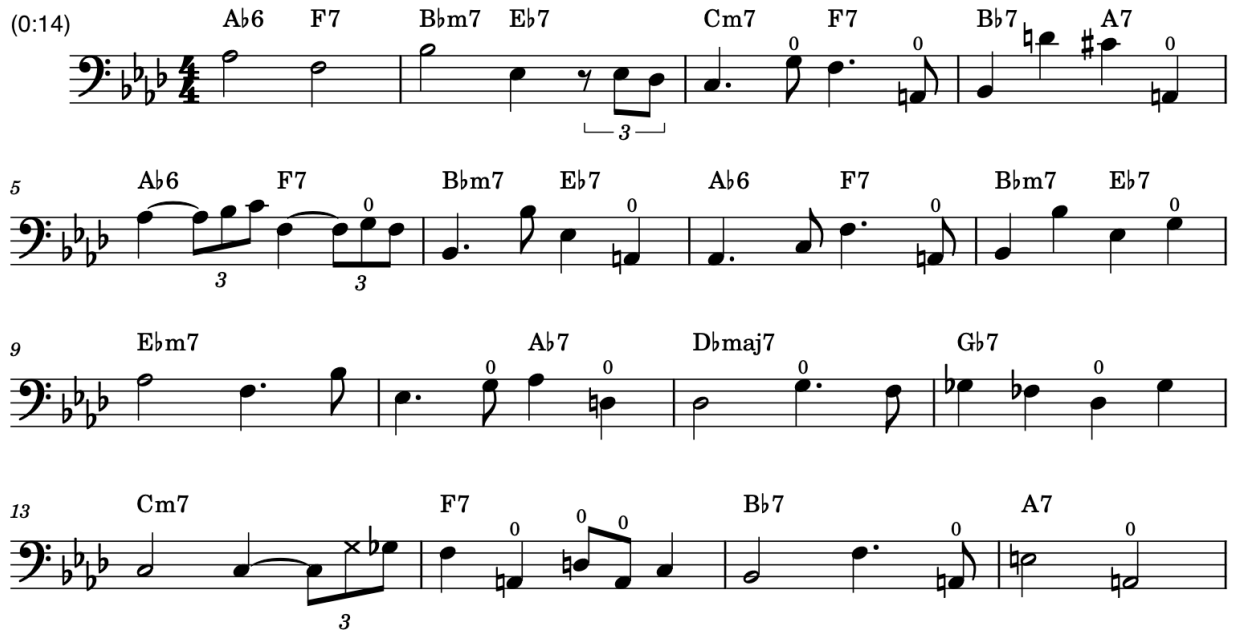

Figure 18: Excerpt of Ray Brown on double bass. "Sometimes I'm Happy" by the Oscar Peterson Trio, 1961[29]

In Figures 17 and 18, John Goldsby and Ray Brown demonstrate how the techniques from Figures 1-16 are combined and incorporated into jazz bass lines. In Figure 18, Brown uses rhythmic variety and syncopation, open strings, chromatic passing tones, a muted note, and chord substitution.

The techniques demonstrated in this chapter were all part of jazz double bass vocabulary by the late 1950s. Double bassists used two feel, walking lines, leaping intervals, passing tones, harmonic superimposition, rhythmic syncopation, the strategic use of open strings, double stops, pull-offs, hammer-ons, muted notes, and right hand raking in free and novel combinations in a variety of musical contexts. This thesis shows how the above concepts found their way into the popular R&B electric bass lines of the 1960s and 1970s.

[29] Oscar Peterson Trio, *The Trio: Live From Chicago*, Verve 8420, 1961, LP.

SECTION III

THE MOTOWN SOUND

James Jamerson's unique electric bass style was forged in Detroit, Michigan in order to accompany the new music being developed at Motown Records. The label, founded in 1959 in Detroit, Michigan, was the creation of songwriter, former record store owner, and jazz fan Berry Gordy.[30] A contraction of "motor town", a nickname for Detroit, Motown was promoted by Gordy as the "Sound of Young America", intended to create music with broad acceptance by both black and white audiences.[31] To accomplish his goal of pop music with crossover appeal, Gordy hired the best musicians in Detroit, bringing them together to write and record material.[32]

The versatile, experienced musicians and songwriters that Berry Gordy assembled in Detroit in the early 1960s had developed their musical prowess in a time of flourishing for local musicians. The lucrative automotive industry in Detroit meant that factory workers could afford instruments for their children, so young musicians grew up with music education programs in their public schools, gospel music in their churches, and live jazz performances in their clubs and dance halls.[33] By the 1950s, Detroit was well known as a main feeder of great jazz musicians into the hard bop scene in New York, best exemplified by Hank Jones, Donald Byrd, Paul Chambers, Milt Jackson, and others.[34] Despite the strong jazz tradition of Detroit, most professional opportunities for musicians to perform with big bands had dried up as the 1940s came to a close,

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[30] Lars Bjorn and Jim Gallert, *Before Motown: A History of Jazz in Detroit* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 199.
[31] Rob Bowman, "Gordy, Berry," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001), accessed March 29, 2022, https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.45924
[32] M. L. Liebler, *Heaven Was Detroit: From Jazz to Hip-Hop and Beyond* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016), 145.
[33] Liebler, *Heaven Was Detroit: From Jazz to Hip-Hop and Beyond*, 165.
[34] Bjorn, *Before Motown: A History of Jazz in Detroit*, 123.

so many jazz musicians found themselves diversifying into other styles to make a living.[35] Motown pianist and session leader Earl Van Dyke described this dynamic: "All we wanted to do was play jazz, but we all had families and at the time, playing rhythm and blues was the best way to make the rent."[36]

The term "rhythm and blues" was popularized by record companies in 1949, replacing the term "race music" as a catch-all for various kinds of blues, jazz, and gospel music marketed to Black music fans.[37] Out of the many styles that rhythm and blues, or R&B, included in the 1950s, jump blues bands were particularly popular and lucrative.[38] The style of jump blues had emerged during the end of the swing era, incorporating the fast beats, exciting rhythms, and walking bass lines of jazz into accessible blues and rock settings.[39]

Jump blues was just one strain of the powerful mixture of jazz, gospel, and R&B influences that the Motown session musicians experienced in Detroit.[40] Of the group that Berry Gordy hired, those with significant jazz experience included bassist James Jamerson, drummer Richard "Pistol" Allen, pianist and organist Earl Van Dyke, pianist Johnny Griffith, guitarist Joe Messina, percussionist Jack Brokensha, and arrangers Johnny Allen, Willis "Willie" Shorter, and Maurice King, among others.[41] Gordy encouraged these songwriters and arrangers to use sophisticated harmony and melody in the service of accessible popular music. Their elegant compositions were brought to the session musicians, who called themselves the Funk Brothers.[42] Rather than prescribing each musician's part note for note, the arrangers often allowed the

[35] James Lincoln Collier, "Bands (jazz)," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2002), accessed March 29, 2022, https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.J024300
[36] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 29.
[37] Rye, "Rhythm-and-blues".
[38] Bjorn and Gallert, *Before Motown: A History of Jazz in Detroit*, 169.
[39] Rye, "Rhythm-and-blues".
[40] Bjorn and Gallert, *Before Motown: A History of Jazz in Detroit*, 169.
[41] Bjorn and Gallert, *Before Motown: A History of Jazz in Detroit*, 203.
[42] Liebler, *Heaven Was Detroit: From Jazz to Hip-Hop and Beyond*, 162.

session players to be creative and come up with their own parts based on a single lead sheet. Motown saxophonist and flutist Thomas "Beans" Bowles described the process: "[...]when they brought the music to us it was all lead sheets. We're all jazz players, so we did it on the spot. It was like having a jam session."[43]

Drummer Jack Ashford concurred, explaining the connection between the jazz gigs that the musicians played together and their Motown recording sessions:

> "[...]if we were doing a tune and a change was similar to something in one of the jazz tunes that we played, Earl would say 'well, do so-and-so, so-and-so like we did last night' and we would interject that into the change of the song. And the song would take on a different color - something that they hadn't planned on. But of course, the producers would say, 'Oh man, that's hip' and they had a hit!"[44]

Berry Gordy's account of events suggests that the experienced jazz musicians working at Motown had such an excessive "jam session" mentality that it needed to be reigned in from time to time:

> "Once we got going, we'd usually ad lib all over the place until we got the groove I wanted. Many of these guys came from a jazz background. I understood their instincts to turn things around to their liking, but I also knew what I wanted to hear - commercially. So when they went too far, I'd stop them and stress, 'We gotta get back to the funk - stay in that groove."[45]

The unique circumstances of the music industry in the early 1960s brought these musicians together in a small recording studio at Motown Records known as the "snakepit" and motivated them to improvise R&B grooves and jazz harmonies while accompanying pop singers.

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[43] Bjorn and Gallert, *Before Motown: A History of Jazz in Detroit*, 201.
[44] Paul Justman, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown,* (2002; Lions Gate).
[45] Bjorn and Gallert, *Before Motown: A History of Jazz in Detroit*, 200.

The fact that this group of musicians named themselves “The Funk Brothers” years ahead of funk’s advent as a music genre illustrates how much they were synthesizing a significant new style from their jazz and R&B influences. This environment of creativity was one that demanded innovation from Motown bassist James Jamerson.

SECTION IV

JAMES JAMERSON

Background & Jazz Influences

James Jamerson was born in 1936 in Charleston, South Carolina.[46] As a child, he was surrounded by gospel music in his Baptist church.[47] He practiced piano at his cousin's house and played trombone in the elementary school band. The young Jamerson would stay up late at night listening to gospel, blues, and jazz on the radio. He also used to sneak into his neighbors' vacant house on Edisto Island to play their double bass. After moving to Detroit in 1954, Jamerson began studying the double bass seriously while attending Northwestern High School.[48]

As a teenager, Jamerson quickly learned his way around the double bass, absorbing language from recordings of the jazz double bass heroes of the day: Ray Brown, Percy Heath, and Paul Chambers, among others.[49] He attended many rehearsals and jam sessions in his area, crossing paths with great jazz mentors of the Detroit music scene like Barry Harris, Kenny Burrell, and Yusef Lateef.[5051] In interviews, Jamerson described playing "dances in high school in a jazz group" in the style of "modern jazz with a little bebop mixed in", as well as working with blues players John Lee Hooker and Washboard Willie.[52] By 1958, he was in demand as a performer for club dates, dances, weddings, and parties in the Detroit area, as well as recording

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[46] Justman, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown,* 2002.
[47] Dan Forte, "Jamerson 1979: The Guitar Player Interview," *Guitar Player,* 1979. http://www.ricksuchow.com/press-group-248.html
[48] Justman, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown,* 2002.
[49] Forte, "Jamerson 1979: The Guitar Player Interview," 1979.
[50] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 9.
[51] Ed Friedland, *The R&B Bass Masters* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2005), 8.
[52] Forte, "Jamerson 1979: The Guitar Player Interview," 1979.

sessions of various genres.[53] Berry Gordy invited Jamerson to come work for Motown after hearing his double bass lines on a session for Thelma Records.[54]

At Motown Records, Jamerson and his fellow Funk Brothers were expected to generate three or four completed instrumental tracks per three hour session.[55] Sometimes they played so many takes that Jamerson would complain "rigor mortis" was setting in.[56] Desiring novelty, Jameron and his colleagues continued to play live gigs outside of the recording studio, using the jazz club environment to take creative liberties and extended solos that were considered inappropriate at Motown Records.[57] Even after adopting the electric bass as his primary instrument, Jamerson sought out performance opportunities outside of Motown with the likes of Tony Bennett, Shirley Bassey, and Grant Green, all to spend more time playing jazz on his beloved double bass.[58]

Although he was busy playing many genres of music, Jamerson was still devoted to jazz, even in his downtime. His son, James Jamerson Jr, describes a typical day at home with his father:

"Usually, he would just listen to jazz around the house - mostly keyboard and sax players. When we'd come home after school and hear jazz playing on the stereo, we'd say 'Dad's home.' I remember he used to play Oscar Peterson so much that it would make me sick."[59]

James Jamerson recorded with many notable artists in his career, including Smokey Robinson & The Miracles, Stevie Wonder, Martha & The Vandellas, Jr. Walker & The All Stars,

[53] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 9.
[54] Forte, Guitar Player, 1979.
[55] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 30.
[56] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 35.
[57] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 41.
[58] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 45.
[59] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 51..

The Four Tops, Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross & The Supremes, Joan Baez, Mary Wells, Robert Palmer, The Temptations, Gladys Knight & The Pips, The Spinners, The Isley Brothers, The Jackson 5, The Marvelettes, Donald Byrd, Jackie Wilson, John Lee Hooker, Lalo Schifrin, Quincy Jones, Bill Withers, and Aretha Franklin, among others.

Transcription & Analysis

Before he came to the electric bass, James Jamerson played on a German double bass that he purchased in 1957. He famously used just one finger to perform, known to his musical colleagues as "the hook".[60] This one finger technique, combined with the high string height and tension on his bass, meant that Jamerson had to "dig in" hard with his right hand to get the big sound he wanted from the double bass. Jamerson continued to use the double bass on some recording sessions, even after adopting the electric bass as his primary instrument in 1961.[61]

[60] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 84.
[61] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 13.

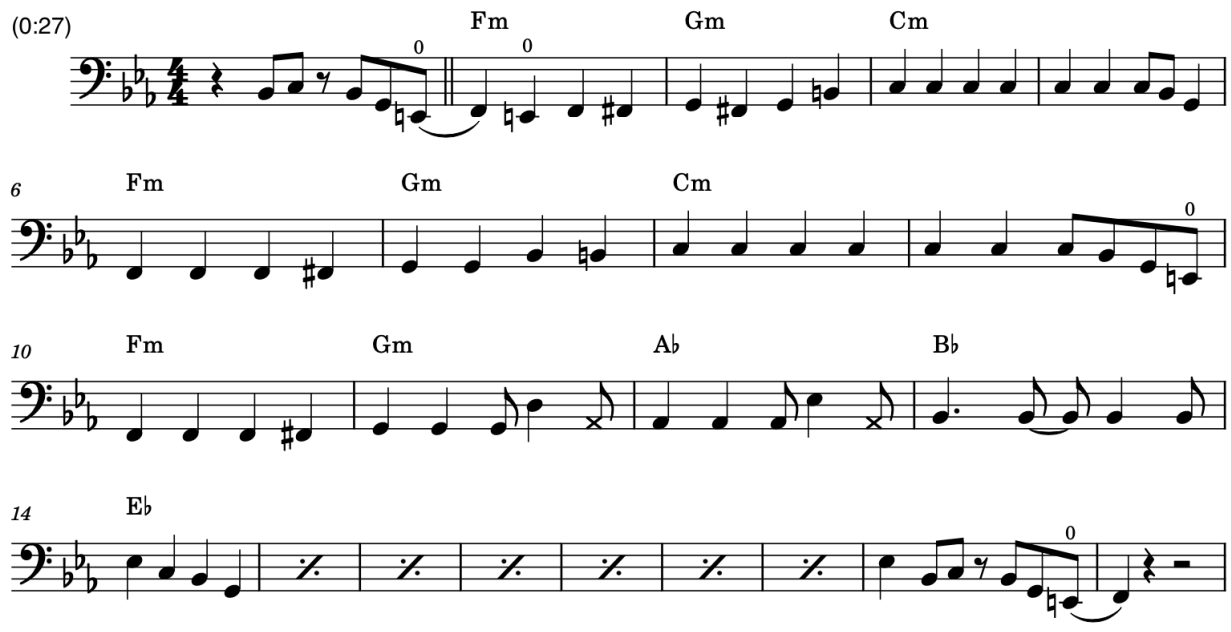

Figure 19: Excerpt of James Jamerson playing double bass. "(Love Is Like A) Heat Wave" by Martha and the Vandellas, 1963.[62]

While the first significant recording of James Jamerson on double bass was made in 1959, a later track from 1963, "(Love Is Like A) Heat Wave" by Martha and the Vandellas, serves as a useful representation of Jamerson's approach to traditional walking bass lines on the double bass. In Figure 19, the consistent feel of the four beat pattern, the tasteful use of passing tones and muted notes, the moments of syncopation, and the hammer-on from the open E to an F firmly link Jamerson to the tradition of jazz and jump blues walking bass lines.

[62] Martha and the Vandellas, *Heat Wave*, Gordy 907, 1963, LP.

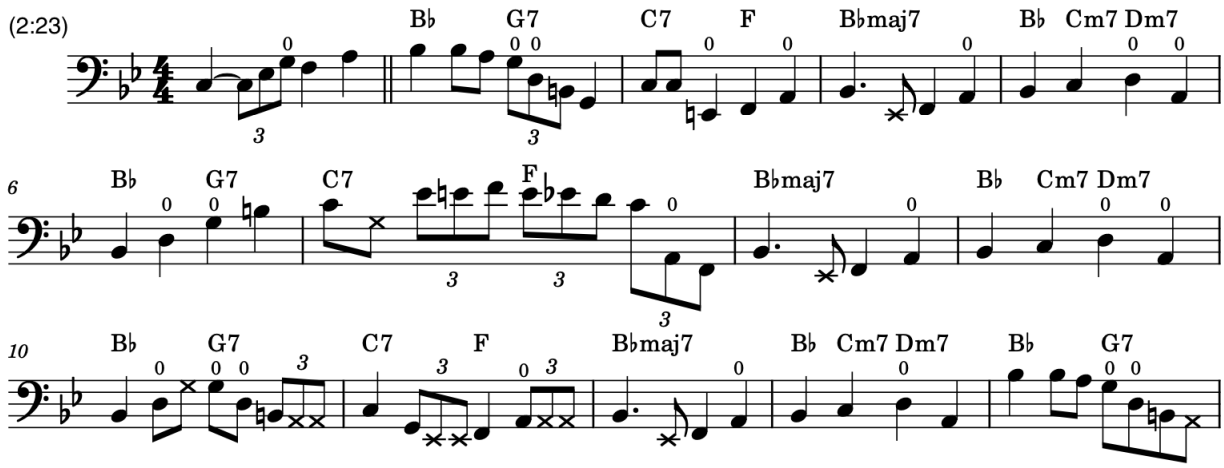

Figure 20: Excerpt of James Jamerson playing double bass. "My Guy" by Mary Wells, 1964.[63]

Another track recorded on double bass, 1964's "My Guy" features James Jamerson incorporating more Ray Brown-like jazz bass idioms such as triplet figures, raking with open strings, and upper register flourishes. As bassist and author Ed Friedland puts it, "Instead of the typical half-note root-5 lines that dominated bass playing, James pulled tricks from his jazz background and used chromatic passing tones, triplet-embellished walking lines, and syncopation to alter the song's feel."[64]

In 1961, James Jamerson began performing on his first Fender Precision electric bass while on tour with Jackie Wilson.[65] Jamerson biographer Allan Slutsky explains that "Jamerson thought of himself as a jazz bassist first. He was basically an upright player who took up electric as a necessity".[66] Although the electric bass became Jamerson's primary instrument, he would sometimes double the same recorded bass part on both double and electric bass.[67]

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[63] Mary Wells, *Mary Wells Sings My Guy*, Motown 617, 1964, LP.
[64] Friedland, *The R&B Bass Masters*, 8.
[65] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 84.
[66] J D Considine, "James Jamerson: Jazzman Behind Motown Sound," *The Sun*, May 21, 1989, ProQuest (1644822079).
[67] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 13.

By the next year, Jamerson had acquired “The Funk Machine” that he would come to record on for the rest of his career: a 1962 sunburst Fender Precision Bass with a foam mute on the strings to create a warm tone. The neck of this bass was bowed, creating high action reminiscent of a double bass. Jamerson approached the electric bass with gusto, digging in hard with “the hook” and maximizing the volume and tone controls.[68] Jamerson’s innovative, jazz-inflected approach to the electric bass is demonstrated below.

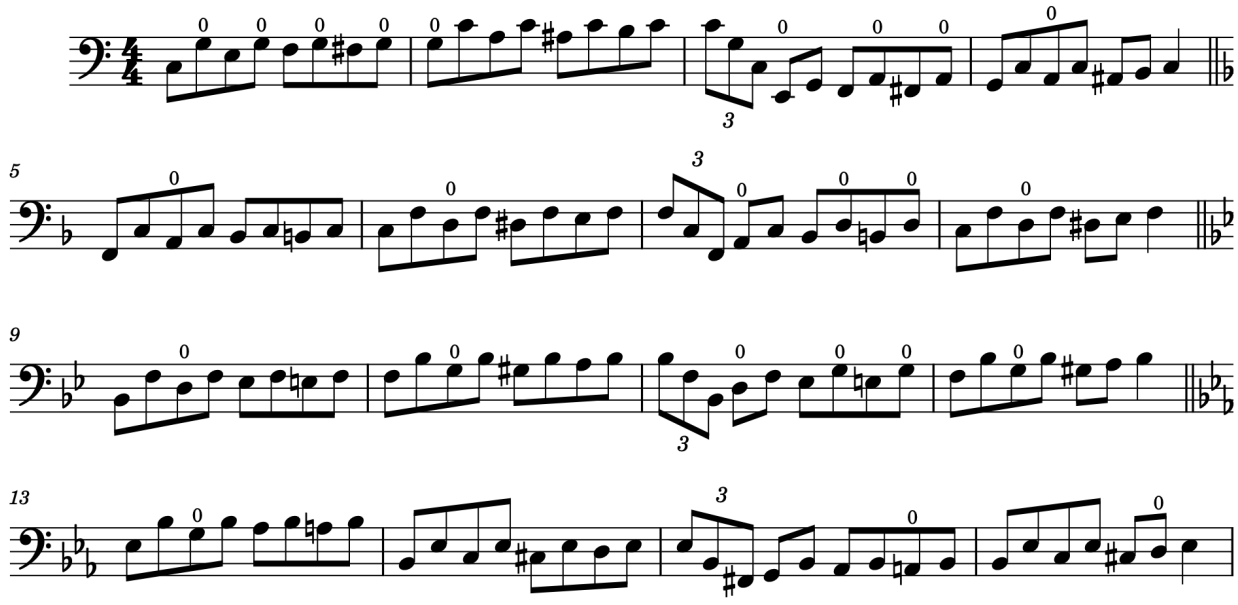

Figure 21: James Jamerson’s etude for practicing chromaticism on electric bass.[69]

In Figure 21, an etude by James Jamerson illuminates how he practiced technique on the electric bass. The chromatic passing tones and triplet rakes are familiar jazz double bass idioms applied to the new instrument. This exercise demonstrates how Jamerson developed his command of open strings, using them in different ways depending on the key.

