

ALL ABOUT THE BASS

Exploring Bass Clef Reading and Notation and Bass Line Musical Patterns



A. Bass Clef & Bass Clef Notation

STAFF is the name given to the five lines where musical notes are written.

The position of notes on the staff or staff shows their **PITCH** (how high or low a note is).

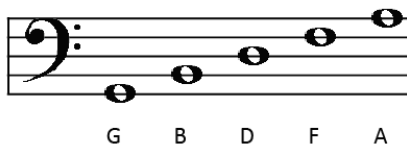
The **BASS CLEF** is a symbol used to show low-pitched notes on the staff and is *usually* used for the left hand on a piano or keyboard to play the **BASS LINE** and also used by low pitched instruments (*see B.*)



The staff or staff is made up of 5 **LINES** and 4 **SPACES**.

Notes on the **LINES** of the **BASS CLEF**: **G, B, D, F, A**

Green Buses Drive Fast Always



Notes in the **SPACES** of the **BASS CLEF**: **A, C, E, G**

All Cows Eat Grass



Bass Clef **STAFF NOTATION**:



B. Musical Instruments that use the Bass Clef



Left Hand
of a
Piano/
Keyboard



Left Hand
& Pedals
of an
Organ



Bassoon



Cello



Double
Bass



Trombone



Tuba



Timpani



Bass
Guitar



Bass
(deepest
male singing
voice)

C. Bass Line Patterns

BASS RIFFS – Short, repeated, 'catchy' and memorable Bass Line Patterns used in Rock, Rap, Hip Hop, R'n'B, and Pop songs often performed on Bass Guitar. Bass Riffs 'fit' with the notes in the chord, but also use other '**EXTRA**' notes (**PASSING NOTES**) to make them more memorable.



WALKING BASS – used in Jazz, Blues, Rhythm and Blues, and Rock'n'roll, and featuring **a note on every beat**. Using the **ROOT, THIRD** and **FIFTH** of the chord, and '**EXTRA**' notes (called **PASSING NOTES**) to create a smooth bass line often moving mainly by step (**CONJUNCT**).



ARPEGGIO: Playing the notes of a chord separately and **in order** *root, third fifth, root, third, fifth etc*, can be ascending (going up) or descending (going down).



BROKEN CHORD – Playing the notes of a chord separately but **not necessarily in strict order** (e.g., like an Alberti Bass), often creating a repeated musical pattern, can be ascending (going up) or descending (going down).



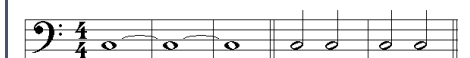
ALBERTI BASS – a type of **ACCOMPANIMENT PATTERN** in the **BASS LINE** using the **ROOT, THIRD** and **FIFTH** notes of a **CHORD** played in a **specific order**:

ROOT	FIFTH	THIRD	FIFTH
Lowest	Highest	Middle	Highest

The pattern repeats, but notes change as chord changes and a melody is added 'on top' of the Alberti Bass. Used by Classical composers such as Mozart, especially in solo piano music, as well as modern composers.

