

Get the Funk Out

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Performance

♩ = 100

The first system of music features a treble clef staff in 4/4 time. The melody begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, and then a series of eighth notes: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The guitar TAB staff below shows the fretting: the first measure has four 'x' marks on strings 1-4; the second measure has a 6 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the third measure has a 6 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the fourth measure has a 5 on string 1, a 3 on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the fifth measure has a 3 on string 1, a 3 on string 2, and a 4 on string 3; the sixth measure has a 5 on string 1 and a 5 on string 2; the seventh measure has an 'x' on string 1, a 3 on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the eighth measure has a 3 on string 1, a 3 on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the ninth measure has a 3 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 5 on string 3; the tenth measure has an 'x' on string 1 and an 'x' on string 2.

The second system continues the melody. The treble clef staff shows a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, and then eighth notes: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The guitar TAB staff shows: the first measure has a 6 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the second measure has a 6 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the third measure has an 'x' on string 1, an 'x' on string 2, an 'x' on string 3, and a 5 on string 4; the fourth measure has a 5 on string 1, a 3 on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the fifth measure has an 'x' on string 1, an 'x' on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the sixth measure has a 3 on string 1, a 3 on string 2, and a 4 on string 3; the seventh measure has an 'x' on string 1, an 'x' on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the eighth measure has a 5 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 5 on string 3; the ninth measure has a 5 on string 1, a 3 on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the tenth measure has a 3 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 5 on string 3.

The third system continues the melody. The treble clef staff shows a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, and then eighth notes: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The guitar TAB staff shows: the first measure has a 6 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 5 on string 3; the second measure has a 6 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 5 on string 3; the third measure has a 6 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 5 on string 3; the fourth measure has an 'x' on string 1, an 'x' on string 2, an 'x' on string 3, and a 5 on string 4; the fifth measure has a 5 on string 1, a 3 on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the sixth measure has a 5 on string 1, a 3 on string 2, and a 4 on string 3; the seventh measure has an 'x' on string 1 and an 'x' on string 2; the eighth measure has an 'x' on string 1, an 'x' on string 2, and a 5 on string 3; the ninth measure has a 5 on string 1, a 3 on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the tenth measure has a 3 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 5 on string 3.

The fourth system continues the melody. The treble clef staff shows a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, and then eighth notes: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The guitar TAB staff shows: the first measure has a 6 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 5 on string 3; the second measure has a 6 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 5 on string 3; the third measure has a 6 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 5 on string 3; the fourth measure has an 'x' on string 1, an 'x' on string 2, an 'x' on string 3, and a 5 on string 4; the fifth measure has a 5 on string 1, a 3 on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the sixth measure has an 'x' on string 1, an 'x' on string 2, and a 3 on string 3; the seventh measure has a 5 on string 1, a 6 on string 2, an 'x' on string 3, a 5 on string 4, an 'x' on string 5, and an 'x' on string 6; the eighth measure has a 5 on string 1, a 6 on string 2, an 'x' on string 3, a 5 on string 4, an 'x' on string 5, and an 'x' on string 6; the ninth measure has a 5 on string 1, a 6 on string 2, an 'x' on string 3, a 5 on string 4, an 'x' on string 5, and an 'x' on string 6; the tenth measure has a 3 on string 1, a 5 on string 2, and a 5 on string 3.

3 3 5 x 3 x 3 3 3 5 | 3 x 5 x 3 3 3 3 5 x x

3 x 3 x 3 5 5 x x 5 x x | 3 x x 5 x 3 5 5 5 3 5

3 5 x 3 3 5/6 5 5 5 5 3 3 3 | 5 x 3 x 5 x 3 x 3 3 5

x x 3 x 5 x 3 x 5 x 3 | 3 3 3 3 3 5 5 5 5 5 6

Lesson

Gm Pentatonic

Most of the funk licks and riffs we will discuss come from the Gm Pentatonic Scale so make sure you know it well.