[68] Ivan Big Ive Williams, “DETROIT BASS PLAYER 'JAMES JAMERSON JR' INTERVIEW,” YouTube video, uploaded 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djX3QA_Ebuo
[69] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 91.

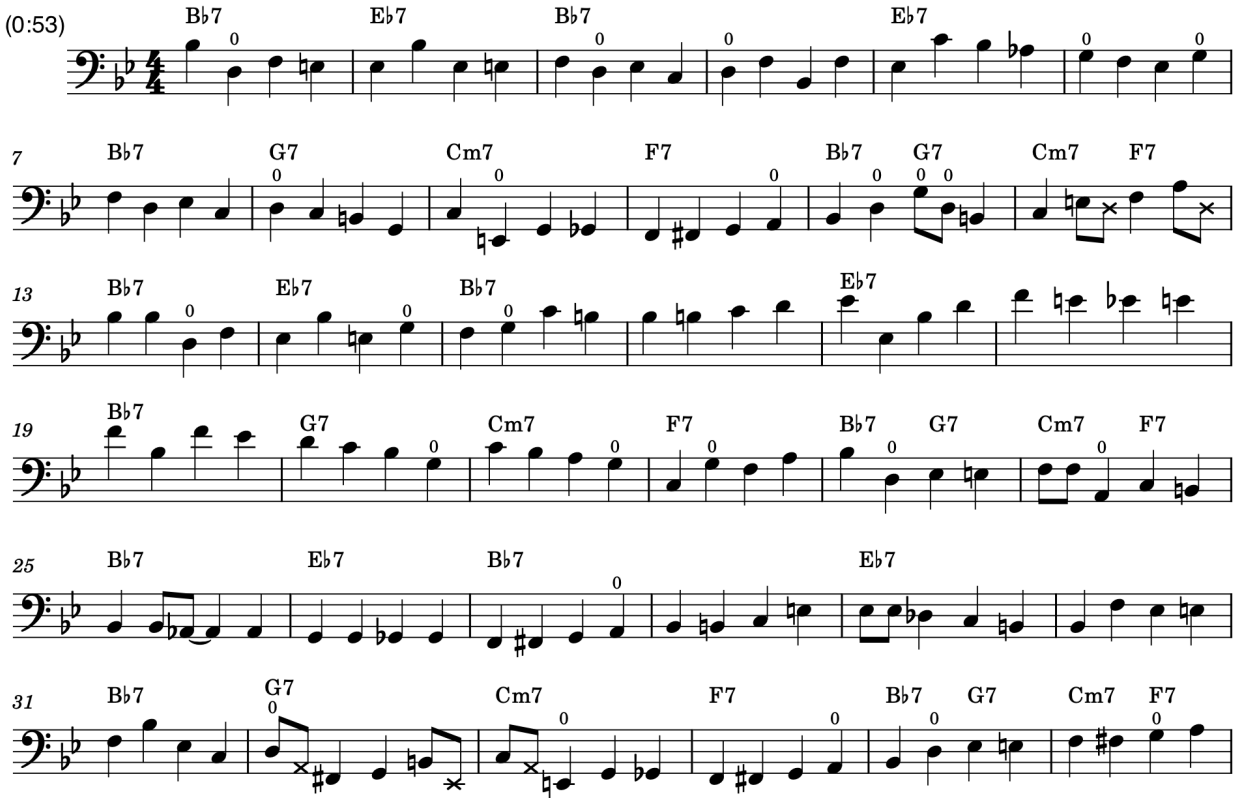

Figure 22: Excerpt of James Jamerson on electric bass. Untitled live performance with Dennis Coffey at Morey Baker's nightclub in Detroit, 1969.[70]

In Figure 22, Jamerson plays a traditional walking bass line over a blues progression on his electric bass. He displays mastery over several jazz double bass techniques: passing tones, raking, open strings, muted notes, contrast between the high and low ranges of the bass, and the use of non-root chord tones on strong beats. As guitarist Dennis Coffey said, "James didn't just play root and fifth. He played through the changes while keeping a great pocket."[71]

Jamerson brought an improvisational jazz mentality into his electric bass work at Motown Records. With the rest of the Funk Brothers often playing consistent, groove-based parts,

[70] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, audio track 18.
[71] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, audio track 18.

Jamerson felt “liberated from the necessity of constantly being a timekeeper”.[72] His improvised parts began to resemble melodies in their own right.

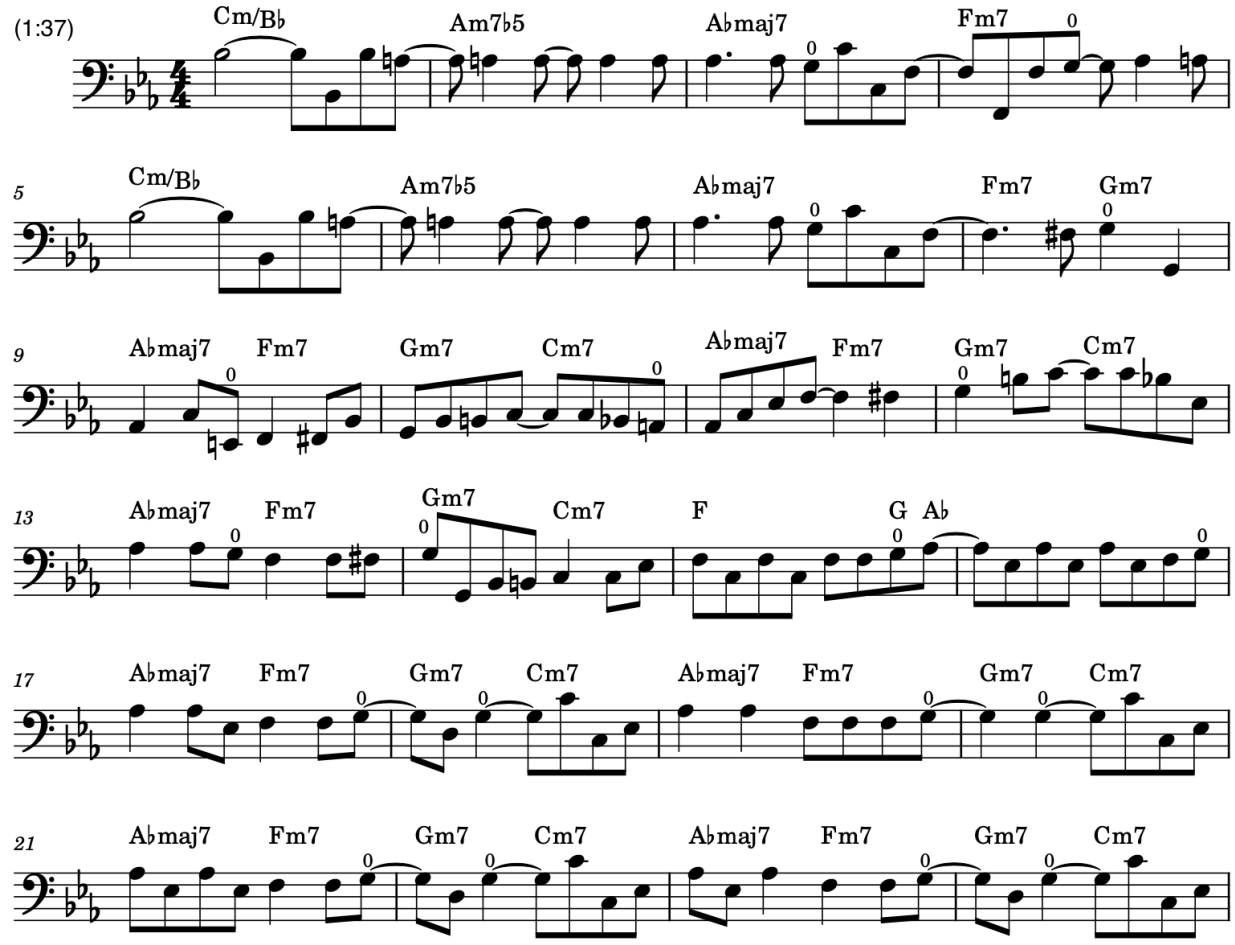

Figure 23: Excerpt of James Jamerson on electric bass. “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough” by Marvin Gaye & Tammi Terrell, 1967.[73]

In Figure 23, Jamerson plays the final verse and chorus of “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough”, a sophisticated composition from Valerie Ashford & Nicholas Simpson that features chromatically descending root motion from Bb to A to Ab. While Jamerson strongly states the

[72] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 32..
[73] Marvin Gaye & Tammi Terrell, *United,* Tamla 277, 1967, LP.

root motion during the verse, he also dances around it, arpeggiating the chords and using syncopated upbeat rhythms, anticipating the next downbeat to propel the song forward. Moving into the chorus, Jamerson continues to use syncopation and arpeggiation, but now adds chromatic passing tones, including an open E string in the ninth measure that resolves smoothly to F, despite E not being in the tonality of the Abmaj7 chord it is played over. In total, Jamerson does not merely embellish his part with jazz idioms, but plays a unique, fully contrapuntal bass line that complements the vocal melody. Speaking to this, Jamerson said:

> "When they gave me that chord sheet, I'd look at it, but then start doing what I felt and what I thought would fit. All the musicians did. All of them made hits. […]I'd hear the melody line from the lyrics and I'd build the bass line around that. I always tried to support the melody. I had to."[74]

In 1965, the ease that Jamerson developed on the electric bass over time combined with his changing taste to effect a shift in his playing style. Now able to execute incredibly nimble passages with less effort than on the double bass, Jamerson moved away from traditional walking bass parts and into a complex style, weaving tapestries of eighth notes, triplets, and sixteenth notes.[75]

[74] Forte, "Jamerson 1979: The Guitar Player Interview," 1979.
[75] Friedland, *The R&B Bass Masters*, 9.

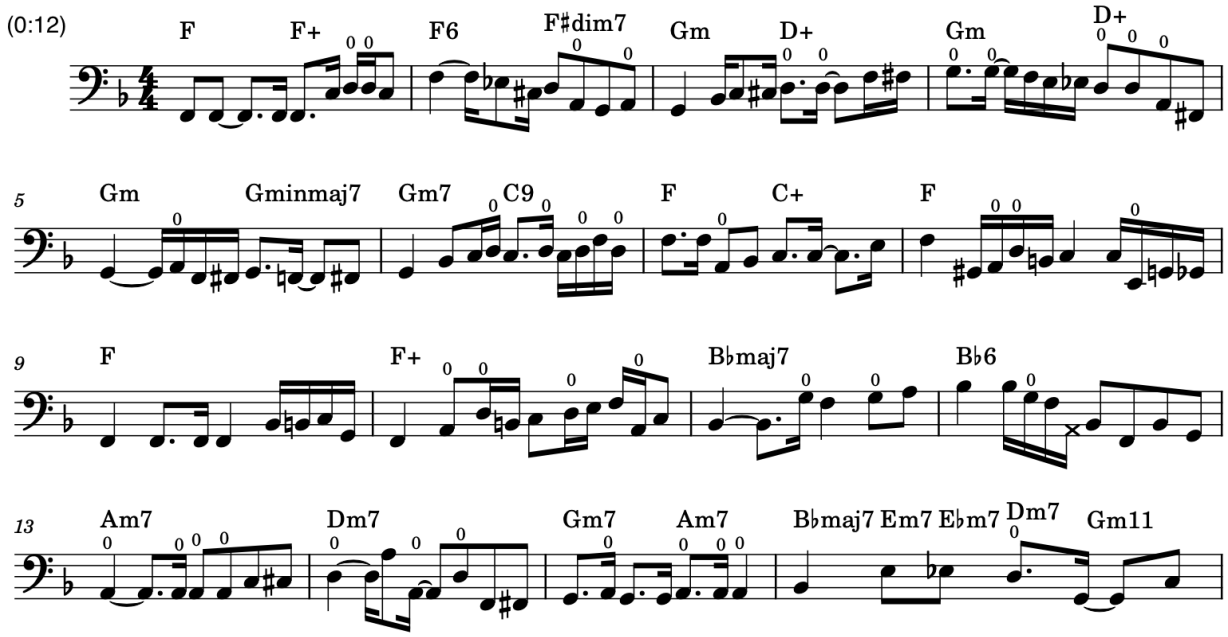

Figure 24: Excerpt of James Jamerson on electric bass. "For Once In My Life" by Stevie Wonder, 1968.[76]

In Figure 24, Jamerson demonstrates his new approach to the electric bass on "For Once In My Life". Passing tones, arpeggiation, muted notes, and open strings are still used liberally, but the syncopation is much more advanced than before. The combination of surprising sixteenth note rhythms and the unpredictably rising and falling melodic contour of Jamerson's line create a dazzling effect. Funk Brother Jack Ashford described Jamerson's new rhythmic approach: "[...]He could hear another time in his head and be playing cut time against what you were playing, and it would fit!". Agreeing with Ashford, bassist and producer Don Was commented: "You have to be absolutely fearless to play those notes in that place and yet be responsible for the bottom of the groove…".[77]

[76] Stevie Wonder, *For Once In My Life*, Tamla 291, 1968, LP.
[77] Justman, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 2002.

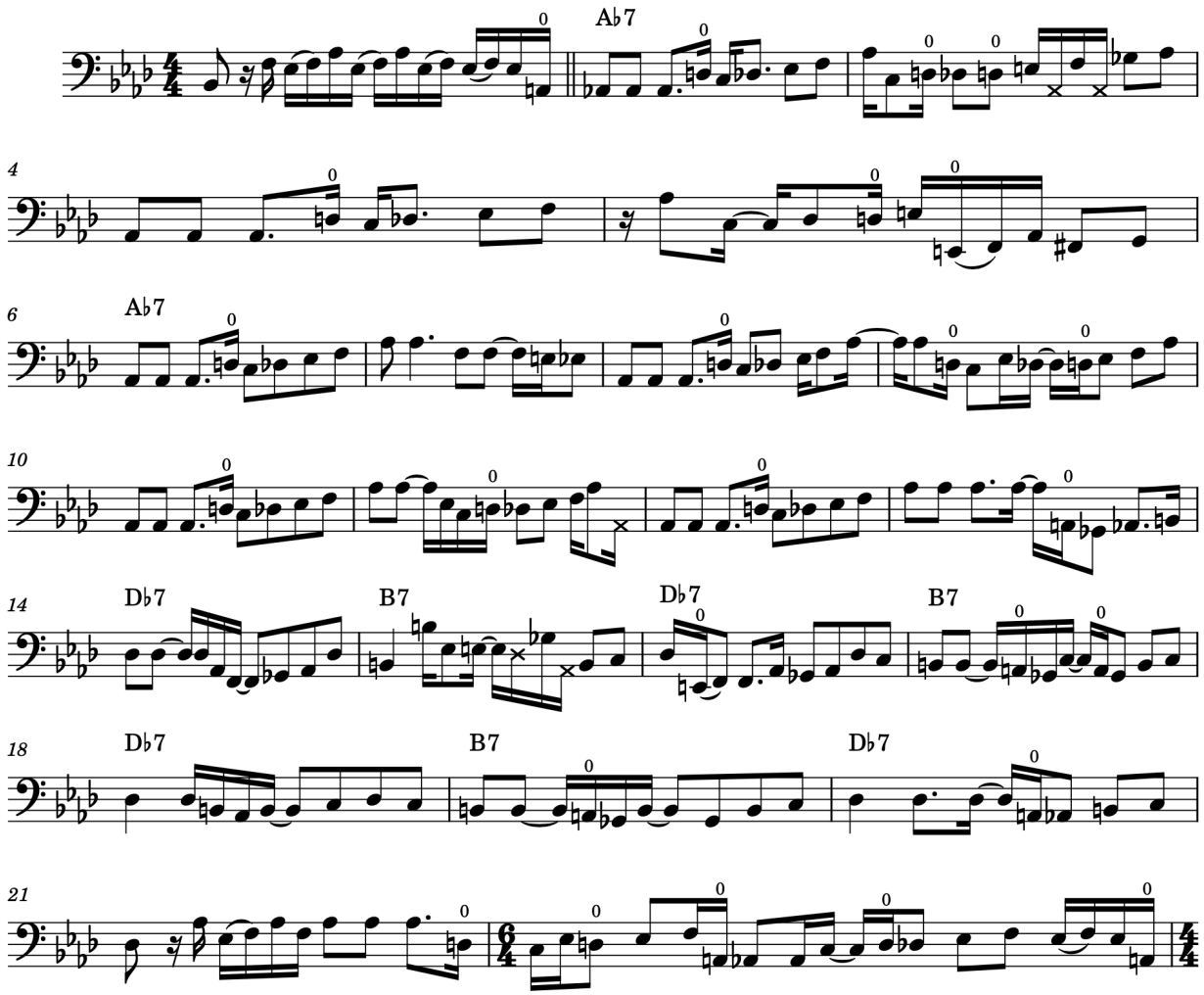

Figure 25: Excerpt of James Jamerson on electric bass. "Home Cookin'" by Jr. Walker and the All Stars.[78]

In Figure 25, Jamerson's bass line from "Home Cookin'" demonstrates a particularly iconic feature of his playing: the use of an ascending bass line over a static chord. Along with all of the usual embellishments like syncopation, open strings, muted notes, and hammer-ons, Jamerson routinely drops down a sixth from the root of the chord to its third degree and then

[78] Jr. Walker and the All Stars, *Home Cookin'*, Soul 710, 1969, LP.

climbs up to the fifth of the chord, sometimes continuing the ascent from the sixth of the chord back up to the root. This technique of dropping down from the root to the third and rising back upward is evident in lots of jazz walking bass lines, particularly those of Jamerson's heroes Ray Brown and Percy Heath. Jamerson's unique touch was to execute those pitch patterns with rhythmically fresh sixteenth note variations.

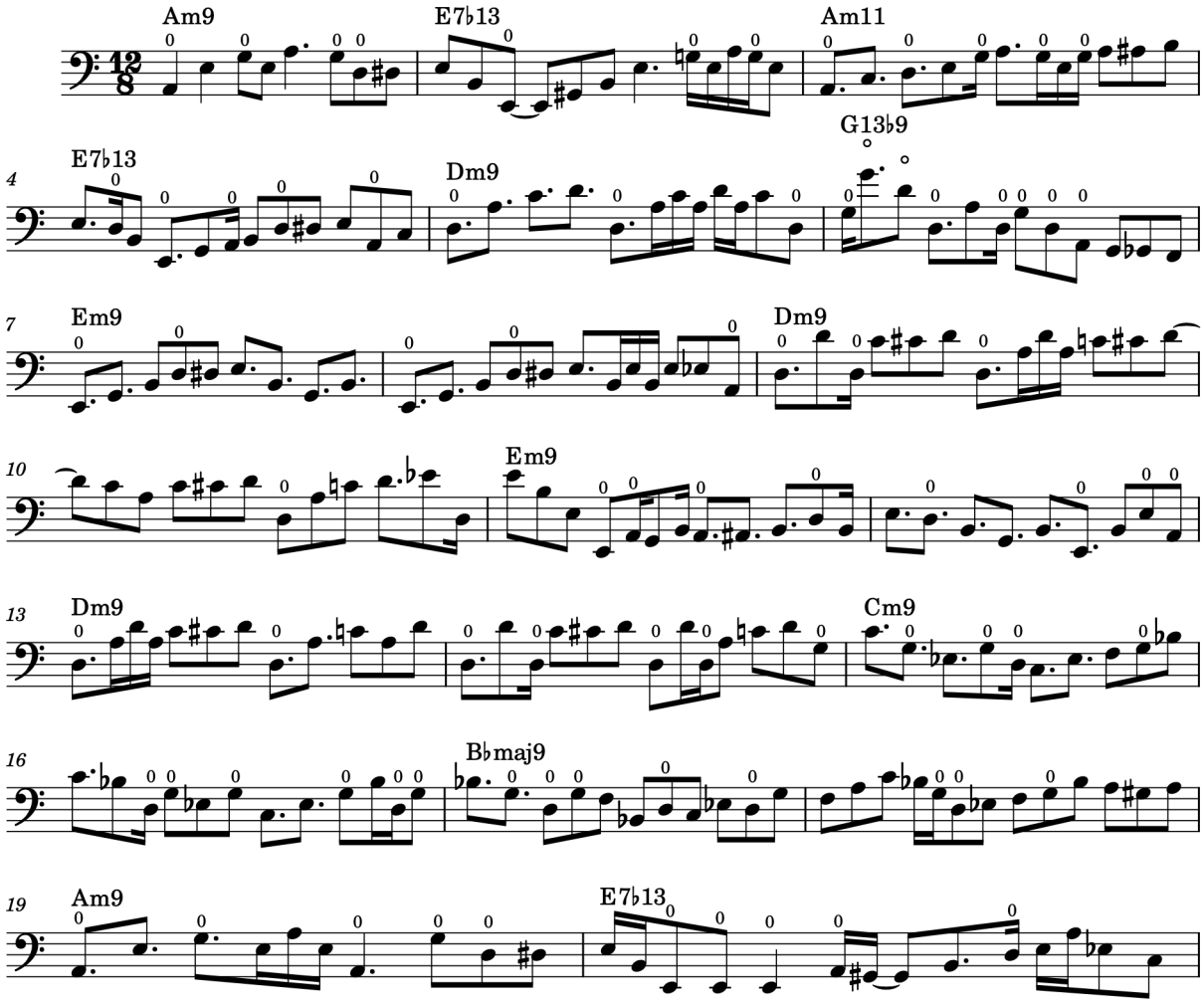

Figure 26: Excerpt of James Jamerson on electric bass. "Save The Children" by Marvin Gaye, 1971.[79]

[79] Marvin Gaye, *What's Going On*, Tamla 310, 1971, LP.

In Figure 26, Jamerson comes full-circle, performing in his unique R&B style on a groove that resembles a jazz waltz. While most Motown songs were in 4/4 time, Jamerson's jazz and gospel background clearly enabled him to be comfortable in triple meter. The rhythmic fluency on display in "Save The Children", along with the creative use of harmonics over the G13(b9) chord, evokes the busiest sections of jazz double bass lines by Ray Brown or Paul Chambers.