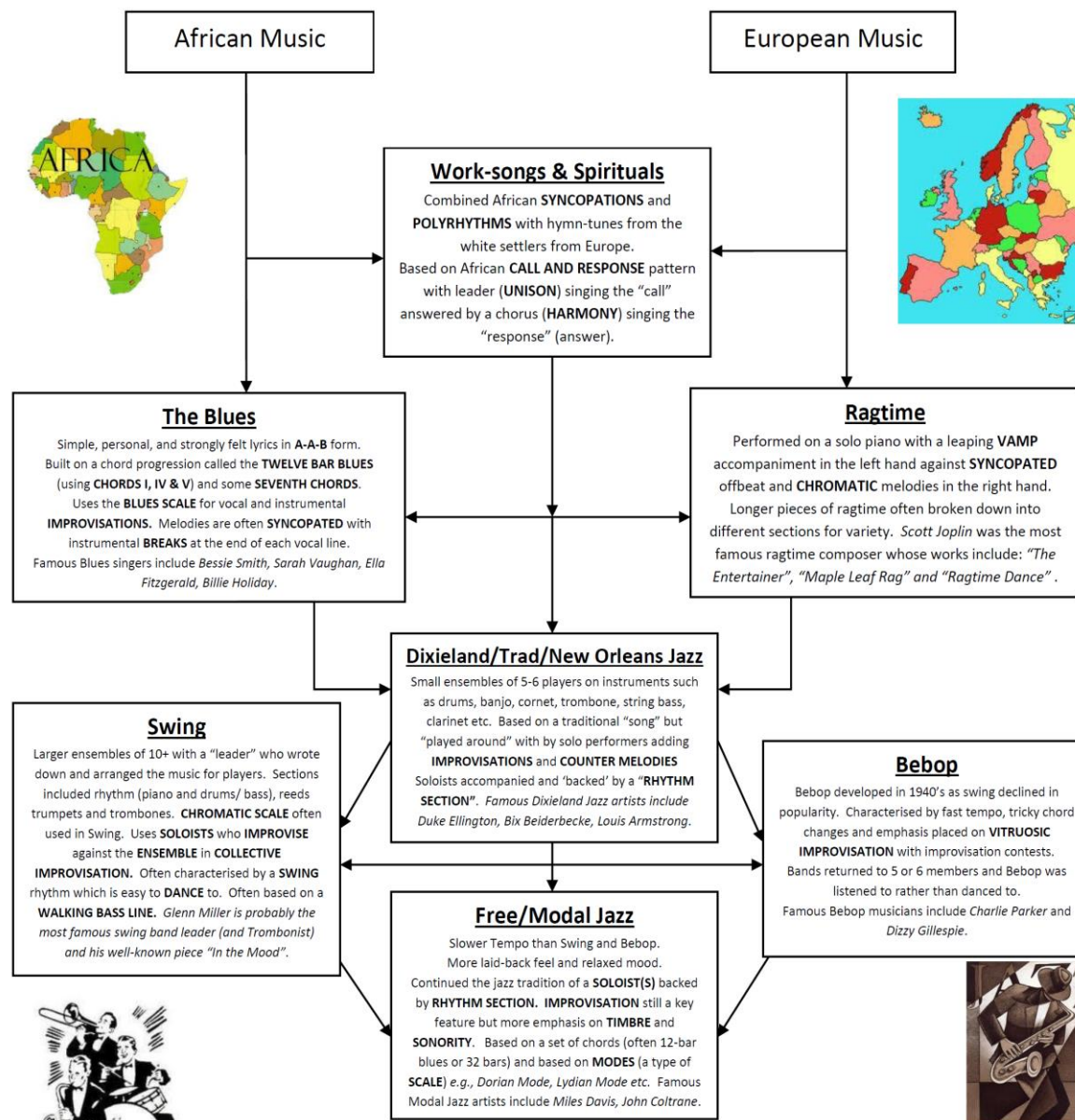


(BASS) PEDAL (POINT/NOTE) – either **SUSTAINED** notes of **LONG DURATION**, or **REPEATED LONG NOTES**, often in **BASS LINE PART**, using the **ROOT** (a **TONIC PEDAL**) or the **FIFTH** (a **DOMINANT PEDAL**). Changing chords, harmonies, and a melody line "fit over the top" of a **PEDAL** note.



All That Jazz

Exploring Jazz and The Blues



A. Jazz and Blues Key Words

RIFF/OSTINATO – Short, repeated musical patterns often used in **SOLOS**.

IMPROVISATION – music created 'on the spot' (previously unprepared performance)

SEVENTH CHORD – a **TRIAD** (root, third and fifth) with a fourth note added which is seven notes about the root/tonic. **C7** = C, E, G (triad) + **B flat**.