Musical notation for the Gm Pentatonic scale lick. The top staff shows a melodic line in G minor with triplet markings over groups of three notes. The bottom staff shows the corresponding fretboard positions for the strings, with fret numbers 3, 6, 3, 5, 3, 5, 3, 6, 3, 6, 6, 3, 6, 3, 5, 3, 5, 3, 5, 3, 6, 3.

Punching the String

To start off let's look at arguably the most important part of getting a funky rhythm sound which is the aspect of muting all other strings in order to very aggressively strum the guitar in a "punchy" way while still isolating only the notes we want to ring and nothing else. With the added percussive effect you get a much different feeling from the guitar.

Musical notation for "Punching the String". The top staff shows a melodic line in G minor. The bottom staff shows the fretboard positions, with 'X' marks indicating muted strings. The fret numbers are 3, 3.

Punching the Strings - 8th Notes

To add even more punchiness to our funk rhythms we can kill the space in between two notes by releasing the pressure on the frets and essentially muting all strings. With funk guitar playing, the goal is to put your right hand on autopilot because your left hand movement is controlling everything you're playing.

Musical notation for "Punching the Strings - 8th Notes". The top staff shows a melodic line in G minor with eighth notes. The bottom staff shows the fretboard positions, with 'X' marks indicating muted strings. The fret numbers are 3, 3.

Accenting

Accenting is simply playing some notes louder in order to emphasise them. Try accenting on 3 with Steve.

Musical notation for "Accenting". The top staff shows a melodic line in G minor with eighth notes. The bottom staff shows the fretboard positions, with 'X' marks indicating muted strings. The fret numbers are 3, 3. A greater-than sign (>) is placed under the 3rd fret of the 3rd string in the 4th measure, and a legend indicates "> = Accent".

Adding 16th Notes

Now that we're comfortable with that we come to the 16th notes. 16th notes are ubiquitous in funk music and are another essential aspect of the genre you'll need to get comfortable. Let's try first fully-muted strings.

T
A
B

Accenting 16th Notes

Accenting the 16th notes is the end goal for getting that authentic funk sound. Try this first bar of accented 16th figures with Steve.

T
A
B

Adding the Left Hand

Now let's try more accenting but with our G string fretted like earlier. Don't forget you'll be using your left hand and not your right to decide when the string gets played. For reading convenience we'll reduce the muted string notation to just the G string for now.

T
A
B

Another Rhythm

Here's another rhythm to add that incorporates small groups of three for an interesting pattern. There are an endless number of rhythms to play and all of them work as long as they gel with the groove of the song.

T
A
B

Sliding into Chords - Ex.3

Now we are adding to our Gm7 chord by putting a 9th on top. 9th chords, whether major or minor, are very common in funk music.

T
A
B

4	5	X	5	X	X	5	X	X	5	X	X	5	5	5	X
2	3	X	3	X	X	3	X	X	3	X	X	3	3	3	X
2	3	X	3	X	X	3	X	X	3	X	X	3	3	3	X

Sliding into Chords - Ex.4

Here is another position with which to play a Gm9 chord with the 5th string root.

T
A
B

9	10	X	10	X	X	10	X	X	10	X	X	10	10	X	X
9	10	X	10	X	X	10	X	X	10	X	X	10	10	X	X
7	8	X	8	X	X	8	X	X	8	X	X	8	8	X	X
9	10	X	10	X	X	10	X	X	10	X	X	10	10	X	X

Sliding into Chords - Ex.5

This is a little less obvious way to play a Gm9 as it's missing the root and the third, but it still functions very well, particularly because the thinner strings punch through the mix a bit more with there is a full band.

T
A
B

9	10	X	10	X	X	10	X	X	10	X	X	10	10	10	10
9	10	X	10	X	X	10	X	X	10	X	X	10	10	10	10
9	10	X	10	X	X	10	X	X	10	X	X	10	10	10	10