By the time his recording career began to slow down in the early 1970s, James Jamerson had changed the way the world heard the electric bass.[80] While his style drew upon the traditions of jazz, gospel, and R&B, it was utterly distinct from the guitar licks and sedate walking bass lines that had been heard on electric bass before him. The agility of his fingers on the electric bass allowed him to employ jazz bass ornaments in rapid succession, and his sixteenth note rhythmic concept paved the way for the "percolating" R&B and funk bassists that followed in his footsteps.[81]

[80] Considine, "James Jamerson: Jazzman Behind Motown Sound".
[81] Friedland, *The R&B Bass Masters*, 10.

SECTION V

CHUCK RAINEY

Background & Jazz Influences

Charles "Chuck" Walter Rainey III was born in the Cleveland, Ohio area in 1940. Before settling into his identity as an electric bassist in his 20s, he played violin, piano, trumpet, percussion, baritone horn, and electric guitar, in addition to singing baritone in a doo wop group.[8283] Growing up in a pentecostal church environment, Rainey heard many musicians and choir singers perform with an emphasis on driving rhythm and expressive emotionality.[84] His father was an amateur stride pianist who played the works of Fats Waller and Art Tatum as well as early jazz, blues, and ragtime recordings from artists like Louis Armstrong, Earl "Fatha" Hines, and Ma Rainey in their home.[85] Unlike James Jamerson, Chuck Rainey did not take to the double bass, although he did dabble in it briefly in high school.[86]

When Rainey picked up the electric bass to perform with R&B groups, some of his early influences were jazz double bassists Slam Stewart, Keter Betts, Ray Brown, and Percy Heath, as well as organist Jimmy Smith.[8788] Rainey's first serious performing opportunity was with R&B

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[82] Bill Milkowski and Barry Kernfeld, "Rainey, Chuck," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2002), accessed March 29, 2022, https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.J368900
[83] The Sessions Panel, "CHUCK RAINEY - Legendary bassist," YouTube video, uploaded 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EvEd38pHus
[84] The Sessions Panel, "CHUCK RAINEY - Legendary bassist," YouTube, 2015.
[85] Chris Jisi, "Groove Convergence! Will Lee Interviews Chuck Rainey, the 'Godfather of the Groove'," *Bass Player,* February 1997.
[86] Milkowski and Kernfeld, "Rainey, Chuck," *Grove Music Online,* 2002.
[87] The Sessions Panel, "CHUCK RAINEY - Legendary bassist," YouTube, 2015.
[88] The Official Xotic Guitars and Effects Channel, "Interview with Chuck Rainey at Detroit Bass Festival 2013 part2", YouTube video, uploaded 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJ_mVc6U_Fg

artist Big Jay McNeely in 1962. McNeely's repertoire included jazz, jump blues, and rock and roll, requiring lots of demanding walking bass lines from the young bassist. Rainey had to adapt to playing bebop standards and traditional jazz progressions like rhythm changes on his electric bass. McNeely's challenging repertoire helped Rainey develop the muscle strength and right hand technique that allowed him to execute intricate rhythms at fast tempos.[89]

First and foremost among Rainey's influences on electric bass was the work of James Jamerson on popular Motown songs. Rainey was expected to know the Motown repertoire when called upon at jam sessions. In his study of Jamerson's bass lines, Rainey quickly grew to admire and emulate Jamerson's busy rhythmic approach and use of jazz double bass techniques:

"Everything changed when I heard Motown on the radio. In terms of me playing bass, Jamerson gave me the keys to get into the house. In those days, I had to play a lot of Top-40 music, which meant a lot of Motown--and every time I had to learn one of James's lines, it would kick me in the butt and open my eyes a little wider. That really motivated me to study and evaluate what could be done with the instrument. Even though later events contributed to my approach on the instrument, I would certainly describe myself as a Jamerson-type bassist. I have a lot of his motion and sound in my style."[90]

Rainey did get to know James Jamerson personally as well.

"I first met James in 1960 at Keith's 105th Street Theatre in Cleveland, Ohio. I was appearing there with Big Jay McNeely and James was there with Smokey Robinson & The Miracles. We were both using the same kind of bass system and the same kind of bass, and I especially remember that his strings were set very high from the fingerboard on his instrument, on which I commented. And he also commented on my extremely low string setting on my bass [...] He made me feel very, very comfortable about using his amplifier for the next show, which I really thought was nice."[91]

[89] The Sessions Panel, "CHUCK RAINEY - Legendary bassist", 2015.
[90] Jisi, "Groove Convergence! Will Lee Interviews Chuck Rainey, the 'Godfather of the Groove'," 1997.
[91] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, audio track 12.

After moving to New York City in 1964 to join King Curtis's band, Rainey's skill on electric bass secured his position as a top call electric bassist on recording sessions in the area.[92] In 1972, he joined Quincy Jones's big band and moved to Los Angeles, where he found even more success.[93] In the 1960s and 1970s, Rainey played with a variety of pop acts beyond his steady gigs with King Curtis and Quincy Jones, including recordings with Aretha Franklin, Steely Dan, Etta James, Joe Cocker, Donny Hathaway, and Little Feat, among others. He also played with jazz artists such as Cannonball Adderley, Eddie Harris, Freddie Hubbard, Nancy Wilson, Ahmad Jamal, Red Holloway, Gato Barbieri, George Benson, Donald Byrd, Larry Coryell, Grant Green, The Crusaders, Gene Harris, Bobbi Humphrey, Richard Holmes, Lena Horne, and Yusef Lateef, among others. Rainey even played on Louis Armstrong's 1970 album, *Louis Armstrong and His Friends*, appearing on electric bass on some tracks while jazz double bassists Richard Davis and George Duvivier appeared on others. Davis and Duvivier, as well as Charles Mingus, Milt Hinton, and Bob Cranshaw, were some of the jazz bassists who personally influenced Rainey throughout his career.[94]

[92] Milkowski and Kernfeld, "Rainey, Chuck," *Grove Music Online, 2002*.
[93] Anonymous, "The Heart of a Bass Legend: How Chuck Rainey Found His Groove," *International Musician,* October 7 2016: 20.
[94] Jake Feinberg Show, "The Chuck Rainey Interview", YouTube video, uploaded 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snwj08CSWbY

Transcription & Analysis

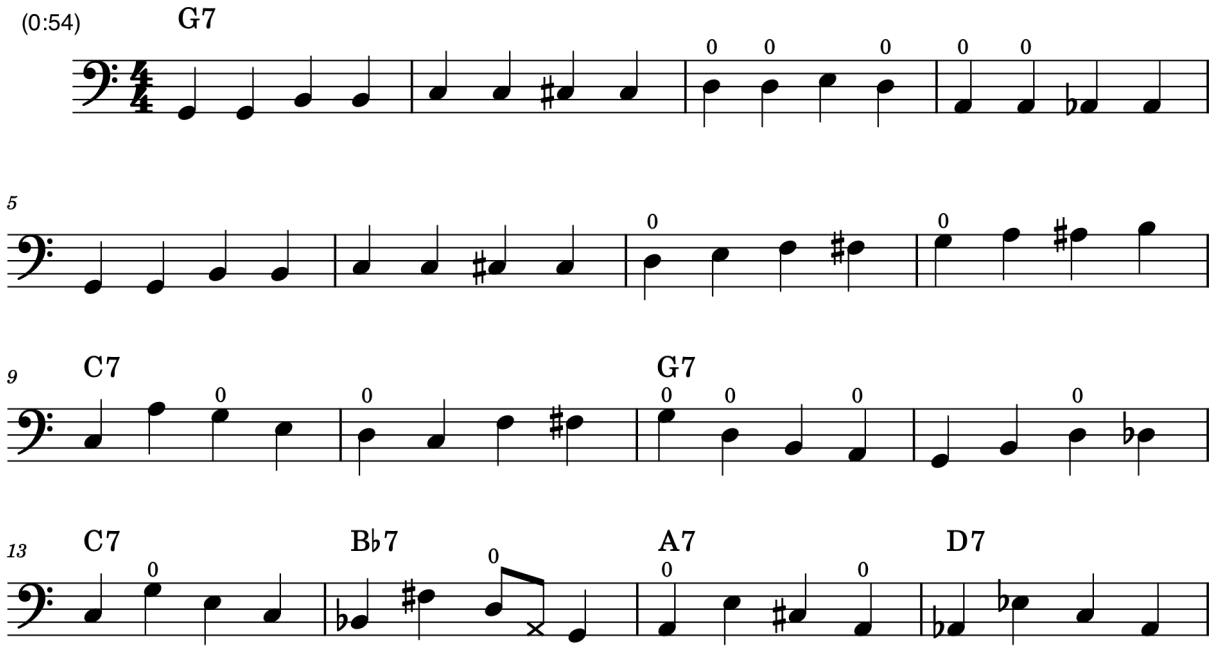

Figure 27: Excerpt of Chuck Rainey on electric bass. "Sister Sadie" by King Curtis, 1964.[95]

In Figure 27, Rainey plays a walking bass line at a blisteringly fast tempo, accompanying King Curtis through an arrangement of Horace Silver's "Sister Sadie". Rainey's approach to the jump blues style on electric bass is one he cultivated in his time with Big Jay McNeely's band, intentionally emphasizing long, legato notes and playing with his right index and middle fingers instead of the thumb technique he started with as a beginner.[96][97] In an interview, Rainey describes his ideal aesthetic on the instrument:

"A good clean and round 'traditional' bass tone - traditionally referring to the sound and feel of an organ bass or upright bass in popular music during the 50's, 60's & early 70's. In

[95] King Curtis, *Tanya / Sister Sadie*, Capitol 5324, 1964, Single.
[96] Jake Feinberg Show, YouTube, 2015.
[97] The Sessions Panel, "CHUCK RAINEY - Legendary bassist," YouTube, 2015.

particular, the sound and feel of the organ bass in gospel music in the late 40‘s up thru to the late 80‘s, either with the left foot or left hand bass execution. Then of course there is the sound and feel of the upright bass in traditional ‘Jazz’ of the 40’s up thru to present day - both instruments are combinations of how I hear and feel the bass as an electric bass player.”[98]

Rainey’s lines in Figure 27 provide an instructive mixture of jazz bass techniques: arpeggiation of chords, strategic use of open strings, and many rising chromatic lines that Rainey refers to as “walkups”.[99] In the final measure of the excerpt, Rainey plays an Ab major arpeggio over a D7 chord, superimposing a tritone substitution in classic jazz bass fashion.

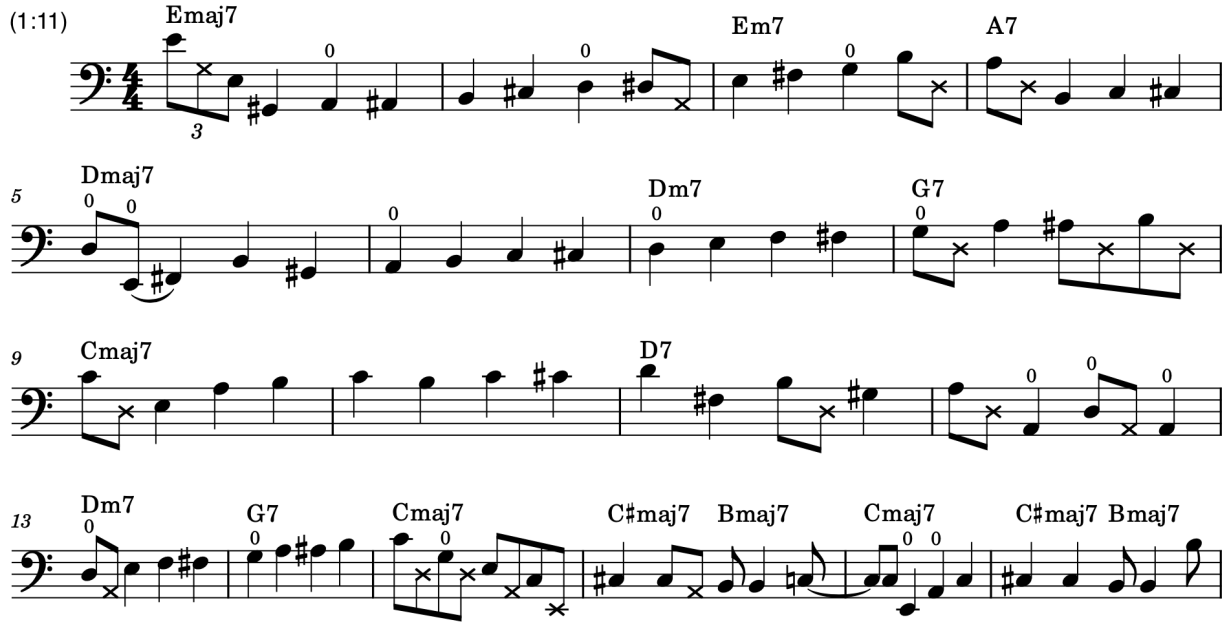

Figure 28 Excerpt of Chuck Rainey on electric bass. “Watch What Happens” by Lena Horne and Gabor Szabo, 1970.[100]

In Figure 28, Rainey mimics the rhythmic, timbral, and tonal approaches of a jazz double bassist, intentionally channeling the vocabulary of Ray Brown over the bridge and A sections of

[98] Michael Liminos, “Chuck Rainey: The Guru of Music & Life,” blues.gr, April 19, 2012, accessed March 29, 2022. https://blues.gr/profiles/blogs/an-interview-with-legendary-bass-player-chuck-rainey
[99] San Yana, “Chuck Rainey Groovin’ Bass”, YouTube video, uploaded 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mPZ9g5xlSM
[100] Lena Horne & Gabor Szabo, *Watch What Happens*, Buddah 18-SK, 1970, LP.

"Watch What Happens".[101] The excerpt features many of the jazz double bass techniques outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis, including rakes, the use of open strings, muted notes, chromatic passing tones, arpeggiation, syncopation, and even a hammer-on over the Dmaj7 chord. Describing his love of jazz, Rainey said:

"Jazz offers me an ability to reach farther into the many networks and extensions of harmony, rhythm and music theory. It challenges memory, execution, improvisation skills and an ability to maintain the role of my instrument."[102]

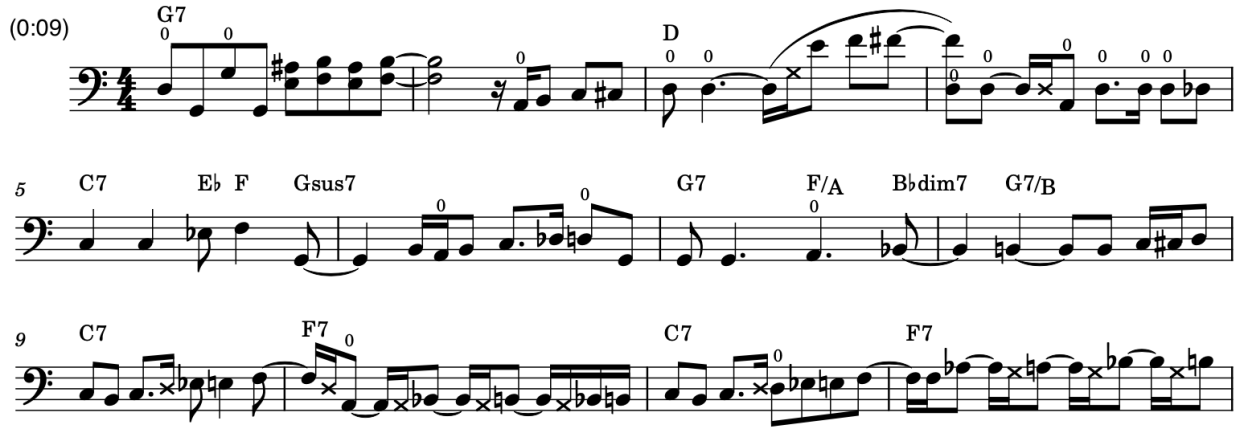

Figure 29: Excerpt of Chuck Rainey on electric bass. "The Streetbeater" by Quincy Jones, 1973.[103]

In Figure 29, Rainey demonstrates a funk/R&B pattern. In the first four measures of the excerpt, Rainey employs double stops, sliding between the E and A# diad and the F and B diad before moving on to an open D string with a high F#. Rainey became particularly well known for his use of these double stops.[104]

[101] The Official Xotic Guitars and Effects Channel, "Interview with Chuck Rainey at Detroit Bass Festival 2013 part4", YouTube video, uploaded 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCc0blDmvZA
[102] Liminos, "Chuck Rainey: The Guru of Music & Life," 2012.
[103] Quincy Jones, *You've Got It Bad Girl,* A&M SP-3041, 1973, LP.
[104] Friedland, *The R&B Bass Masters*, 19.

The climbing bass lines that Rainey referred to as “walkups” are on display here, with sixteenth note rhythms clearly inspired by James Jamerson. In Jamerson’s biography Standing in the Shadows of Motown: The Life and Music of Legendary Bassist James Jamerson, Rainey offered these words:

”I have really confirmed to myself how much of an influence this man has had on my style of playing certain rhythms, ghost notes, and some feels. I have definitely emulated his choice of notes and rhythms throughout my career, and through him, that was one way that I found my groove and found my way.”[105]

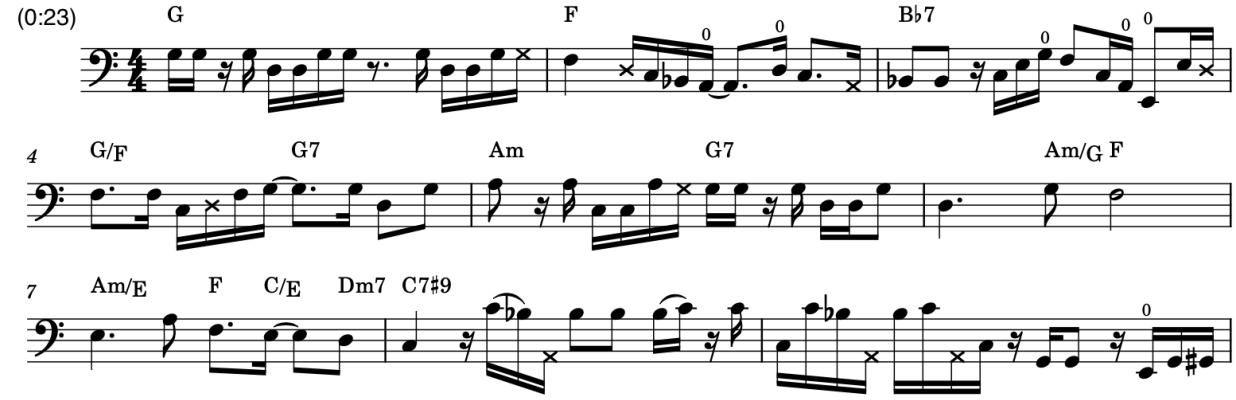

Figure 30: Excerpt of Chuck Rainey on electric bass. “Kid Charlemagne” by Steely Dan, 1976.[106]

As the 1970s progressed, Rainey’s reputation as a top call session bassist brought him into many different musical settings, including the jazz-tinged pop rock recording sessions of Steely Dan. In Figure 30, Rainey’s line on “Kid Charlemagne” is heavily syncopated and rhythmic, and in the third bar of the excerpt, Rainey superimposes Am and Em chords over the Bb7 played by the ensemble. This jazzy flourish works to set up the G/F in the following bar by chromatic approach.

[105] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, audio track 12.
[106] Steely Dan, *The Royal Scam*, ABC 5161, 1976, LP.

By this time, funk bassist and slap technique innovator Larry Graham had made a big impact on electric bassists, and, as he does in this excerpt, Rainey would frequently add flair to his bass lines by switching between his usual fingerstyle and the thump-and-pluck style that Graham popularized. “Kid Charlemagne” also features Rainey’s frequent collaborator Bernard Purdie on drums. Purdie’s active, funky drum grooves inspired Rainey to approach his electric bass like a “melodic drum” here and on many other recordings.[107]

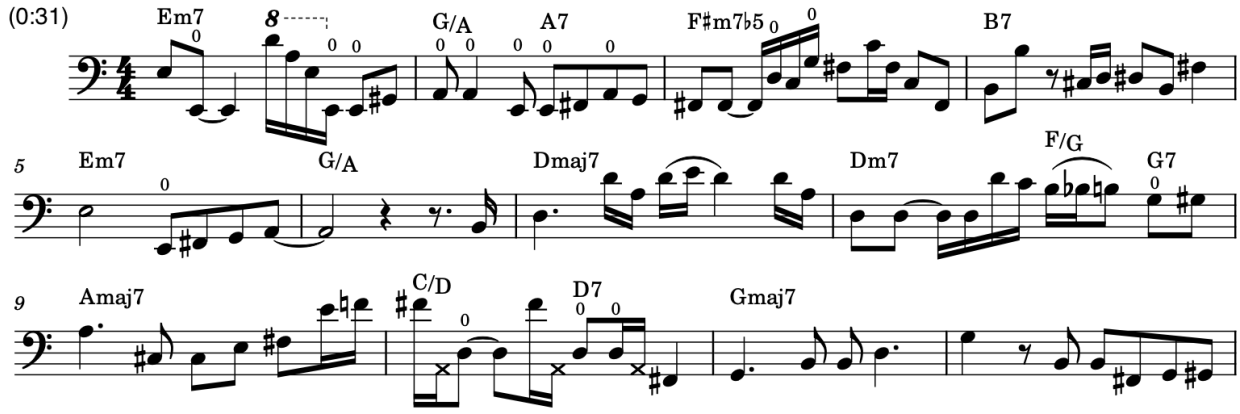

Figure 31: Excerpt of Chuck Rainey on electric bass. “Until You Come Back To Me” by Aretha Franklin, 1974.[108]

In Figure 31, Rainey demonstrates a natural command of sophisticated jazz harmony and funky sixteenth note rhythms while accompanying Aretha Franklin’s vocal lines on “Until You Come Back To Me”. In the first bar of the excerpt, Rainey plays a surprising Em11 arpeggio that makes use of the open E to span the entire three octave range of the electric bass. His passing tones, arpeggiation, and bouncy melodic contour are executed in the Jamerson style, but he also slips in double stops, grace notes, and slides in his own unique ways.[109]

[107] The Sessions Panel, “CHUCK RAINEY - Legendary bassist,” YouTube, 2015.
[108] Aretha Franklin, *Let Me In Your Life,* Atlantic 7292, 1974, LP.
[109] San Yana, “Chuck Rainey Groovin’ Bass”, YouTube, 2016.