SWING/SWUNG RHYTHM – performing a regular 'straight' rhythm with a 'lilt' in a "**ONE** and **A**, **TWO** and **A**" style (using **TRIPLETS**) common in swing music.

B. The Twelve Bar Blues

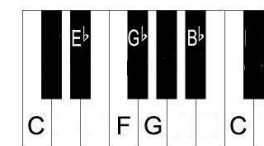
Some or all of these chords can be **SEVENTH CHORDS** (7)

CHORD I	CHORD I	CHORD I	CHORD I
CHORD IV	CHORD IV	CHORD I	CHORD I
CHORD V	CHORD IV	CHORD I	CHORD I

C. The Blues Scale


BLUES SCALE – a series of notes often used within improvisations in blues music (*the Blues Scale on C is shown to the right*).

BLUE NOTES – additional or extra sharpened or flattened notes in a melody.




D. Instruments of Jazz and Blues


Double Bass ("Bass") or "String Bass"




Drum Kit/Drums



Piano




Electric Guitar (or could be Acoustic)




RHYTHM SECTION Accompaniment and Backing


Trumpets




Trombones



Saxophones



Clarinets

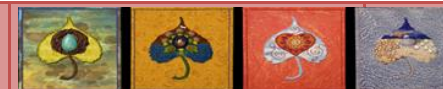


FRONTLINE INSTRUMENTS ("REDS")

Perform **SOLOS** as well as with the ensemble/band.

VARIATIONS

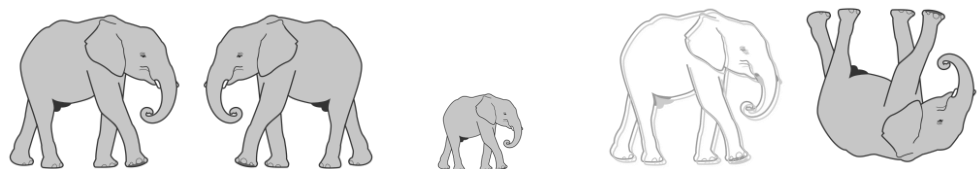
Exploring ways to develop musical ideas



A. Theme and Variations Key Words

MELODY – A tune or succession of notes, varying in pitch, that have an organised and recognisable shape. Often called the main **TUNE** or **THEME** of a piece of music or song and easily remembered.

VARIATION – Where a **THEME** is altered or changed musically, while retaining some of the primary elements, notes and structure of the original. **VARIATION FORM:**



A (Theme) A1 (Variation) A2 (Variation) A3 (Variation) A4 (Variation)

B. Augmentation and Diminution – Note Values and Duration

AUGMENTATION – the process of **DOUBLING** the note values (**DURATION**) of a theme as a means of variation.



DIMINUTION – the process of **HALVING** the note values (**DURATION**) of a theme as a means of variation.

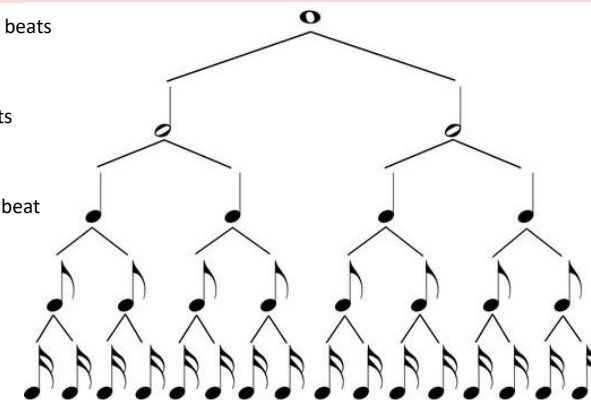
SEMIBREVE = 4 beats

MINIM = 2 beats

CROTCHET = 1 beat

QUAVER
= ½ beat

SEMIQUAVER
= ¼ beat



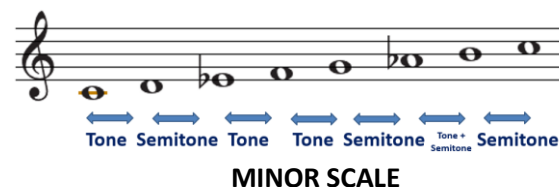
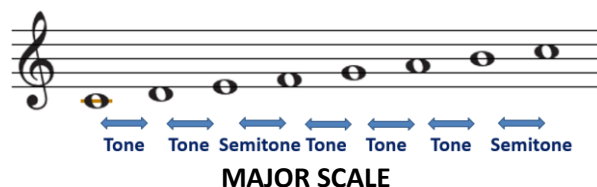
C. Variation Techniques

PITCH – Change the highness or lowness of the theme – play the same notes, but at different pitches e.g. in different OCTAVES .	TEMPO – Change the speed of the theme – play it faster or slower.	DYNAMICS – Change the volume of the theme – play it louder or softer.	TEXTURE – Change the amount of sound we hear – play as a SOLO , add an ACCOMPANIMENT or CHORDS , add a COUNTER-MELODY (an 'extra' melody that is played or sung at the same time as the main melody, often higher in pitch and sometimes called a DESCANT).	TIMBRE AND SONORITY – Change the SOUND of the theme – play it on a different instrument.	ARTICULATION – Change the way the theme is played – smoothly (LEGATO – shown by a SLUR) or short, detached and spiky (STACCATO – shown by a dot).	PEDAL – A long (often very long!) note in the bass line of the music over which other parts, including the theme or a variation of the theme can be played. Also called a PEDAL NOTE or PEDAL POINT and often the TONIC note (but can be the DOMINANT or other notes).	DRONE – A long or series of repeated (often long) notes using the TONIC and DOMINANT notes together (a FIFTH).	MELODIC DECORATION – Adding extra notes or embellishments to the theme such as trills, turns, mordents (ORNAMENTS) or PASSING NOTES (extra notes between the main melody notes).	OSTINATO – Adding a repeated musical pattern (rhythmic or melodic) to the main theme as a form of variation.	CANON/ROUND – A song or piece of music in which different performers sing or perform the same THEME starting one after the other.	GROUND BASS – A repeated musical pattern in the bass part upon which chords, and melodies can be performed and varied "over the top" of.
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D. Tonality – Major and Minor



TONALITY refers to whether a **THEME** or **MELODY** is in a **MAJOR** or **MINOR** key. Changing the tonality from major to minor or minor to major is one way of providing a variation on the theme of melody. Major and minor scales follow a certain pattern of tones and semitones:



E. Inversion and Retrograde

INVERSION – Changing the **INTERVALS** between the notes of a theme so that they are upside down from the original.

RETROGRADE – A variation technique created by arranging the main theme backwards.

RETROGRADE INVERSION – Arranging the "inverted" variation of the theme backwards!



hooks and riffs

Exploring Repeated Musical Patterns



A. Key Words

HOOK – A ‘musical hook’ is usually the ‘catchy bit’ of the song that you will remember. It is often short and used and repeated in different places throughout the piece. HOOKS can either be a:

MELODIC HOOK – a HOOK based on the instruments and the singers

RHYTHMIC HOOK – a HOOK based on the patterns in the drums and bass parts or a

VERBAL/LYRICAL HOOK – a HOOK based on the rhyming and/or repeated words of the chorus.

RIFF – A repeated musical pattern often used in the introduction and instrumental breaks in a song or piece of music. RIFFS can be rhythmic, melodic or lyrical, short and repeated.

OSTINATO – A repeated musical pattern. The same meaning as the word RIFF but used when describing repeated musical patterns in “classical” and some “World” music.

BASS LINE – The lowest pitched part of the music often played on bass instruments such as the bass guitar or double bass. RIFFS are often used in BASS LINES.