Rainey's early 1960s experiences playing jump blues and jazz meant that he understood the double bass roots of Jamerson's impressive electric bass lines. Not only was Rainey able to play like James Jamerson, but he was able to innovate like James Jamerson, bringing other jazz double bass techniques such as double stops, grace notes, and use of the extreme high register into the lexicon of R&B electric bass. As James Jamerson's career slowed down in the 1970s, Chuck Rainey proved himself to be one of the most important torchbearers of the R&B electric bass legacy.

SECTION VI

WILTON FELDER

Background & Jazz Influences

Wilton Felder was born in Houston, Texas in 1940, the same year as Chuck Rainey.[110] He started playing saxophone in junior high school and cites Stan Getz, Gerry Mulligan, Chet Baker, Cannonball Adderley, and Bobby Timmons as major influences that inspired his lifelong love of jazz.[111][112] Living in Texas, Felder was also brought up in the traditions of gospel, blues, and country music that were prominent there.[113]

As a young man, Felder played jazz saxophone with colleagues Joe Sample and Nesbert "Stix" Hooper in a band called The Swingsters. They would later change their name to The Modern Jazz Sextet, The Nighthawks, The Jazz Crusaders, and eventually, The Crusaders.[114] The group initially played a combination of east coast hard bop, west coast cool jazz, and Texas blues, which was particularly well served by Felder's emotive saxophone style.[115][116]

Eventually, Felder's band moved to Los Angeles, where union regulations initially prohibited them from most jazz performance opportunities. To earn a living, the group began to play commercial music, which proved to be beneficial to their sound as genres blended and fused

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[110] Thomas Owens, "Felder, Wilton," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2002–), accessed March 29, 2022. https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.J147700
[111] Jake Feinberg Show, "The Wilton Felder Interview", YouTube video, uploaded 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtgKkCLdlAM
[112] Jake Feinberg Show, "The Wilton Felder Interview", YouTube, 2021.
[113] Jake Feinberg Show, "The Wilton Felder Interview", YouTube, 2021.
[114] Owens, "Felder, Wilton," *Grove Music Online*, 2002–.
[115] Jake Feinberg Show, "The Wilton Felder Interview", YouTube, 2021.
[116] Owens, "Felder, Wilton," *Grove Music Online*, 2002–.

throughout the 1960s and 1970s.[117] Although The Crusaders achieved their greatest success with the single “Street Life” in 1979, Felder and the other members took part in many other musical ventures in Los Angeles.

In 1968, Felder came into the possession of an electric bass, given to him by a nightclub owner. He taught himself how to play the instrument so that he could relieve keyboardist Joe Sample from having to accompany himself on the organ. While he never played the double bass, Felder brought a strong jazz concept to the electric bass, developed in his many years as a jazz saxophonist.[118]

Like Chuck Rainey and the other great bassists of the time, Felder was influenced heavily by James Jamerson. Speaking on this influence, Felder said:

> "Jamerson's style was unique, from the heart, and earthy. He had an innate sense of the bass's role, but at the same time, he knew how to play freely while keeping the groove going. He could hear a song and instantly know where it was going, where he was able to stretch, and where playing less would mean more. And his bass lines always went with the vocalist and melody. Whatever he played, he meant it and you felt it, yet he was able to add the nuances that gave his parts so much expression. He's the godfather of the electric bass."[119]

Felder’s prowess as a jazz saxophonist was equaled by his versatility and dependability as a modern electric bassist, which won him a strong reputation in the recording studios of Los Angeles. He recorded in many different genres, often blurring the lines between jazz, pop, rock, R&B, and soul. Some of the notable artists Felder recorded with include jazz greats Archie Shepp, Stanley Turrentine, Jean-Luc Ponty, Grant Green, Jimmy Smith, Donald Byrd, Nancy Wilson, Carmen McRae, Milt Jackson, Blue Mitchell, and Dizzy Gillespie, as well as pop stars

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[117] Jake Feinberg Show, “The Wilton Felder Interview”, YouTube, 2021.
[118] Jake Feinberg Show, “The Wilton Felder Interview”, YouTube, 2021.
[119] Chris Jisi, “James Jamerson: Motown,” *Bass Player*, Supplement 2009: 22-23.

Billy Joel, Joni Mitchell, Shuggie Otis, Joan Baez, John Cale, The Four Tops, The Jackson 5, and Seals & Crofts, among others.

Transcription & Analysis

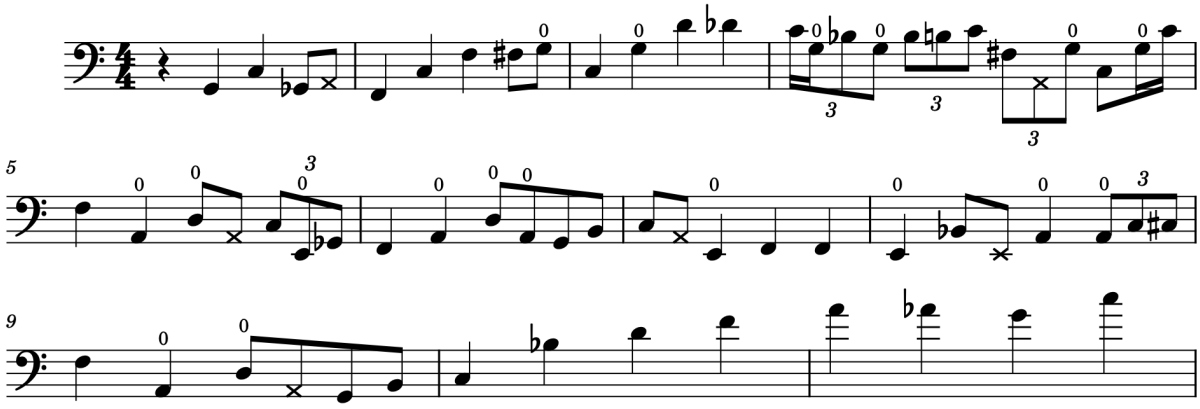

Figure 32: Excerpt of Wilton Felder on electric bass. "Introduction by Hank Stewart" at a live performance by Grant Green, 1972.[120]

In Figure 32, Felder improvises an unaccompanied walking bass line, loosely resembling a blues progression. His demonstration of jazz double bass vocabulary, while awkward, is impressive given his complete lack of experience on the double bass. Felder makes use of passing tones, open strings, muted notes, and rhythmic embellishments in a way that indicates his familiarity with jazz double bass concepts. Befitting his experience as a saxophonist, he makes large leaps frequently and varies the rhythm surprisingly.

[120] Grant Green, *Live At The Lighthouse*, Blue Note BN-LA037-G2, 1972, LP.

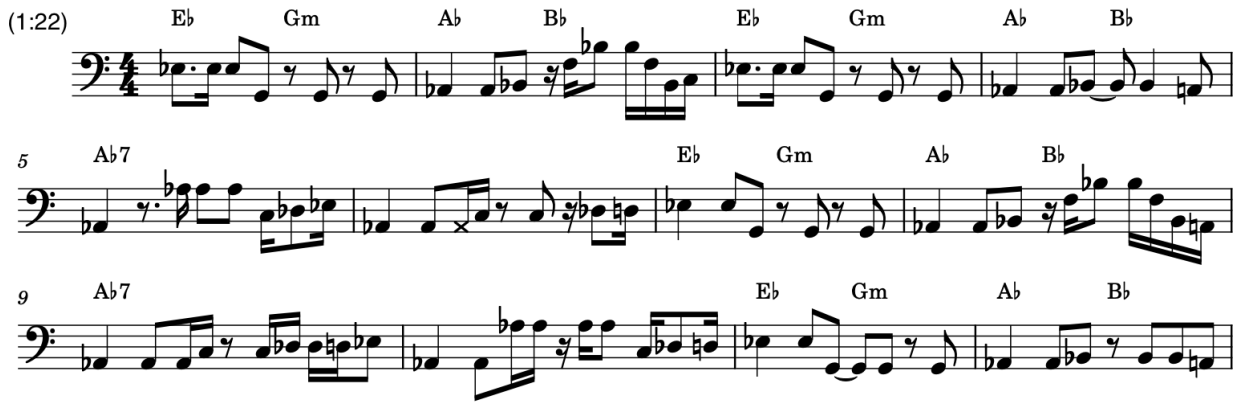

Figure 33: Excerpt of Wilton Felder on electric bass. "Let's Get It On" by Marvin Gaye, 1973.[121]

In Figure 33, Felder plays a rhythmically varied bass line as he enters the bridge of "Let's Get It On". The stuttering walkups, arpeggios, and chromatic passing tones of jazz double bassists and James Jamerson are present, but in a moderate and restrained manner. Felder's tasteful balance between repetitive, foundational patterns and modern, dynamic variations is notable.

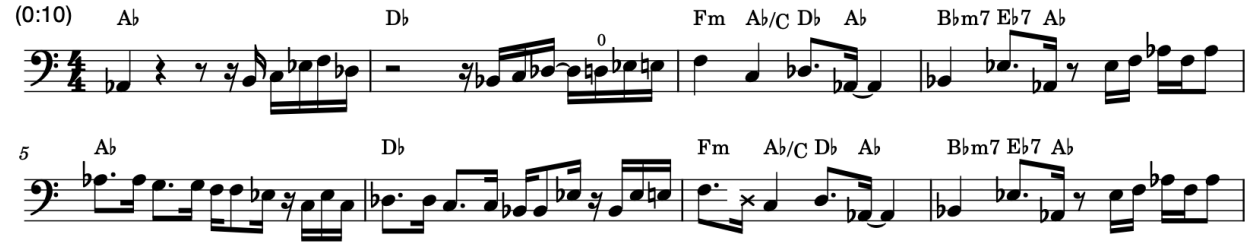

Figure 34: Excerpt of Wilton Felder on electric bass. "I Want You Back" by The Jackson 5, 1969.

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In Figure 34, Wilton Felder uses chromatic passing tones and rhythmic anticipations on "I Want You Back" in a regimented way, repeating the complex lines verbatim throughout the

[121] Marvin Gaye, *Let's Get It On*, Tamla 329V1, 1973, LP.
[122] The Jackson 5, *I Want You Back* / *Who's Lovin' You*, Motown 1157, 1969. Single.

song to create a sense of structure. “I Want You Back”, like many other R&B hits of the late 1960s and 1970s, was arranged with more specificity than the early Motown recordings, as Felder explains:

"The bass part, which essentially mirrors and counters the melody, was mostly written out; I added just a bit of myself to it. [...] The bass is all about how you get from one chord to another and from one downbeat to the next. A lot of the notes, false notes, and rhythms I play in between come from my sax experience as well as from James Jamerson's influence."[123]

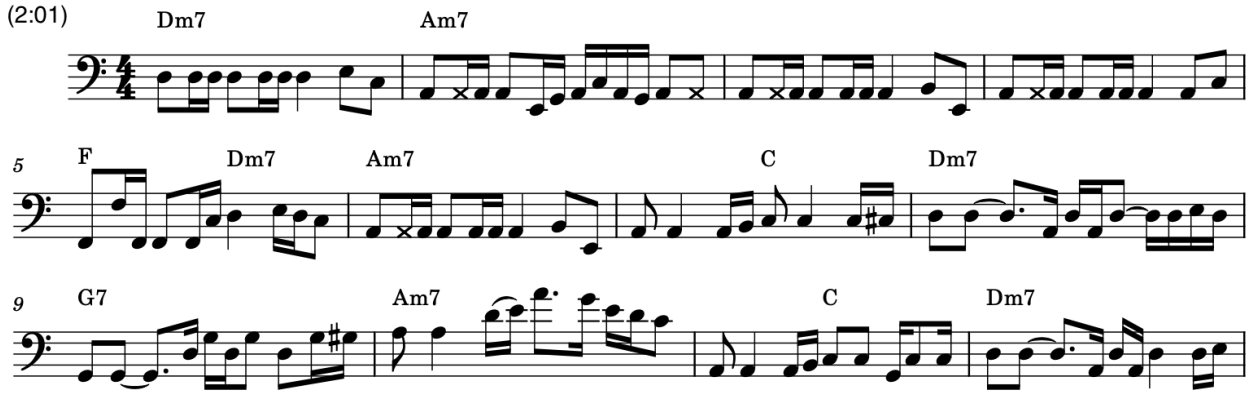

Figure 35: Excerpt of Wilton Felder on electric bass. “Ain’t No Love in the Heart of the City” by Bobby “Blue” Bland, 1978.[124]

In Figure 35, Felder plays one of his signature funky, well-structured bass lines on “Ain’t No Love In the Heart of the City”. Keeping his melodic contour relatively flat, Felder mostly uses varied sixteenth note rhythms with the simple root motion to drive the song forward. Choosing his moment to fill, Felder slides into the high register and back down for just one brief measure, adding some of his personal flair without taking as many liberties as Jamerson may

[123] Chris Jisi, “The Jackson 5’s ‘I Want You Back’: A Complete Transcription of Wilton Felder’s Bass Line”, *Bass Player,* February 1997: 83-86.
[124] Bland, Bobby, *Ain’t No Love in the Heart of the City*, Dunhill 15003, 1974, Single.

have done in the same position. The difference in approach between Felder, Rainey, and Jamerson parallels the contrasting approaches of the jazz double bassists; while Percy Heath played fewer flashy licks than Ray Brown on average, they are both considered masters of their craft with different personal approaches to improvising bass lines.

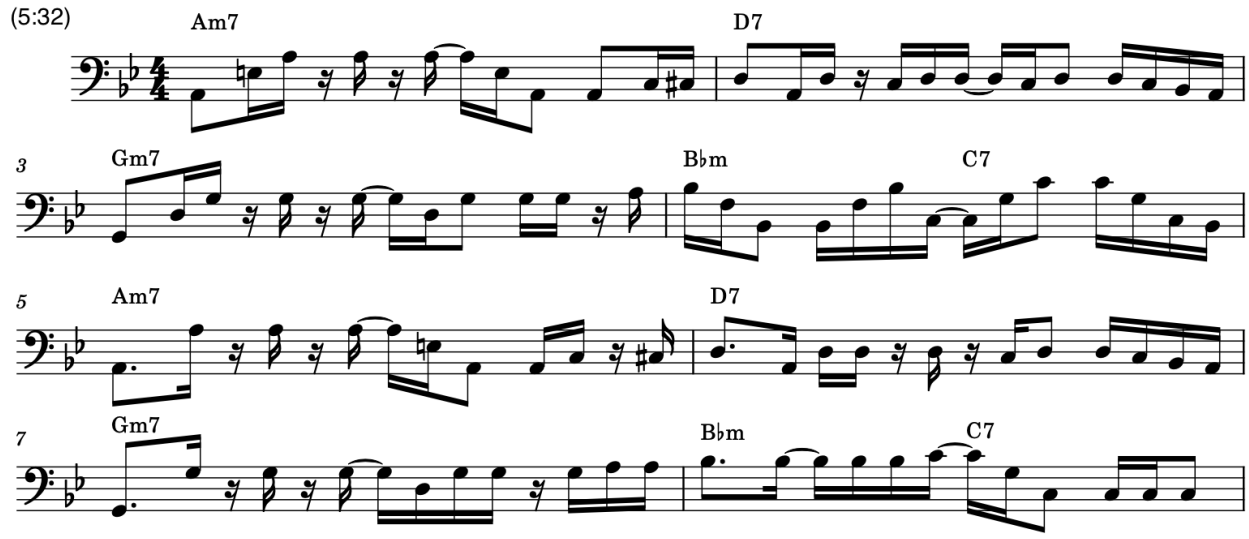

Figure 36: Excerpt of Wilton Felder on electric bass. "Never Never Gonna Give Ya Up" by Barry White, 1973.[125]

In Figure 36, Felder employs subtle variations in his fast sixteenth note lines to create excitement as the track "Never Never Gonna Give Ya Up" drives toward its conclusion. While he insists on repeating certain rhythmic motifs at the beginning of each two-bar phrase, Felder's interstitial material is varied and sometimes flashy, as in the rapidly rising and falling melodic contour of the fourth bar of the excerpt. Felder's mastery of syncopated sixteenth notes is on display in this excerpt, with the groove intact despite no two measures being identical.

[125] Barry White, *Never, Never Gonna Give Ya Up*, 20th Century 2058, 1973, Single.

Better known to many for his career as a jazz saxophonist, Wilton Felder claims a unique place in R&B electric bass history as a successful multi-instrumentalist. Seeing the bandstand from the perspectives of both the featured saxophonist and the accompanying bassist, he had impeccable acumen for when to keep bass lines simple and when to make them more dynamic and ornamental.

SECTION VII

NATHAN WATTS

Background & Jazz Influences

Born in Detroit, Michigan in 1954, Nathan Watts started playing music at the same time and in the same place that Motown Records was establishing itself.[126] As a child, Watts used to walk by the Motown building and look through the windows into the "snakepit" where the Funk Brothers were recording tracks.[127] He came to know James Jamerson well enough that he would casually call the older bassist "dad".[128]

Exposed to music in church and in his elementary school, Watts first picked up the trumpet as a child.[129] Since he was coming up in Detroit, Watts benefitted from the mentorship of Funk Brothers such as Earl Van Dyke and Robert White, as well as Motown saxophonists Ernie Rodgers and Kasuku Mafia (also known as Norris Patterson), who taught Watts and his schoolmates to play big band jazz.[130][131] While Watts's early goal in music was to play the trumpet as well as Lee Morgan, his love of jazz was complicated when schoolmate and lifelong friend Ray Parker Jr. convinced Watts to switch to electric bass.[132] Together, the two friends learned and

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[126] Chris Jisi, "Bass Line of Wonder: Nathan Watts," *Bass Player*, June 2010: 26-35.
[127] Ivan Big Ive Williams, "DETROIT BASS ROYALTY "NATE WATTS" INTERVIEW," YouTube video, uploaded 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZR8eZvjoAqc
[128] natewattsmusic, "Up Close and Personal with Nathan Watts (part 1)," YouTube video, uploaded 2010. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0aSZCZxU_Q
[129] Australian Musician, "NAMM SHOW 2019: NATE WATTS (Stevie Wonder) INTERVIEW," YouTube video, uploaded 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xbnDDn6ZEM
[130] Ivan Big Ive Williams, "DETROIT BASS ROYALTY "NATE WATTS" INTERVIEW," YouTube, 2018.
[131] bassfrontiersmag, "Nathan Watts of Stevie Wonder Video Interview," YouTube video, uploaded 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hw0AVZh2Vck
[132] Australian Musician, "NAMM SHOW 2019: NATE WATTS (Stevie Wonder) INTERVIEW," YouTube, 2019.

recreated their favorite songs from popular rock acts of the day such as Jimi Hendrix and Steppenwolf.[133][134] Watts also studied the R&B bass lines of Chuck Rainey, Joseph "Lucky Scott", and most importantly, James Jamerson:

"When I first started playing bass, we had no better teacher than the one that was on all the records, and that was Jamerson. I mean, if you learned even half of the Motown songs we grew up with, you can learn how to play bass very fast!"[135][136]

It did not take Watts long to find himself among high level musicians. Shortly after his first recording session in Detroit, Watts found himself in Los Angeles, auditioning for and ultimately winning the position of electric bassist in Stevie Wonder's band, a position Watts has held to the date of this writing.[137] Wonder, another Detroit native, had grown up in the "snakepit" taking music lessons from the Funk Brothers, including James Jamerson, and was specifically looking for a bassist who would bring the Detroit flavor into his band.[138][139][140]

Working with Stevie Wonder is an experience that Watts describes as attending the "Wonder school of music".[141] The influence of jazz on Watts, already potent in 1974, was

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[133] Australian Musician, "NAMM SHOW 2019: NATE WATTS (Stevie Wonder) INTERVIEW," YouTube, 2019.
[134] natewattsmusic, "Up Close and Personal with Nathan Watts (part 1)," YouTube, 2010.
[135] Australian Musician, "NAMM SHOW 2019: NATE WATTS (Stevie Wonder) INTERVIEW," YouTube, 2019.
[136] Rick Suchow, "Nathan Watts: The Groove of Wonder," *Bass Musician Magazine,* February 1, 2011. https://bassmusicianmagazine.com/2011/02/bass-musician-magazine-featuring-nathan-watts-february-2011-issue/
[137] Bass PlayerMag, "Nate Watts at Bass Player LIVE! 2013," YouTube video, uploaded 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjwsLNjOQh4
[138] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 171.
[139] Ivan Big Ive Williams, "DETROIT BASS ROYALTY "NATE WATTS" INTERVIEW," YouTube, 2018.
[140] Hartke, "Kickback with Nate Watts (Stevie Wonder)," YouTube video, uploaded 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dTZKkshhKs
[141] Ivan Big Ive Williams, "DETROIT BASS ROYALTY "NATE WATTS" INTERVIEW," YouTube, 2018.

escalated to new heights by the time he made his first appearance on a Stevie Wonder album, *Songs In The Key of Life*, in 1976.

In addition to his exceptional work with Stevie Wonder, Watts had significant recording credits with The Jacksons, Lenny Williams, Harvey Mason, Sergio Mendes, Deniece Williams, and Gilberto Gil by the early 1980s.

With his aggressive tone, three-fingered right hand attack, and high-action electric bass tuned down a half step, Watts's bass lines sometimes sound and feel very different from those of James Jamerson.[142] However, Watts does count himself as someone who "would take Jamerson's style and twist it to fit".[143] Watts's singing, melodic approach to the bass is truly appropriate for a man who Jamerson himself called "son".

Transcription & Analysis

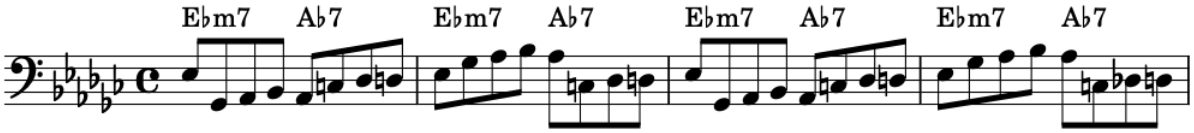

Figure 37: Excerpt of Nathan Watts on electric bass. "I Wish" by Stevie Wonder, 1976.[144]

In Figure 37, Watts plays a repetitive walking pattern in eighth notes on "I Wish". This line, played with Watt's sharp right hand attack, incorporates the dropping and climbing aspects of a jazz bass line, including a chromatic "walkup" at the end of each bar. Similar to "I Want You Back" and many other songs of the era, "I Wish" takes a relatively complex line and repeats it

[142] natewattsmusic, "Up Close and Personal with Nathan Watts (part 1)," YouTube, 2010.
[143] Hartke, "Kickback with Nate Watts (Stevie Wonder)," YouTube, 2019.
[144] Stevie Wonder, *Songs in the Key of Life*, Tamla T13-340C2, 1976, LP.

precisely throughout the song, as opposed to a more improvisational approach over chord changes.

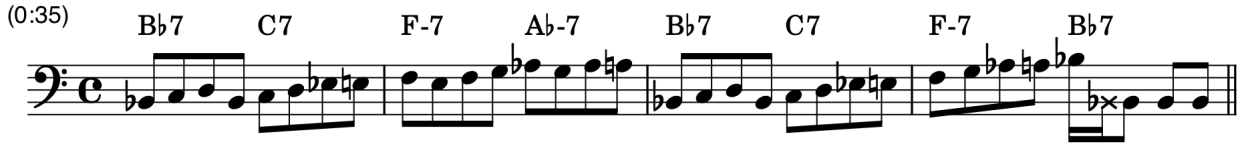

Figure 38: Excerpt of Nathan Watts on electric bass. "I Wish" by Stevie Wonder, 1976.[145]

In Figure 38, Watts plays the prechorus pattern of "I Wish", continuing the walking texture of the previous sections while outlining new chords. The descending major seventh interval from A to Bb in the second and third bars contributes to the jazzy, angular feeling of the section.

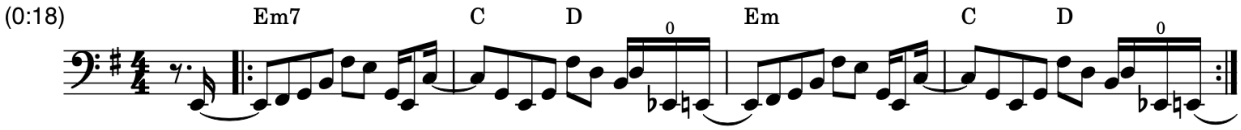

Figure 39: Excerpt of Nathan Watts on electric bass. "This Place Hotel" by The Jacksons, 1980.[146]

In Figure 39, Watts plays the arpeggiated, anticipated walking bass pattern from "This Place Hotel". Watts leaps down to an open string as a passing tone, applying the jazz double bass technique to a more modern, funky pattern, tuned down a half step down from standard tuning. The Eb that serves as a passing tone over the Bm chord is played on Watt's lowest open string, preceding the low E on the first fret.

[145] Stevie Wonder, *Songs in the Key of Life*, Tamla T13-340C2, 1976, LP.
[146] The Jacksons, *Triumph,* Epic 86112, 1980, LP.

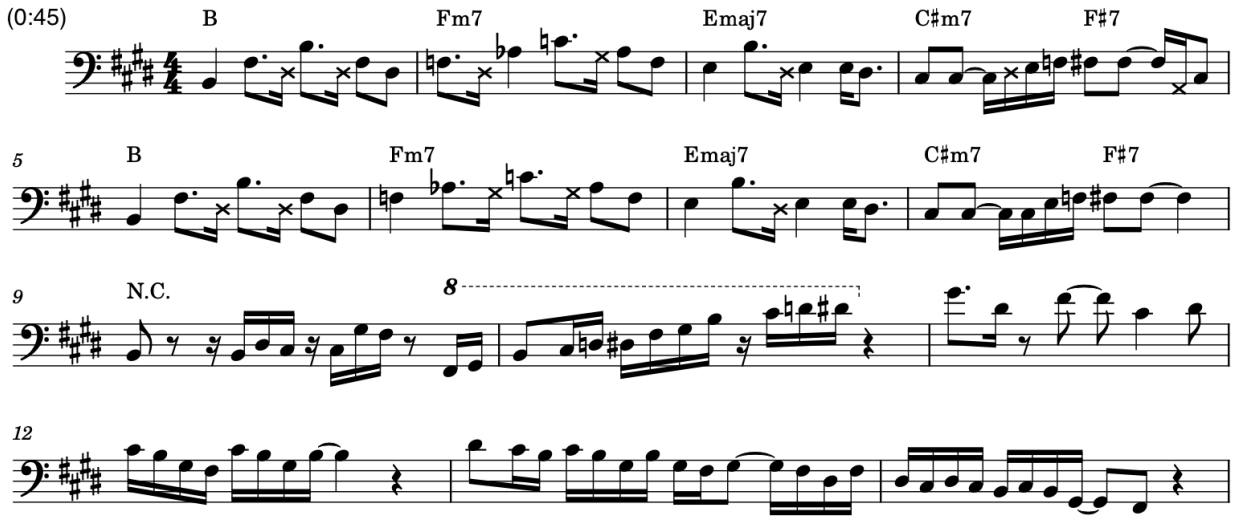

Figure 40: Excerpt of Nathan Watts on electric bass. "Sir Duke" by Stevie Wonder, 1976.[147]

In Figure 40, Watts plays the chorus and soli sections of "Sir Duke". The chorus pattern is yet another embellished walking bass line, arpeggiating simple triads on the first three chords, but enhanced by the muted sixteenth notes in between. By playing the soli in unison with the horn section, Watts applies the chromaticism, sixteenth note rhythmic language, and speed of Jamerson's bass style to a melodic passage, employing the electric bass in order to perform the jazzy lines.

[147] Stevie Wonder, *Songs in the Key of Life*, Tamla T13-340C2, 1976, LP.

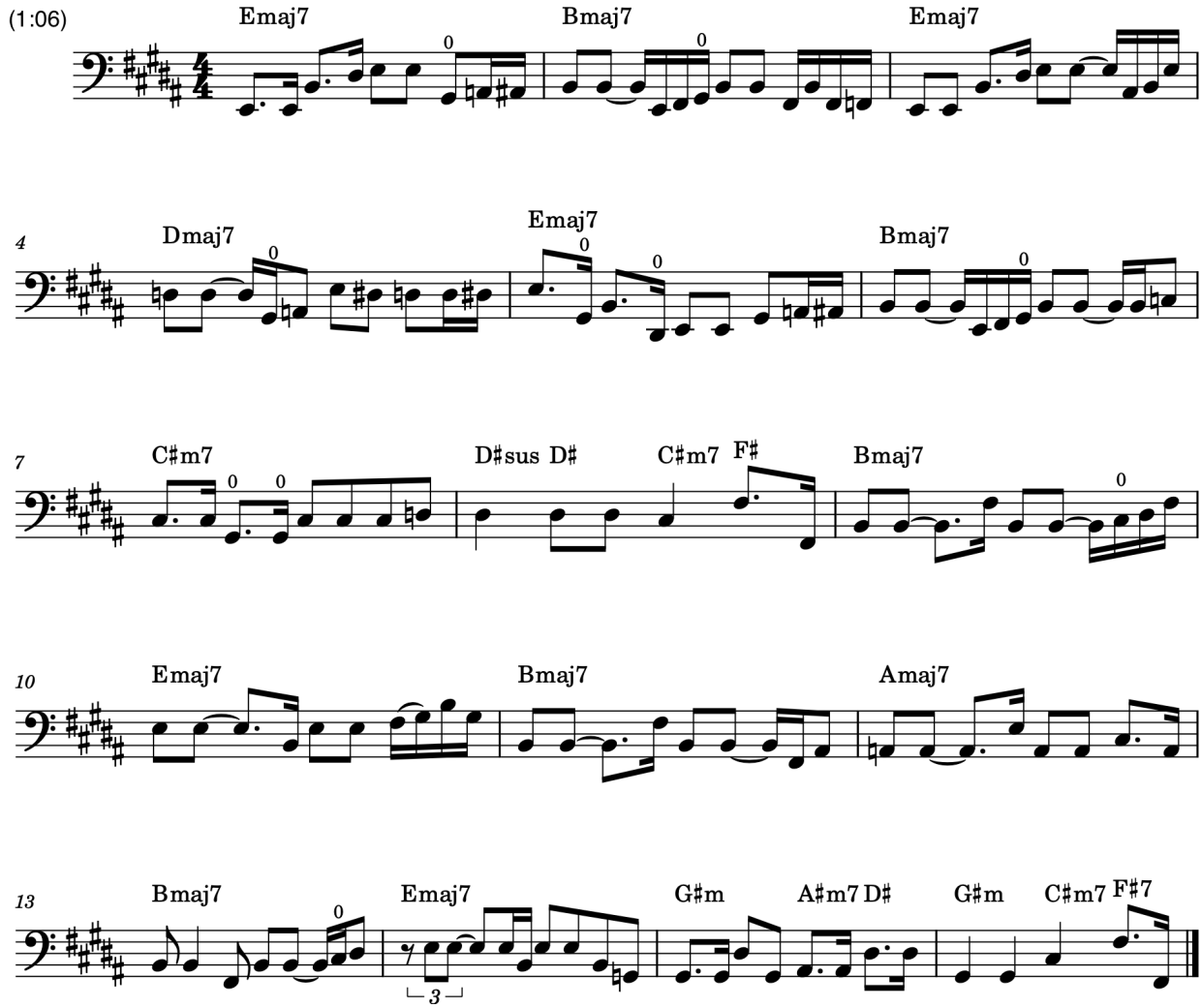

Figure 41: Excerpt of Nathan Watts on electric bass. "As" by Stevie Wonder, 1976.[148]

In Figure 41, Watts plays the bridge and the beginning of the second verse of "As". Unlike in previous excerpts, Watts employs a more familiar improvisational Jamerson style to navigate the chord changes. Chromatic ornaments, varied sixteenth note rhythms, and a hammer-on are all featured in this excerpt. Because of his unusual tuning, the open strings used are D# below the staff and G#, C#, and F# within the staff.

[148] Stevie Wonder, *Songs in the Key of Life*, Tamla T13-340C2, 1976, LP.

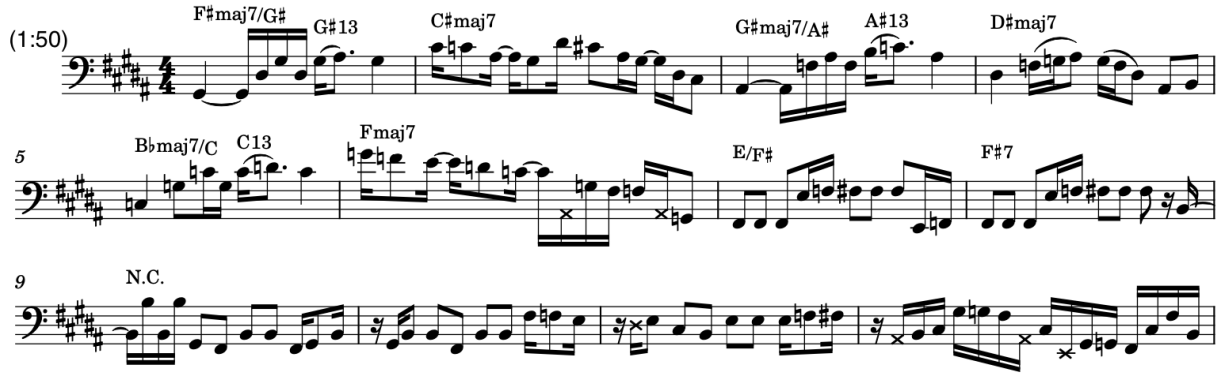

Figure 42: Excerpt of Nathan Watts on electric bass. "Do I Do" by Stevie Wonder, 1982.[149]

In Figure 42, Watts plays the bridge and solo sections of "Do I Do", a composition which prominently features his dazzling abilities. Some of the jazz bass techniques on display include the typical chromaticism and sixteenth note rhythms, as well as slides, muted notes, and arpeggiation. Throughout the recording, over 10 minutes long, Watts improvises over the chords, sometimes sticking to familiar patterns while creating variations upon variations in other places. In the words of Watts:

"That's from the Jamerson ethic of consistently creating and evolving a bass line, which he did whether it was a simple part like 'Uptight' or a masterpiece like 'What's Going On.' From when I first picked up a bass, I've never liked playing the same thing over and over, I was always changing it up and wanting to do it my own way. Hearing my heroes function in that manner gave me confidence."[150]

Nathan Watts took the Detroit bass legacy of James Jamerson and brought it into a new era, performing further transformations on the jazz double bass techniques that Jamerson had already adapted. While Jamerson came up listening to and emulating Ray Brown and Percy

[149] Stevie Wonder, *Stevie Wonder's Original Musiquarium I*, Tamla 6002TL2, 1982, LP.
[150] Jisi, "Bass Line of Wonder: Nathan Watts," 2010.

Heath, Watts came up listening to and emulating James Jamerson and Chuck Rainey. Combining the new tradition of R&B electric bass with his personal style to serve the music of Stevie Wonder, Watts deserves recognition as a later bearer of the Jamerson legacy.

SECTION VIII

CONCLUSION

The strong influence of jazz on R&B bassists of the 1960s and 1970s enabled them to create the first truly unique approach to the electric bass. This R&B style consisted mainly of tried and true rhythmic, melodic, and technical jazz double bass conventions of previous decades, employed at rapid speeds and in novel combinations on the more easily navigable electric bass.

James Jamerson was the first to innovate this new style, drawing upon his experience as a jazz double bassist to improvise sophisticated rhythms and melodies while still providing strong root motion to accompany singers at Motown Records. Among many other notable bassists, Chuck Rainey, Wilton Felder, and Nathan Watts each developed Jamerson's style as the 1960s and 1970s progressed. Chuck Rainey used double stops, grace notes, slap technique, and the extreme high register of the bass on hundreds of recording sessions during this era, befriending and learning from influential jazz bassists Milt Hinton, George Duvivier, and Richard Davis along the way. Wilton Felder, a jazz saxophonist who doubled on electric bass, created a template for modern session bassists by tastefully alternating between repeated patterns and Jamerson-esque variations. Nathan Watts grew up watching Jamerson through the window at Motown Records and learning jazz trumpet from other Motown veterans. He had a very different physical approach to the bass than Jamerson, but incorporated walking bass lines and Jamerson-style ad lib improvisation over chord progressions into his work with Stevie Wonder and others.

These four bassists, among others, developed a common language for what was a relatively new instrument in the 1960s and 1970s. That language endures today, both in the

existing recordings of their bass lines as well as the newer work of bassists who follow in their footsteps, such as Pino Palladino, Joe Dart, Meshell Ndegeocello, Anthony Jackson, Will Lee, Nathan East, Andrew Gouché, and countless others. While Jamerson and his contemporaries deserve credit for their innovations, the R&B electric bass style of the 1960s and 1970s they pioneered must be acknowledged as a synthesis and transformation of the jazz double bass playing that influenced their melodic approaches, their instrumental techniques, and their personal tastes.

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APPENDIX

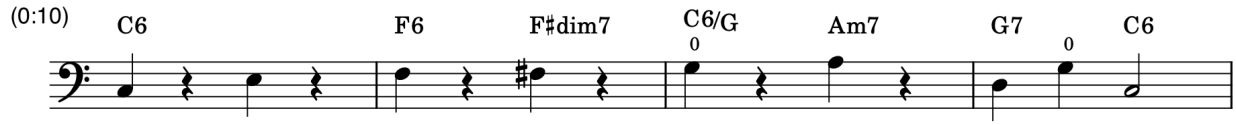

Figure 1: Excerpt of Wellman Braud on double bass. "Rockin' In Rhythm" by Duke Ellington, 1930.[151]

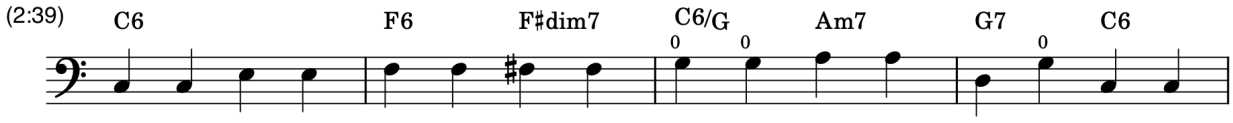

Figure 2: Excerpt of Wellman Braud on double bass. "Rockin' In Rhythm" by Duke Ellington, 1930.[152]

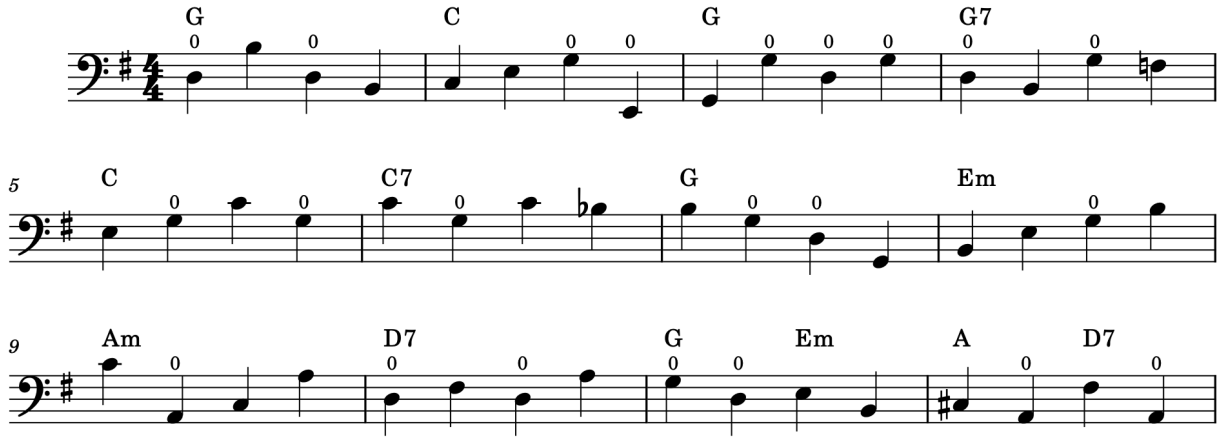

Figure 3: Ron Carter's demonstration of a walking bass line using chord tones.[153]

[151] Duke Ellington, *Rockin' In Rhythm*, Decca BM0239, 1931, Single.
[152] Duke Ellington, *Rockin' In Rhythm*, Decca BM0239, 1931, Single.

[153] Ron Carter, *Building Jazz Bass Lines* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 1998), 24.

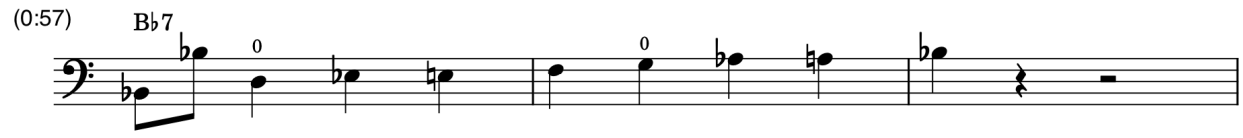

Figure 4: Excerpt of Ray Brown on double bass. "Mack The Knife" by Barney Kessel, Shelly Manne, & Ray Brown, 1959.[154]

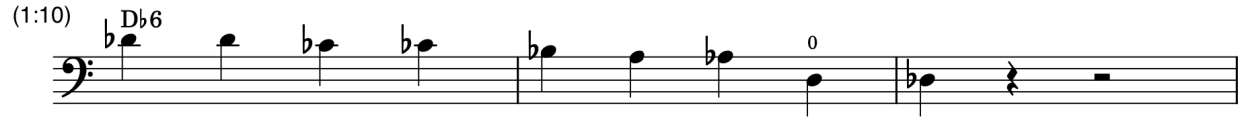

Figure 5: Excerpt of Ray Brown on double bass. "Up There" by Howard McGhee and Teddy Edwards, 1961.[155]

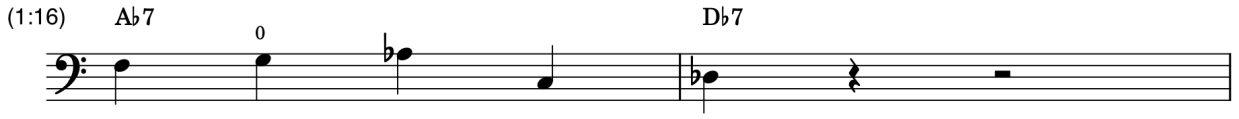

Figure 6: *Excerpt of Ray Brown on double bass. "Up There" by Howard McGhee and Teddy Edwards, 1961.*[156]

[154] Barney Kessel with Shelly Manne and Ray Brown, *Poll Winners Three!,* Contemporary C3576, 1960, LP.
[155] Howard McGhee and Teddy Edwards, *Together Again!!!*, Contemporary M3588, 1961, LP.
[156] Howard McGhee and Teddy Edwards, *Together Again!!!*, Contemporary M3588, 1961, LP.