MELODY – The main “tune” of a song or piece of music, played higher in pitch than the BASS LINE and it may also contain RIFFS or HOOKS. In “Classical Music”, the melody line is often performed “with” an OSTINATO pattern below.

B. Famous Hooks, Riffs and Ostinatos

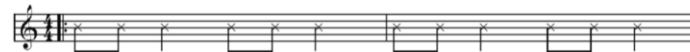
Bass Line Riff from “Sweet Dreams” – The Eurythmics



Riff from “Word Up” – Cameo



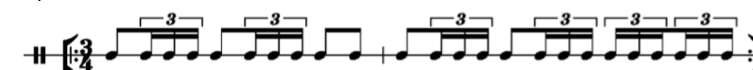
Rhythmic Riff from “We Will Rock You” – Queen



Vocal and Melodic Hook from “We Will Rock You” – Queen



Rhythmic Ostinato from “Bolero” – Ravel



Bass Line Ostinato from “Habanera” from ‘Carmen’ – Bizet



Ostinato from 2nd Movement of Symphony No.101 (The Clock) – Haydn



C. Music Theory

REPEAT SYMBOL – A musical symbol used in staff notation consisting of two vertical dots followed by double bar lines showing the performer should go back to either the start of the piece or to the corresponding sign facing the other way and repeat that section of music.



TREBLE CLEF – A musical symbol showing that notes are to be performed at a higher pitch. Also called the G clef since it indicates that the second line up is the note G.



BASS CLEF – A musical symbol showing that notes are to be performed at a lower pitch. The BASS LINE part is often written using the BASS CLEF. Also called the F clef since it indicates that the fourth line up is the note F.



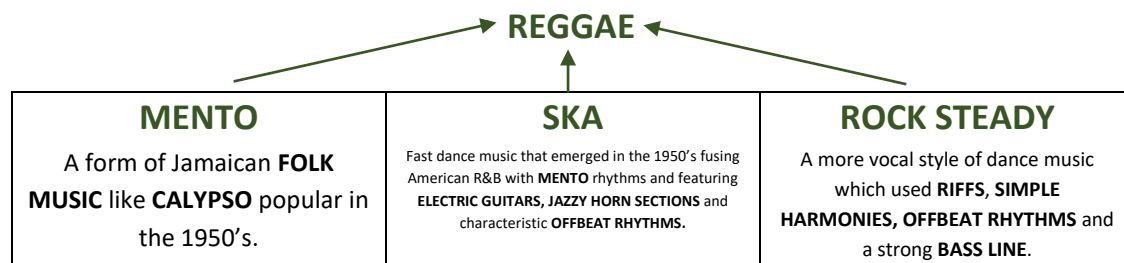
Offbeat

Exploring Reggae and Syncopation



A. How did Reggae develop?

REGGAE is one of the traditional musical styles from **JAMAICA**. It developed from :



Reggae was first heard in the UK in the 1950's when immigrants began to settle. During the 1960's, people began importing singles from Jamaica to sell in UK shops. Now, Reggae is known as the national music of Jamaica.

B. Where is Jamaica?



C. What are Reggae Songs About?

Reggae is closely associated with **RASTAFARIANISM** (a religious movement worshipping Haile Selassie as the Messiah and that black people are the chosen people and will eventually return to their African homeland). The **LYRICS** of Reggae songs are strongly influenced by Rastafarianism and are often political including themes such as **LOVE, BROTHERHOOD, PEACE, POVERTY, ANTI-RACISM, OPTIMISM** and **FREEDOM**.

D. Offbeat Rhythms & Syncopation

OFFBEAT RHYTHMS – Rhythms that emphasise or stress the **WEAK BEATS OF A BAR**. In music that is in 4/4 time, the first beat of the bar is the strongest, the third the next strongest and the second and fourth are weaker. Emphasising the second and fourth beats of the bar gives a “missing beat feel” to the rhythm and makes the music sound **OFFBEAT**, often emphasised by the **BASS DRUM** or a **RIM SHOT** (hitting the edge of a **SNARE DRUM**) in much Reggae music.