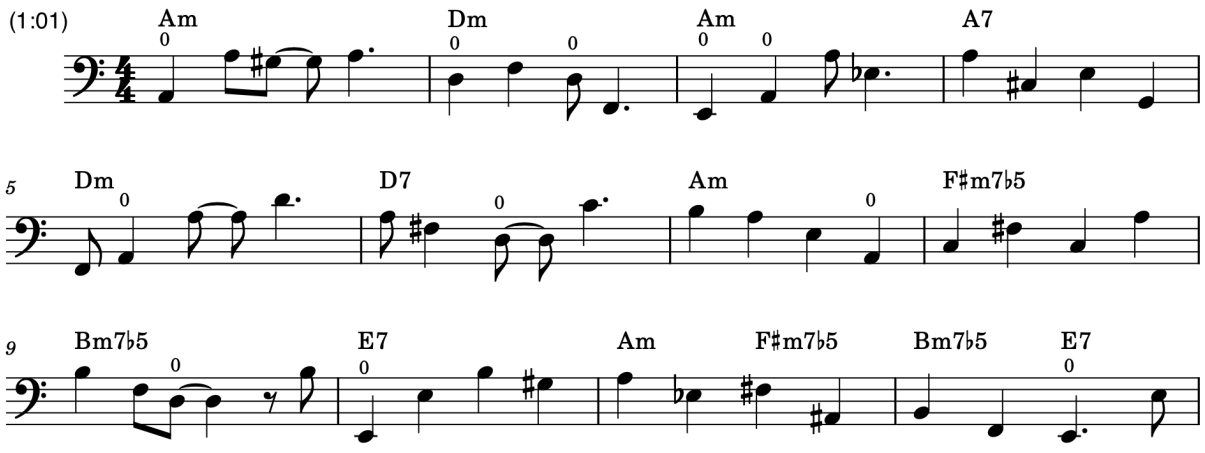

Figure 7: Ron Carter demonstrating syncopated rhythms and passing tones over a minor blues progression.[157]

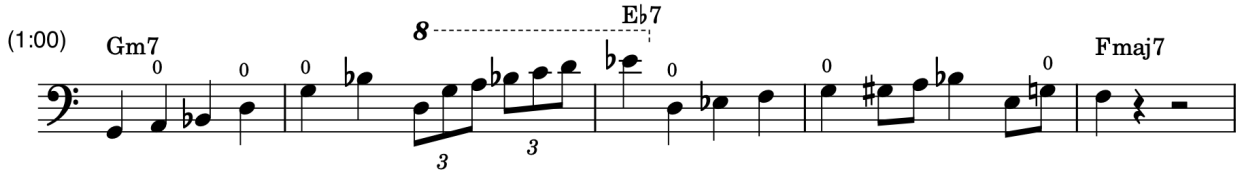

Figure 8: Excerpt of Ray Brown on double bass. "The Days Of Wine And Roses" by The Ray Brown Trio, 1992.[158]

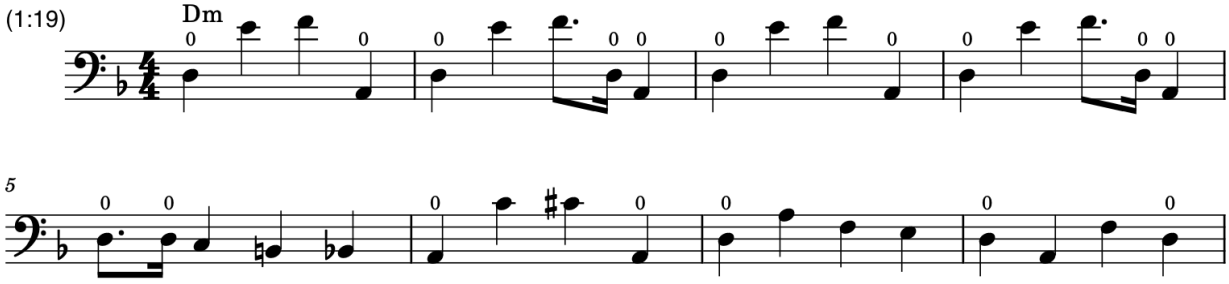

Figure 9: Ron Carter demonstrating the use of open strings in contrast with higher notes on the double bass.[159]

[157] Carter, *Building Jazz Bass Lines*, 43.
[158] Ray Brown Trio, *Black Orpheus*, Paddle Wheel KICJ 109, 1992, LP.
[159] Carter, *Building Jazz Bass Lines*, 46.

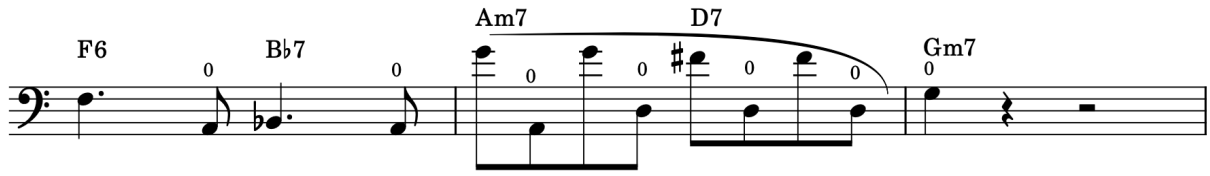

Figure 10: Excerpt of Ray Brown on double bass. "Have You Met Miss Jones" by the Oscar Peterson Trio, 1964.[160]

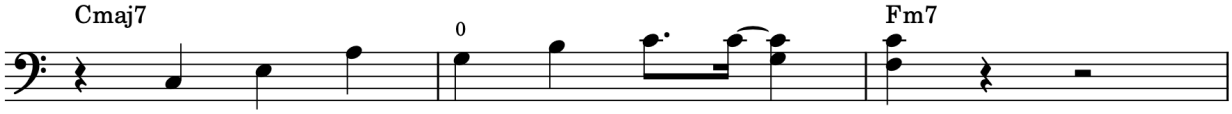

Figure 11: Excerpt of Percy Heath on double bass. "Lazy Susan" by Miles Davis, 1954.[161]

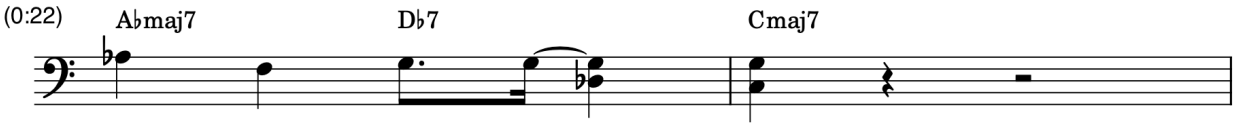

Figure 12: Excerpt of Percy Heath on double bass. "Lazy Susan" by Miles Davis, 1954.[162]

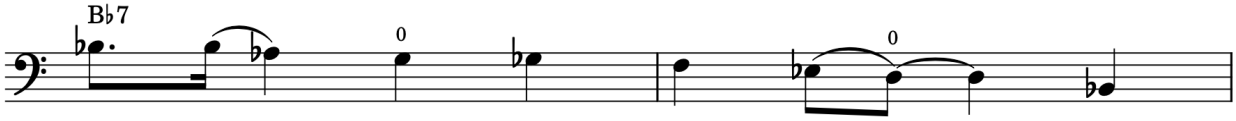

Figure 13: John Goldsby's demonstration of pull-off technique.[163]

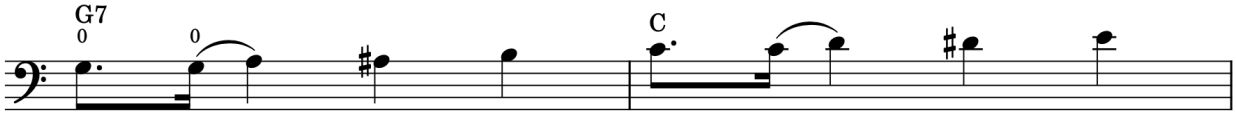

Figure 14: John Goldsby's demonstration of hammer-on technique.[164]

[160] Oscar Peterson Trio, *We Get Requests*, Verve V8606, 1964, LP.
[161] Miles Davis, *Relaxin' with the Miles Davis Quintet*, Prestige 7129, 1958, LP.
[162] Miles Davis, *Relaxin' with the Miles Davis Quintet*, Prestige 7129, 1958, LP.
[163] Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition*, 177.
[164] Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition*, 177.

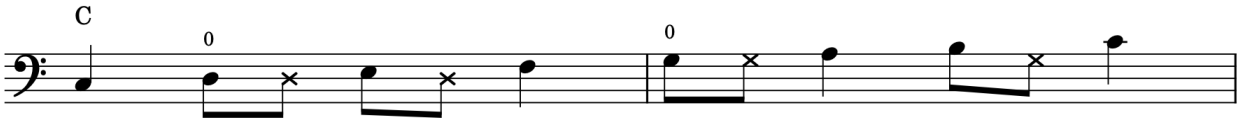

Figure 15: John Goldsby's demonstration of muted notes.[165]

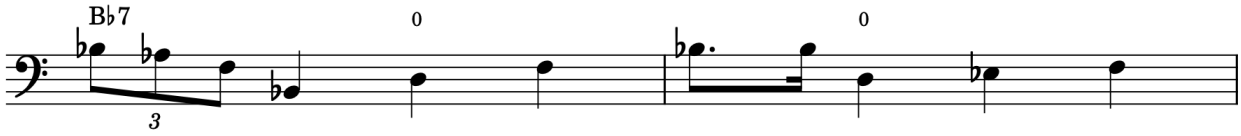

Figure 16: John Goldsby's demonstration of raking technique.[166]

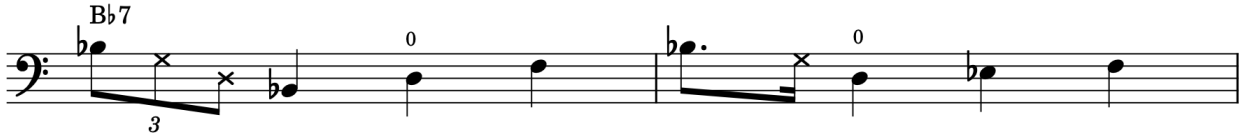

Figure 17: John Goldsby's demonstration of raking technique combined with muted notes.[167]

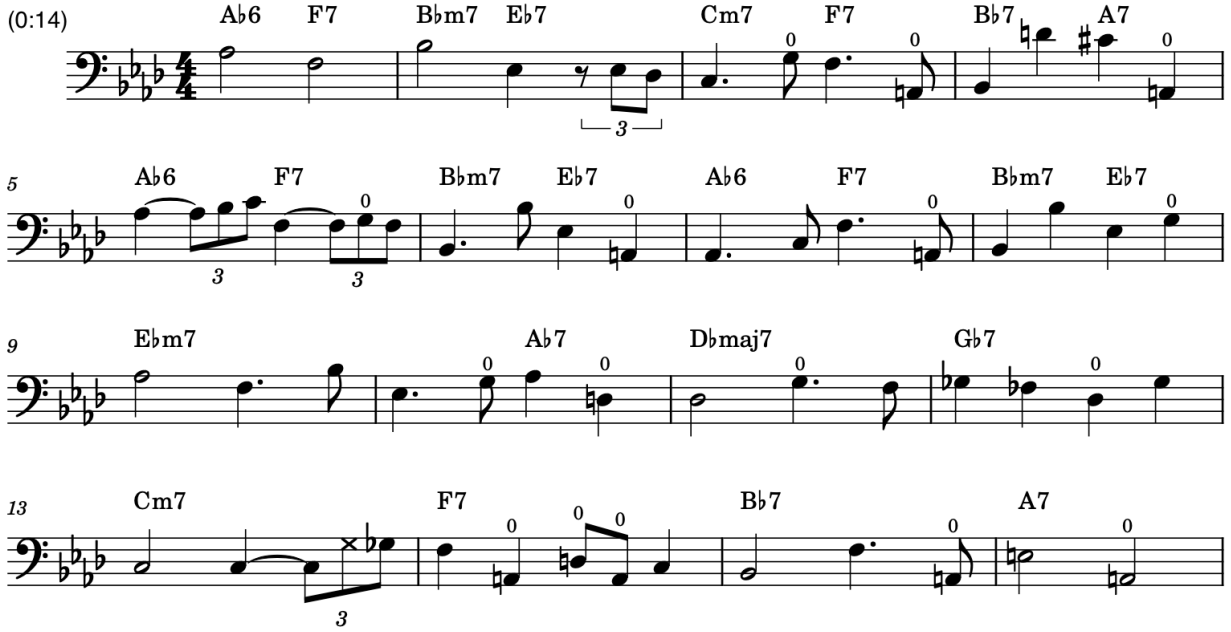

Figure 18: Excerpt of Ray Brown on double bass. "Sometimes I'm Happy" by the Oscar Peterson Trio, 1961[168]

[165] Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition*, 177.
[166] Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition*, 177.
[167] Goldsby, *The Jazz Bass Book: Technique and Tradition*, 177.
[168] Oscar Peterson Trio, *The Trio: Live From Chicago*, Verve 8420, 1961, LP.

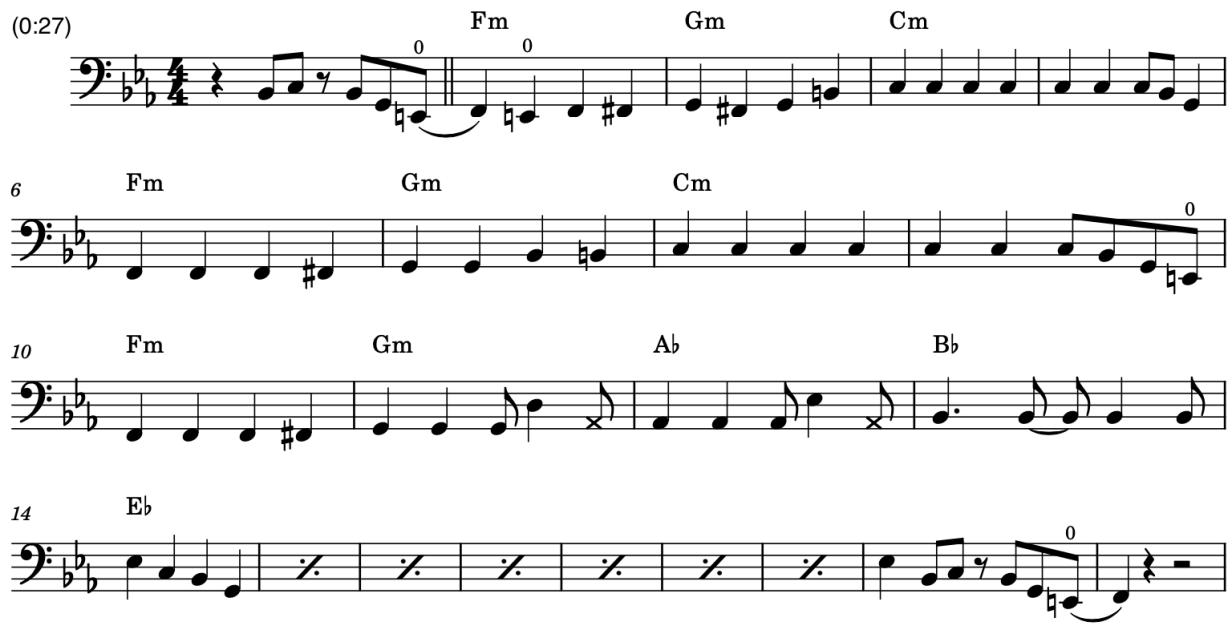

Figure 19: Excerpt of James Jamerson playing double bass. "(Love Is Like A) Heat Wave" by Martha and the Vandellas, 1963.[169]

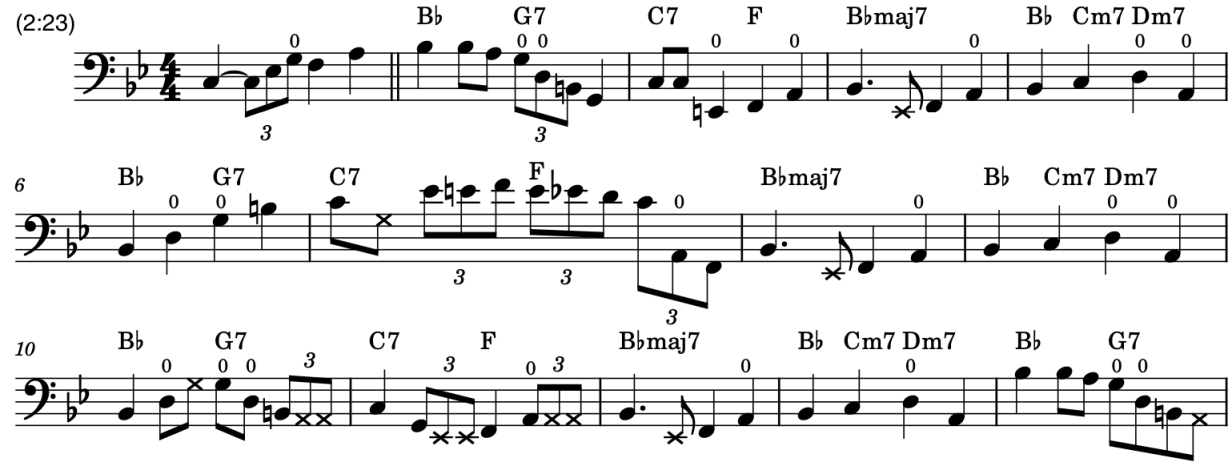

Figure 20: Excerpt of James Jamerson playing double bass. "My Guy" by Mary Wells, 1964.[170]

[169] Martha and the Vandellas, *Heat Wave*, Gordy 907, 1963, LP.
[170] Mary Wells, *Mary Wells Sings My Guy*, Motown 617, 1964, LP.

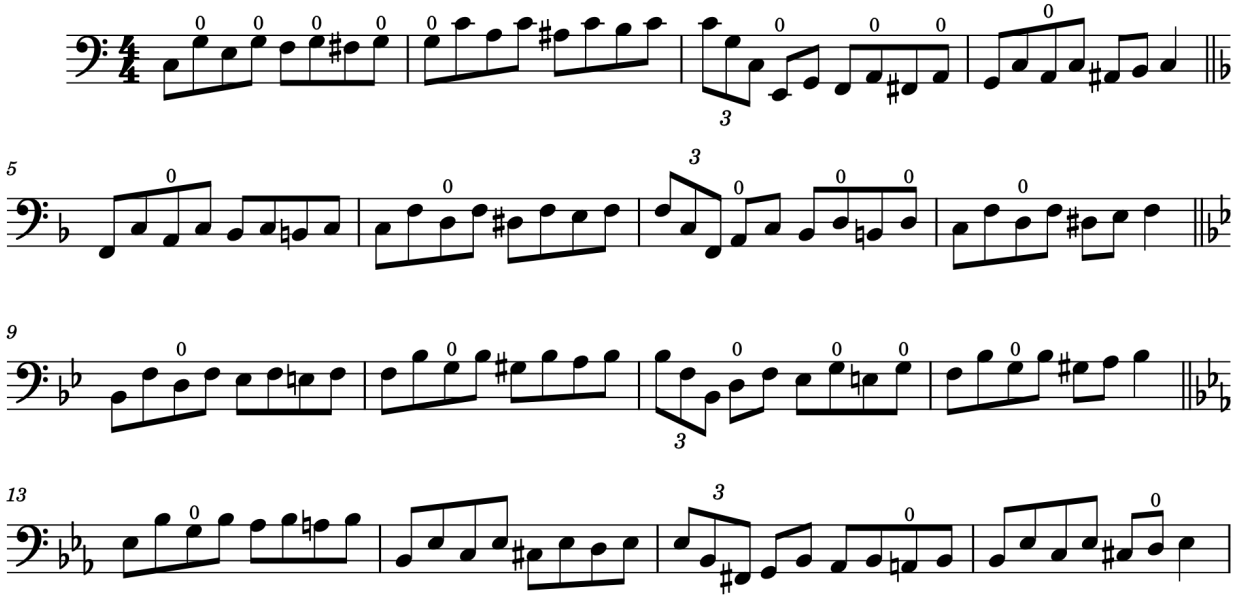

Figure 21: James Jamerson's etude for practicing chromaticism on electric bass.[171]

[171] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, 91.

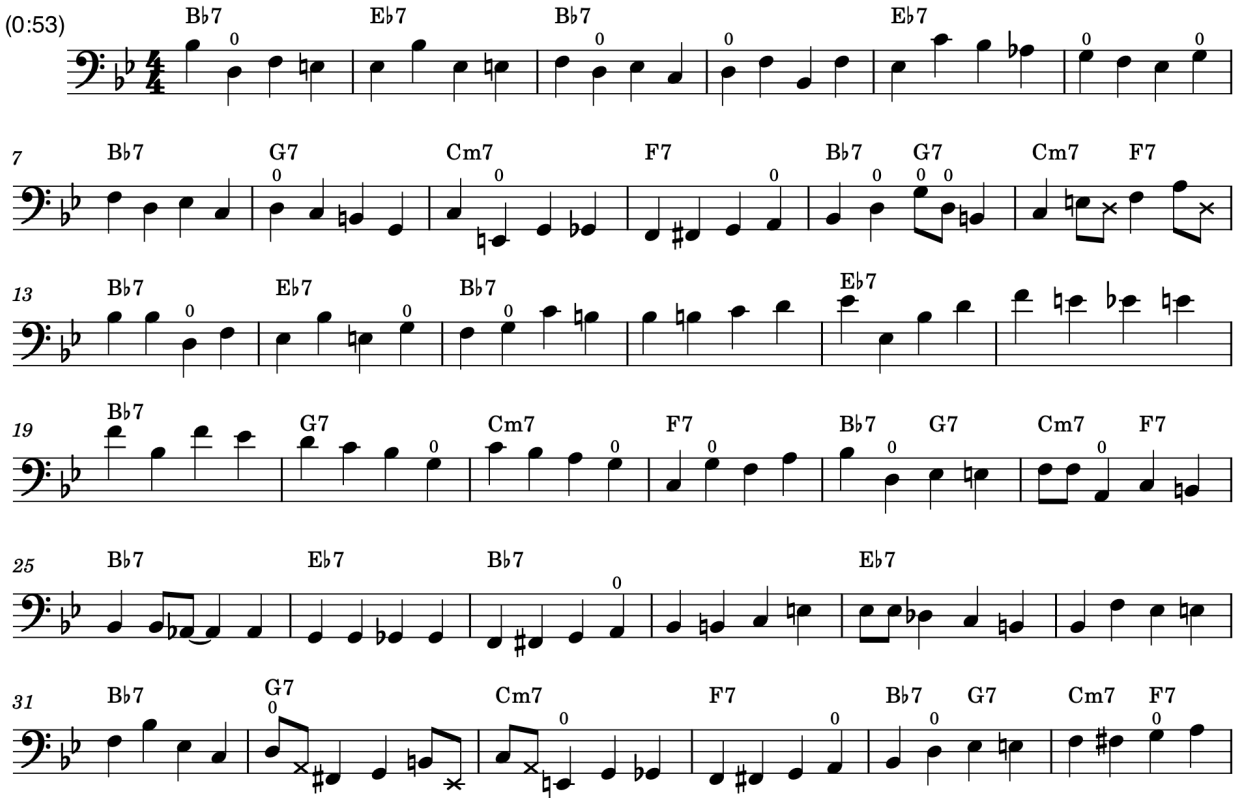

Figure 22: Excerpt of James Jamerson on electric bass. Untitled live performance with Dennis Coffey at Morey Baker's nightclub in Detroit, 1969.[172]

[172] Slutsky, *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*, audio track 18.

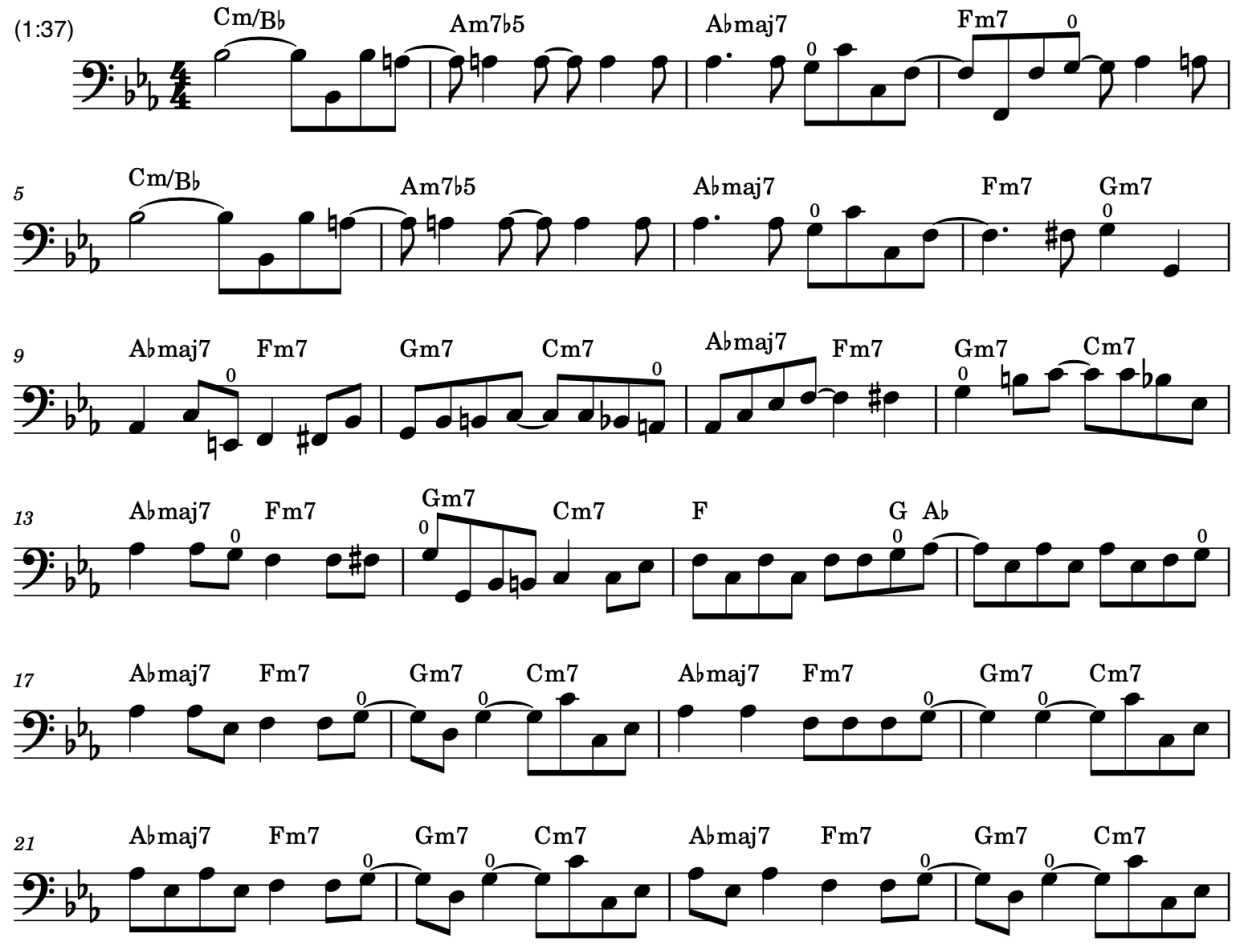

Figure 23: Excerpt of James Jamerson on electric bass. "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" by Marvin Gaye & Tammi Terrell, 1967.[173]

[173] Marvin Gaye & Tammi Terrell, *United,* Tamla 277, 1967, LP.

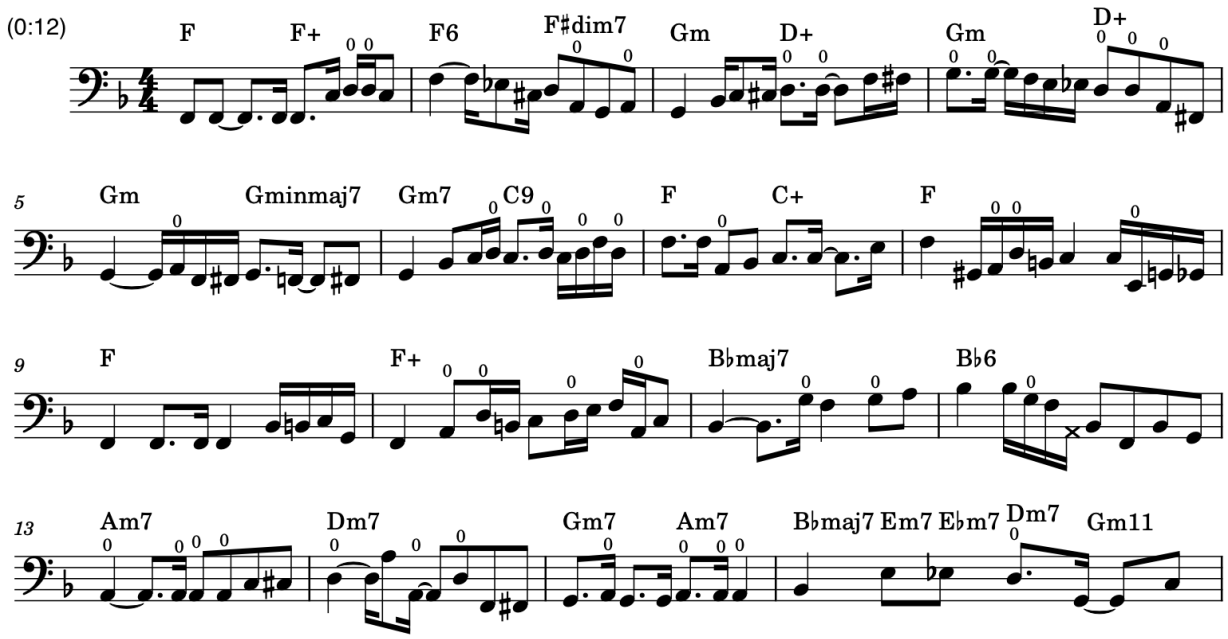

Figure 24: Excerpt of James Jamerson on electric bass. "For Once In My Life" by Stevie Wonder, 1968.[174]

[174] Stevie Wonder, *For Once In My Life*, Tamla 291, 1968, LP.

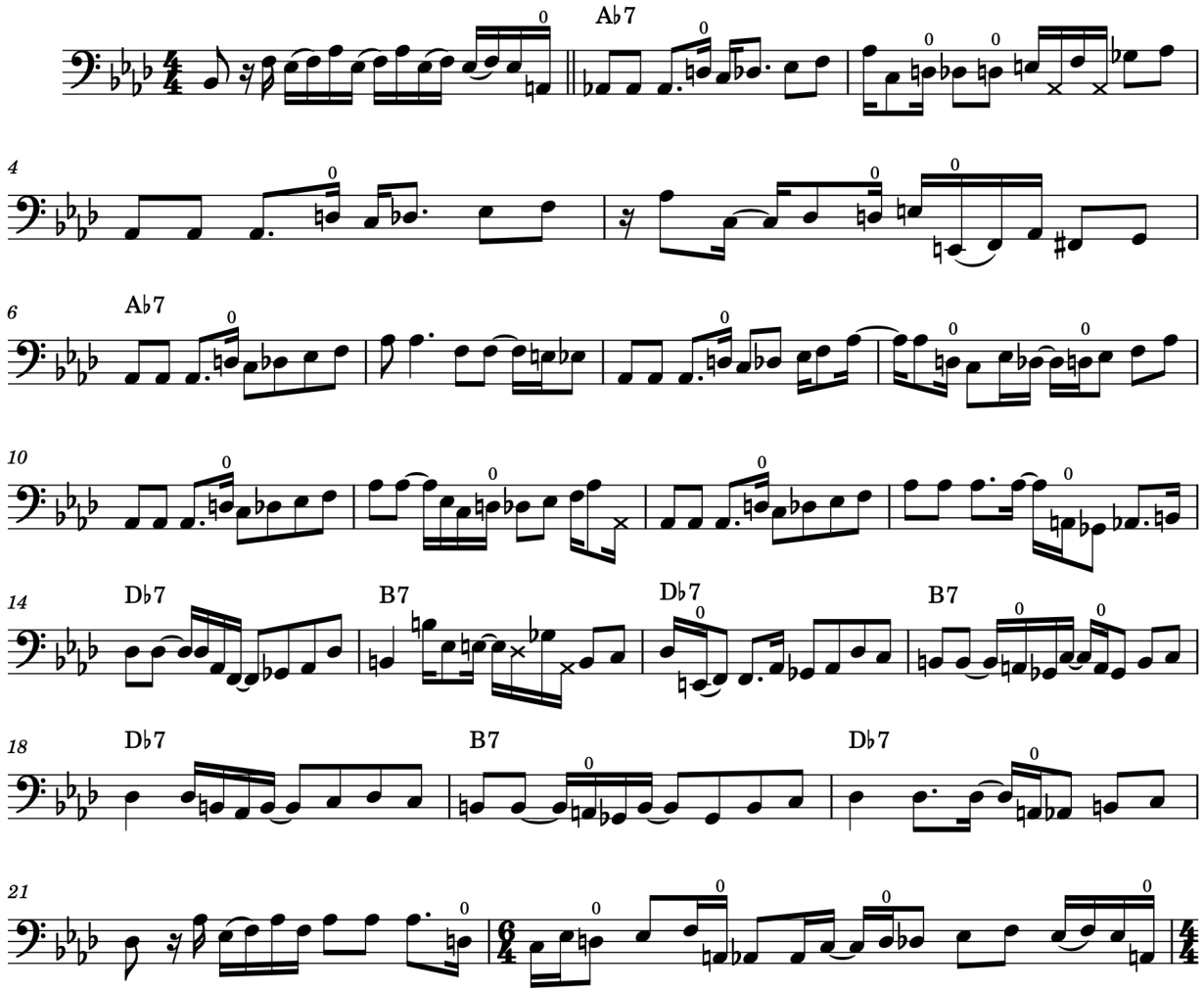

Figure 25: Excerpt of James Jamerson on electric bass. "Home Cookin'" by Jr. Walker and the All Stars.[175]

[175] Jr. Walker and the All Stars, *Home Cookin'*, Soul 710, 1969, LP.

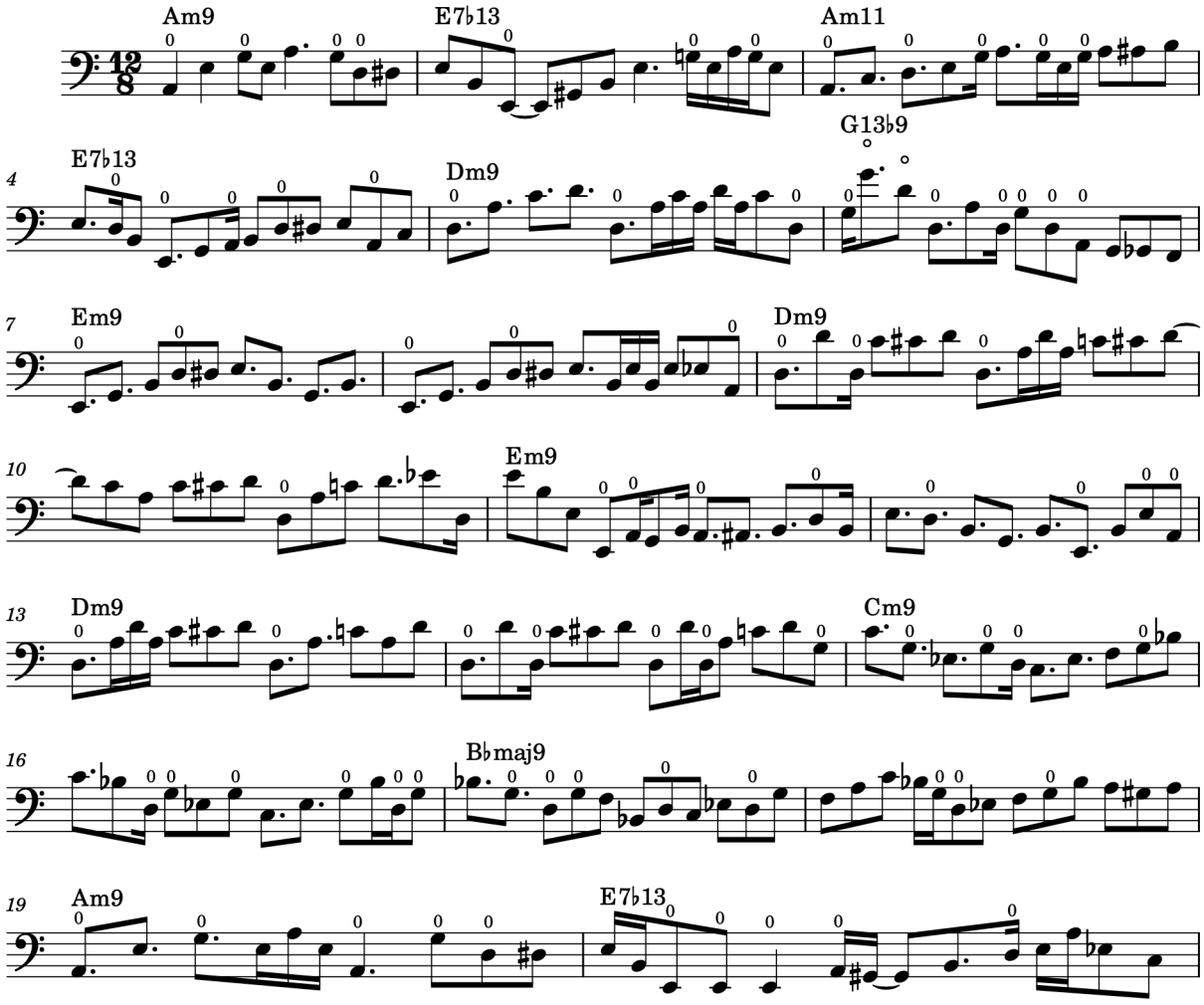

Figure 26: Excerpt of James Jamerson on electric bass. "Save The Children" by Marvin Gaye, 1971.[176]

[176] Marvin Gaye, *What's Going On*, Tamla 310, 1971, LP.

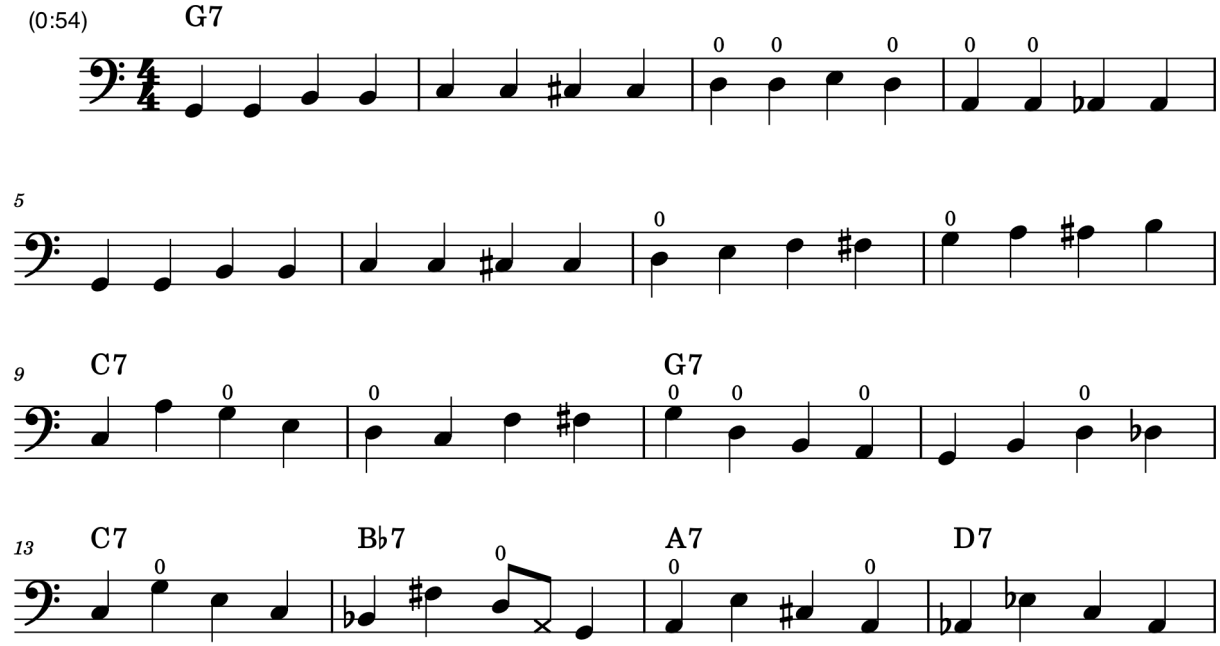

Figure 27: Excerpt of Chuck Rainey on electric bass. "Sister Sadie" by King Curtis, 1964.[177]

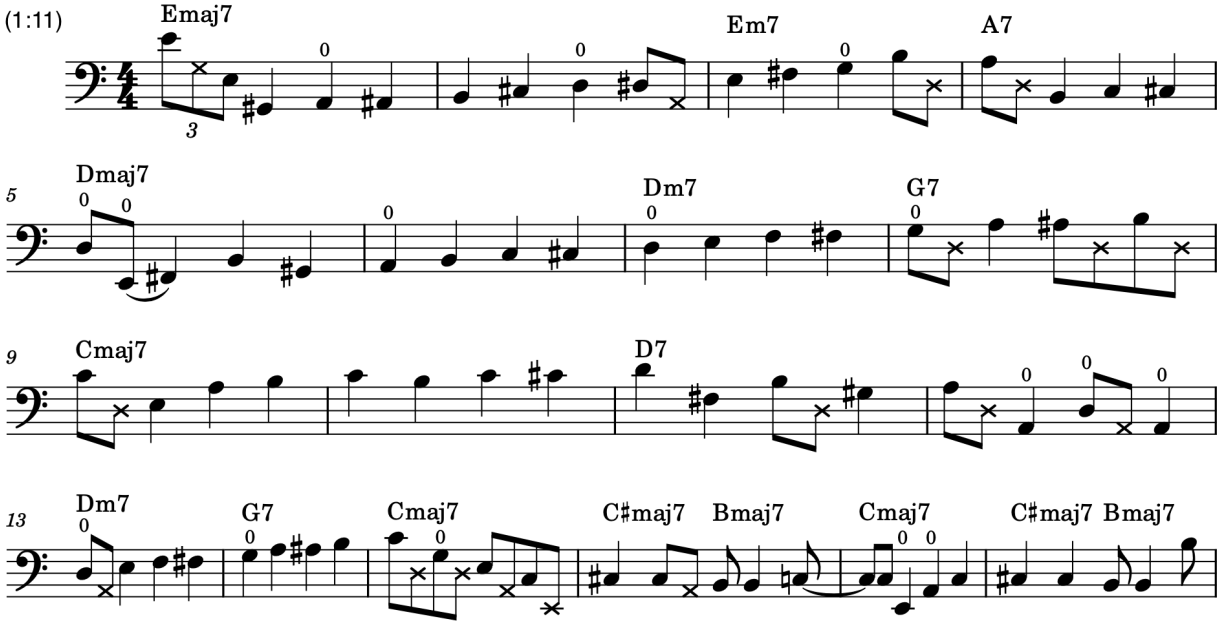

Figure 28 Excerpt of Chuck Rainey on electric bass. "Watch What Happens" by Lena Horne and Gabor Szabo, 1970.[178]

[177] King Curtis, *Tanya / Sister Sadie*, Capitol 5324, 1964, Single.
[178] Lena Horne & Gabor Szabo, *Watch What Happens*, Buddah 18-SK, 1970, LP.

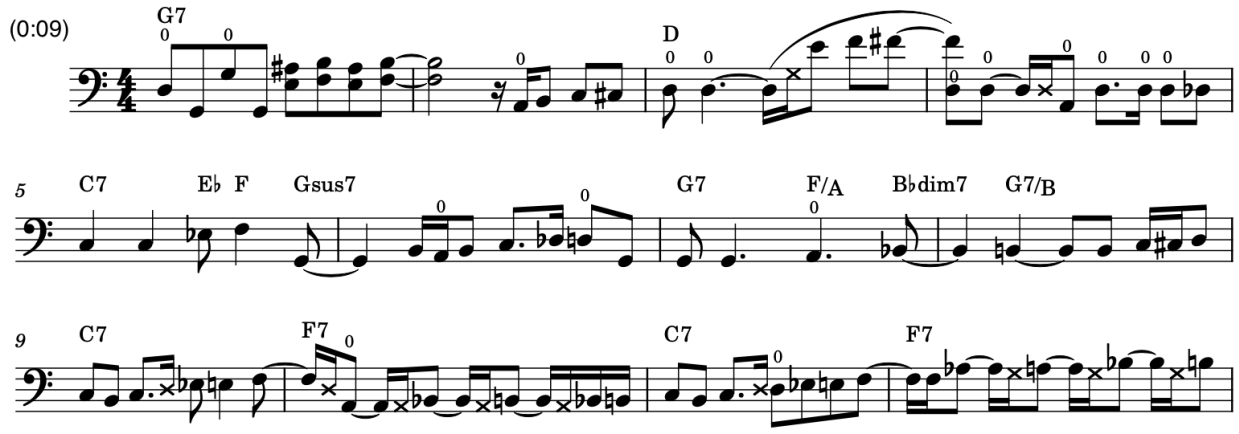

Figure 29: Excerpt of Chuck Rainey on electric bass. "The Streetbeater" by Quincy Jones, 1973.[179]

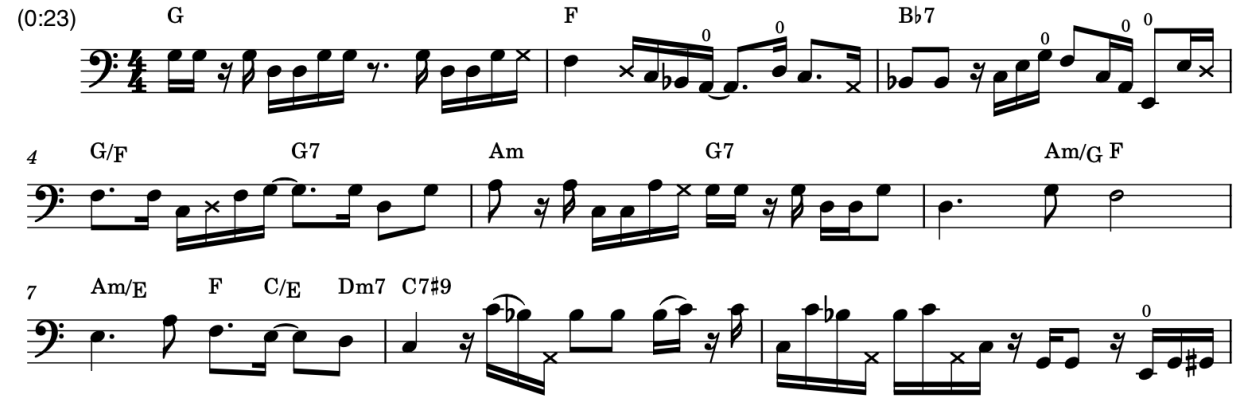

Figure 30: Excerpt of Chuck Rainey on electric bass. "Kid Charlemagne" by Steely Dan, 1976.[180]

[179] Quincy Jones, *You've Got It Bad Girl,* A&M SP-3041, 1973, LP.
[180] Steely Dan, *The Royal Scam*, ABC 5161, 1976, LP.