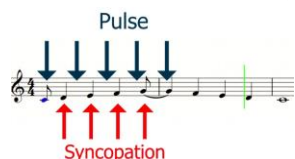
ONBEAT RHYTHM GRID

Pulse/Beat	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
“Onbeat” rhythms (strong beats)	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩

OFFBEAT RHYTHM GRID

Pulse/Beat	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
“Offbeat” rhythms (weak beats)	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩	♩

SYNCOPATION – A way of changing a rhythm by making some notes a bit early, often so they cross over the main beat of the music giving the music a further **OFFBEAT** feel – another common feature of Reggae music.



E. Musical Features of Reggae

OFFBEAT RHYTHMS AND CHORDS (see D)
SYNCOPATED RHYTHMS AND MELODIES (see D)
SUNG LYRICS (see C)
LEAD SINGER often with **BACKING SINGERS** sometimes singing in **CALL AND RESPONSE** (see F3) accompanied by a Reggae band which often features: **BRASS INSTRUMENTS** and **SAXOPHONES, ELECTRIC GUITARS, BASS GUITAR, KEYBOARDS, DRUMS AND PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS. VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL IMPROVISATIONS** (see F2)
MELODIC RIFFS (see F5)
SLOW, RELAXED (‘chilled!’) **TEMPO**
4/4 METRE/TIME SIGNATURE
 Most Reggae songs are structured in **VERSE AND CHORUS/POPULAR SONG FORM**.
SIMPLE HARMONIES (see F4)

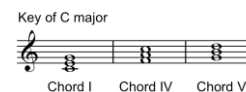


LYRICS (MELODY)
 SYNCOPATED RHYTHMS
 RIFFS
 OFFBEAT CHORDS
 BASS LINE RIFFS

THICK TEXTURAL LAYERS (see F9)
 “The Reggae Trifle” is an example of how many Reggae songs are ‘layered’.

F. Reggae Key Words

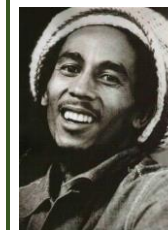
- MELODY** – The main ‘tune’ of a piece of music, often sung by the **LEAD SINGER**.
- IMPROVISATION** – Previously unprepared performance.
- CALL AND RESPONSE** – Similar to a “Question and Answer” often the call sung by the lead singer and answered by the backing singers or instruments (the response) – musical dialogue.
- SIMPLE HARMONIES** – using a limited number of **CHORDS**, mainly **PRIMARY TRIADS** such as the **TONIC, DOMINANT** and **SUBDOMINANT** chords.



- RIFF** – A repeated musical pattern. Often the **BASS GUITAR** played repeated **MELODIC BASS RIFFS** in Reggae songs.
- BASS/BASS LINE** – The lowest pitched part of a piece of music often played by the **BASS GUITAR** in Reggae which plays an important role.
- CHORD** – 2 or more notes played together in **HARMONY**.
- RHYTHM** – A series of long and short sounds.
- TEXTURE** – Layers of sound combined to make music.

G. Who was Bob Marley?

BOB MARLEY was a famous reggae singer, **SONGWRITER**, and musician who first became famous in his band The Wailers, and later as a **SOLO ARTIST**. He was born Nesta Robert Marley on February 6th, 1945 in Nine Mile, Saint Ann, Jamaica. Although he grew up in poverty, he surrounded himself with music and met some of the future members of The Wailers. Bob Marley became involved in the Rastafarian movement and this influenced his music style greatly. Bob Marley and The Wailers worked with several famous musicians before



becoming famous on their own. His career flourished and he became a cultural icon. He was the first international superstar to have been born in poverty in a Third-World country.