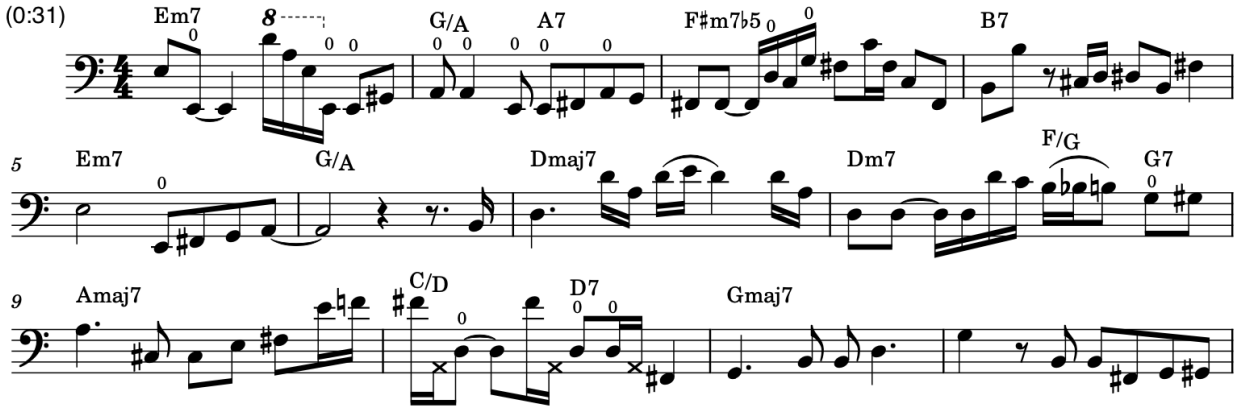

Figure 31: Excerpt of Chuck Rainey on electric bass. "Until You Come Back To Me" by Aretha Franklin, 1974.[181]

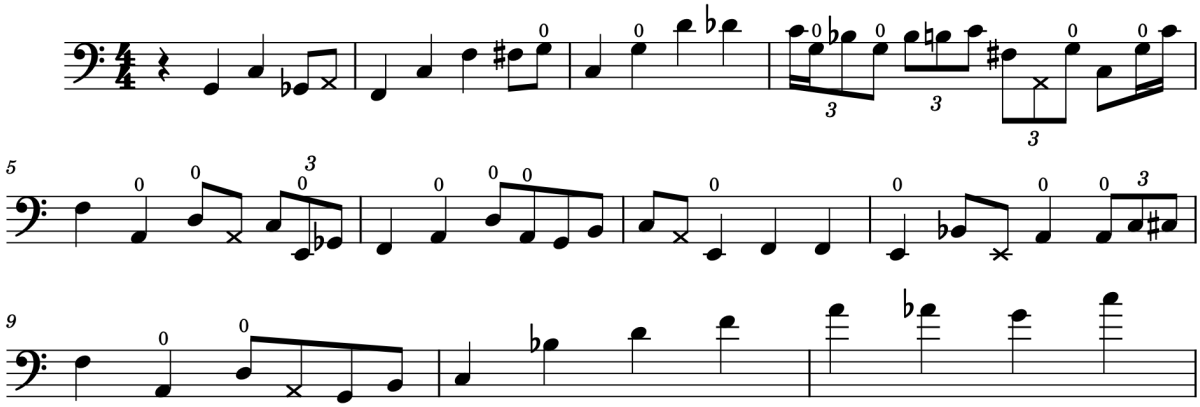

Figure 32: Excerpt of Wilton Felder on electric bass. "Introduction by Hank Stewart" at a live performance by Grant Green, 1972.[182]

[181] Aretha Franklin, *Let Me In Your Life,* Atlantic 7292, 1974, LP.
[182] Grant Green, *Live At The Lighthouse*, Blue Note BN-LA037-G2, 1972, LP.

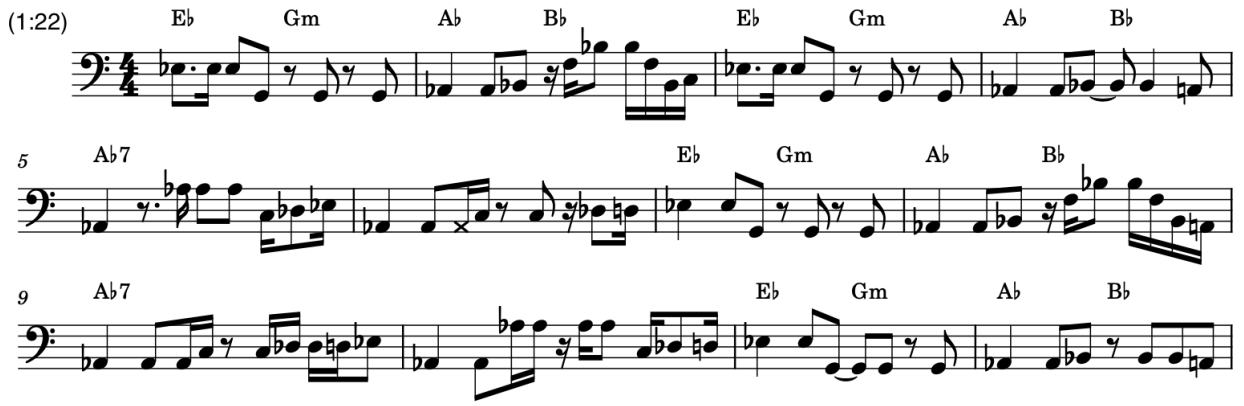

Figure 33: Excerpt of Wilton Felder on electric bass. "Let's Get It On" by Marvin Gaye, 1973.[183]

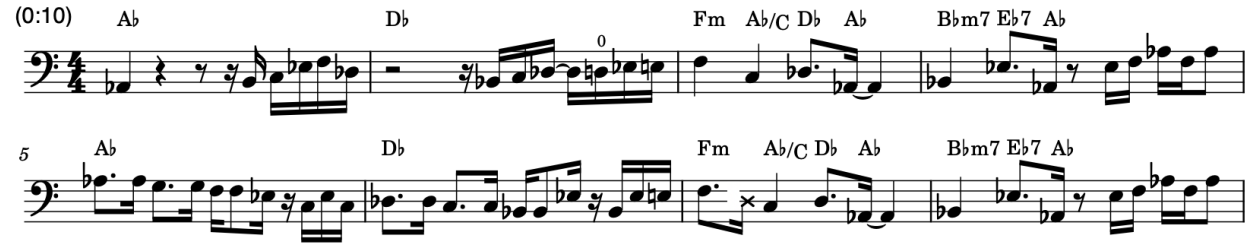

Figure 34: Excerpt of Wilton Felder on electric bass. "I Want You Back" by The Jackson 5, 1969.

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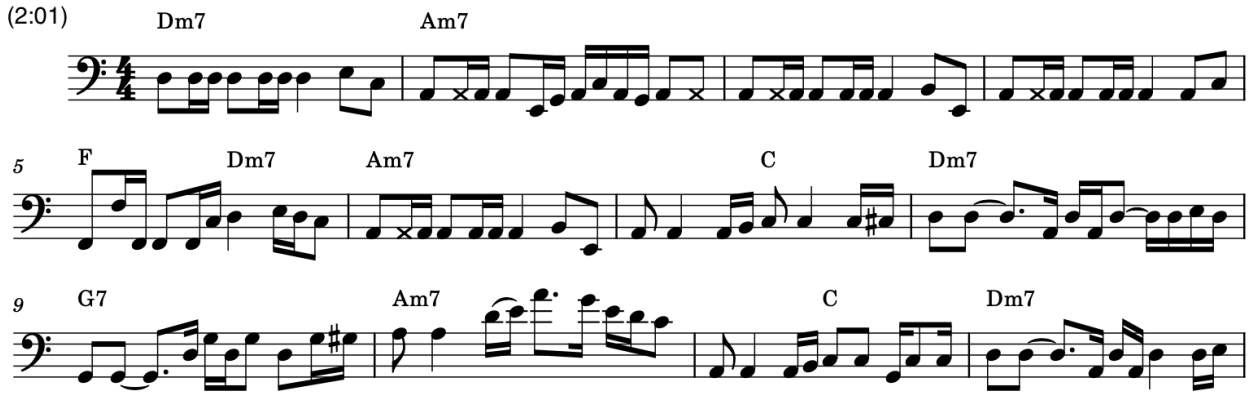

Figure 35: Excerpt of Wilton Felder on electric bass. "Ain't No Love in the Heart of the City" by Bobby "Blue" Bland, 1978.[185]

[183] Marvin Gaye, *Let's Get It On*, Tamla 329V1, 1973, LP.
[184] The Jackson 5, *I Want You Back* / *Who's Lovin' You*, Motown 1157, 1969. Single.
[185] Bland, Bobby, *Ain't No Love in the Heart of the City*, Dunhill 15003, 1974, Single.

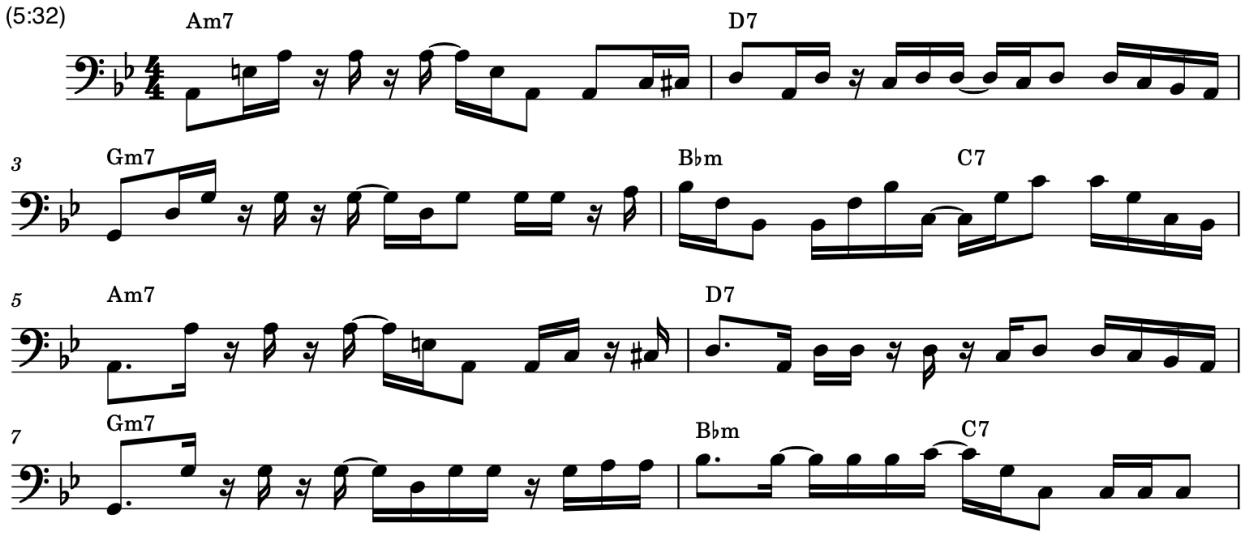

Figure 36: Excerpt of Wilton Felder on electric bass. "Never Never Gonna Give Ya Up" by Barry White, 1973.[186]

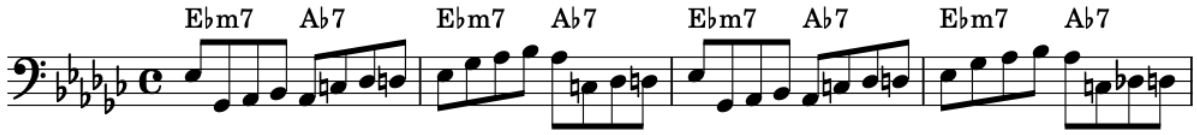

Figure 37: Excerpt of Nathan Watts on electric bass. "I Wish" by Stevie Wonder, 1976.[187]

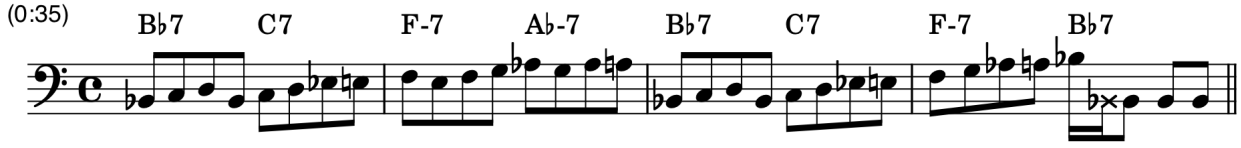

Figure 38: Excerpt of Nathan Watts on electric bass. "I Wish" by Stevie Wonder, 1976.[188]

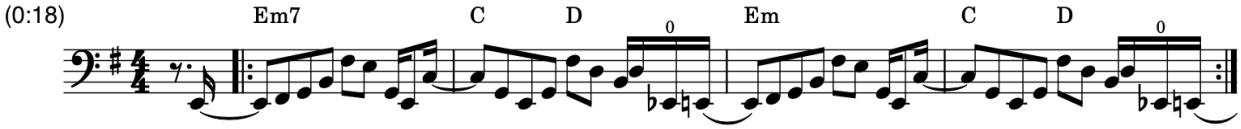

Figure 39: Excerpt of Nathan Watts on electric bass. "This Place Hotel" by The Jacksons, 1980.[189]

[186] Barry White, *Never, Never Gonna Give Ya Up*, 20th Century 2058, 1973, Single.
[187] Stevie Wonder, *Songs in the Key of Life*, Tamla T13-340C2, 1976, LP.
[188] Stevie Wonder, *Songs in the Key of Life*, Tamla T13-340C2, 1976, LP.
[189] The Jacksons, *Triumph,* Epic 86112, 1980, LP.

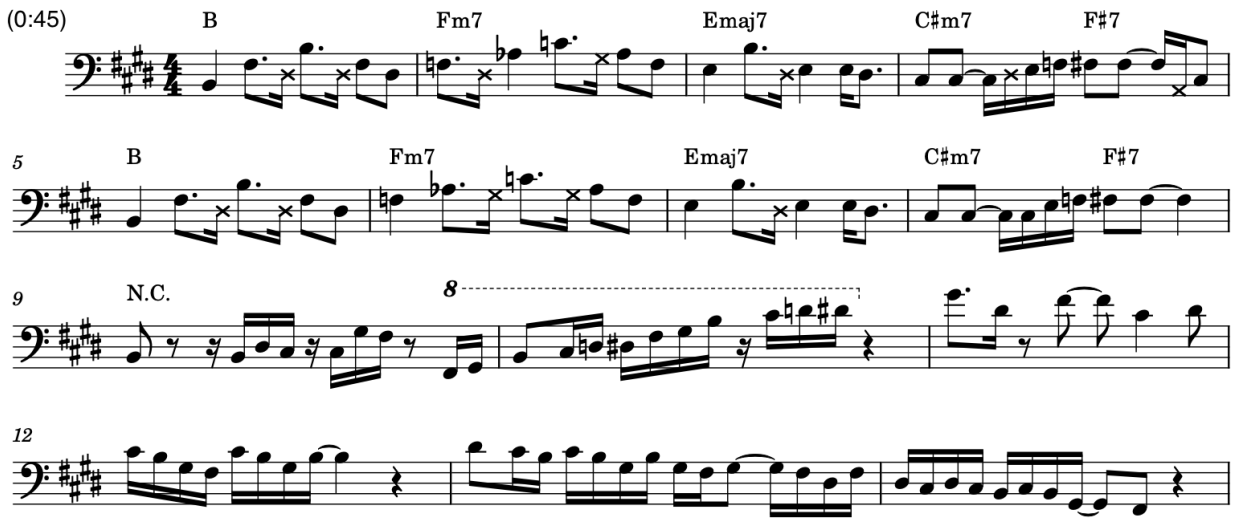

Figure 40: Excerpt of Nathan Watts on electric bass. "Sir Duke" by Stevie Wonder, 1976.[190]

[190] Stevie Wonder, *Songs in the Key of Life*, Tamla T13-340C2, 1976, LP.

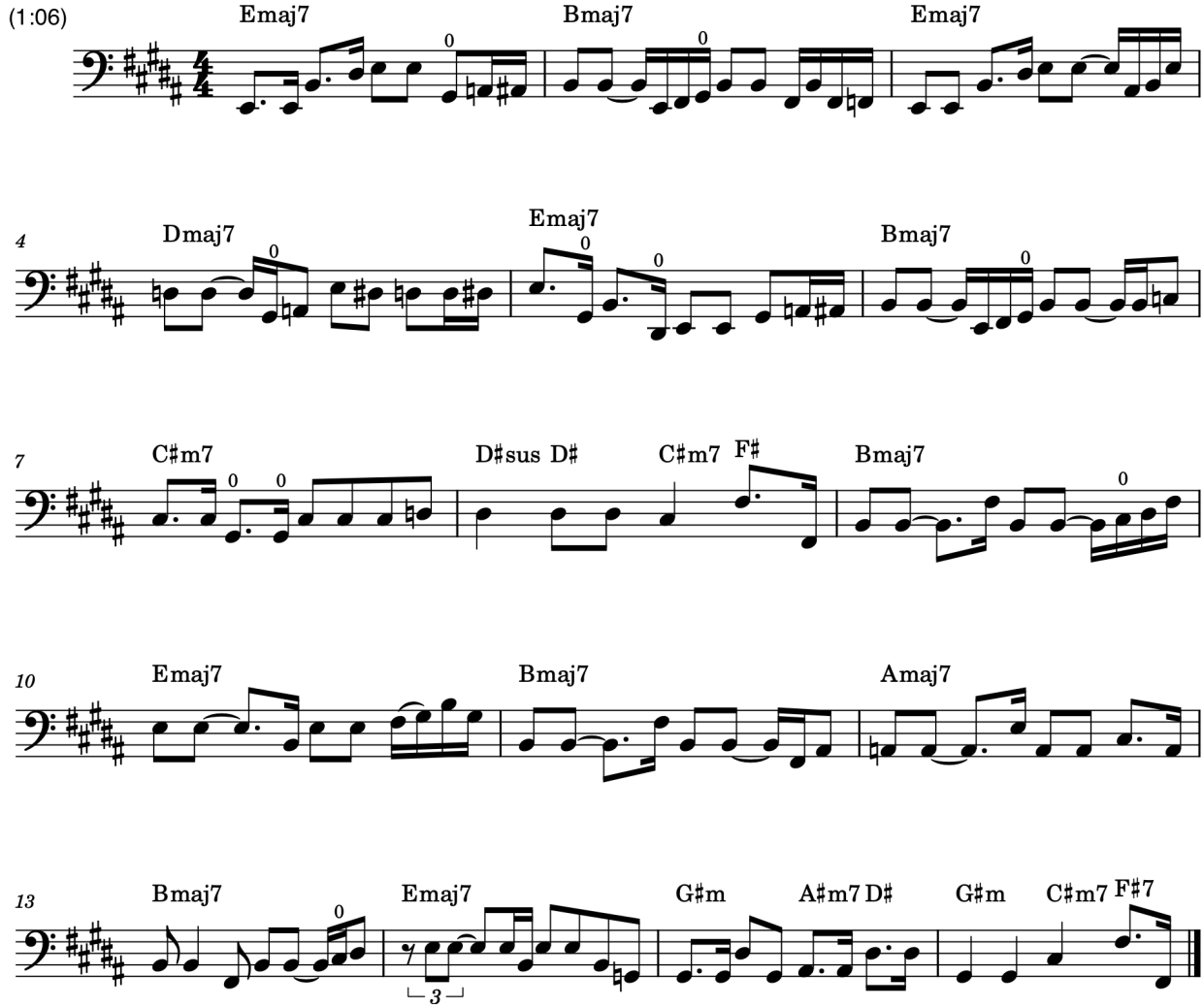

Figure 41: Excerpt of Nathan Watts on electric bass. "As" by Stevie Wonder, 1976.[191]

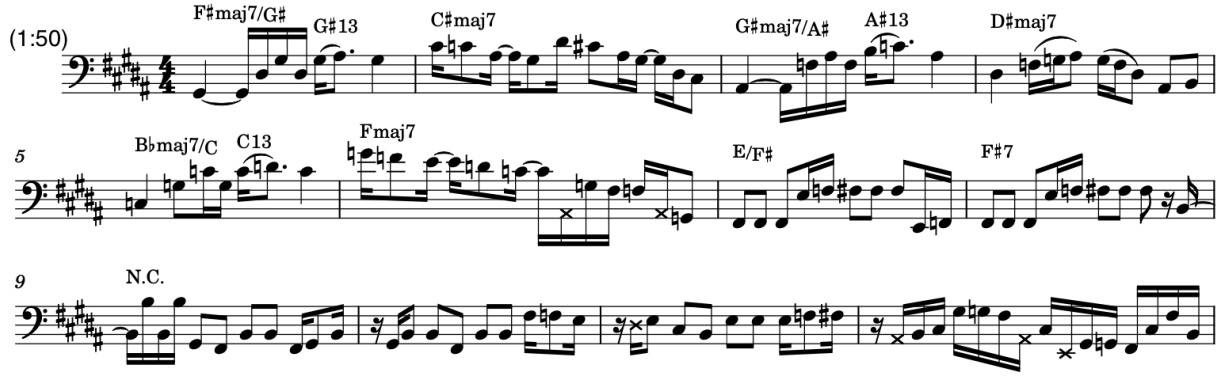

Figure 42: Excerpt of Nathan Watts on electric bass. "Do I Do" by Stevie Wonder, 1982.[192]

[191] Stevie Wonder, *Songs in the Key of Life*, Tamla T13-340C2, 1976, LP.
[192] Stevie Wonder, *Stevie Wonder's Original Musiquarium I*, Tamla 6002TL2, 1982, LP.