

Rhythm and Blues

Learning and Teaching materials for Teachers' reference

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Is pop music a genre? Or are there many genres in pop music?

- Rhythm and Blues (R&B) is a genre of popular music that developed by African Americans in the 1940s that has been continuously refined through the present day.
- Derived from gospel, jazz, folk, and traditional blues music and emerged in tandem with Rock and Roll.

Overview

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1/ Origins (1940s)

Historical background

- Great Migration (1916-1970): 6 million African Americans moved from the South to the North and West, spreading their musical traditions.
 - In the 1940s, R&B music exploded in urban centres like New York, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles.
 - Jazz, swing, and blues were dominant music styles, emphasised electric guitars, double bass, piano, and drum set.
- ⇒ Harlem Hamfats - *Oh! Red* (1936)
- ⇒ Count Basie - *One O'Clock Jump* (1943)

Term “Rhythm and Blues”

- Coined by record companies to “race music”. (All African American music)
- Described “rocking, jazz-based music ... [with a] heavy, insistent beat”.
- The term “*Rhythm and Blues*” (R&B) replaced the Billboard category “*Harlem Hit Parade*”.

Lyrics:

- The African-American history, experience of pain and the quest for freedom and joy, racism, oppression, relationships, economics, aspirations, etc.

Examples:

- ⇒ Wynonie Harris - *Good Rockin' Tonight* (1948) (#1 R&B hit)
- ⇒ Louis Jordan & His Tympany Five - *Five Guys Named Moe* (1943)

2/ Music Characteristics of R&B

Instrumentation

R&B features a blend of **groovy basslines**, **smooth electric pianos**, **soulful guitar riffs**, **drum patterns** and **horn sections** (e.g. saxophone or trumpet), often complemented by **layered backup vocals** and subtle use of **synths** (in modern tracks).

Lead Vocals

Melismatic Singing

- Extending a single syllable over multiple notes (e.g. Mariah Carey's vocal runs).
- Adds emotional intensity and showcases vocal ability.
- Soulful, heartfelt, often with a sense of longing or passion.

Falsetto:

- High vocal register used for emotional impact, especially during climactic moments.
- ⇒ Mariah Carey - *Vision Of Love* (1990) (starts: 2:58)

Call and Response

- Traditional interaction between lead vocals and backup singers.
- Originated from African-American spirituals and gospel traditions.
- Rich harmonies, enhance the overall sound and depth.

⇒ Aretha Franklin - *Respect* (1967)

Improvisation & Ad Libs

- Freestyle vocal flourishes or phrases added by the singer outside the structured melody.

⇒ Beyoncé - *Love On Top* (2011) (starts: 1:21)

Guitar

Rhythmic Chords and Riffs

- Often plays rhythmic patterns (comping) to drive the groove.
- Uses clean tone with minimal distortion, often with effects like wah-wah.

⇒ Chic - *Good Times* (1979) (Intro using wah-wah effects)

Piano / Electric Piano

Rhythmic Chords and Melodies

- Adds harmonic depth and fills in between vocal lines.
 - Electric pianos (e.g. Rhodes or Wurlitzer) are iconic in R&B.
- *Rhodes / Wurlitzer*
 - The Rhodes piano (also known as the Fender Rhodes piano) and Wurlitzer are electric pianos popular in the 1970s.

⇒ Ray Charle - *What'd I Say* (1959)

⇒ John Legend - *Ordinary People* (2004) (Piano intro)

- *Yamaha DX7 synthesizer*

- Another important electric keyboard instruments used in 80's R&B.
- Bell-like timbre.

⇒ Anita Baker - *Sweet Love* (1986)

Saxophone

Soulful Solos and Melodic Lines

- Adds emotion and energy, especially in slower ballads or upbeat dance tracks.
- Played in both smooth and aggressive styles.
- Sometimes adds in call and response with lead singer.

⇒ Grover Washington Jr. - *Just the Two of Us* (1980) (starts 1:47)

Bass

Creates the Groove

- Works closely with drums to maintain the rhythmic foundation.

Melodic Basslines

- R&B basslines are not just rhythmically repetitive; they also include melodic elements to enhance the harmony.
- The bass frequently “walks” between notes rather than sticking to root notes.

⇒ Chaka Khan - *Ain't Nobody* (1984)

Drums

Groove

- In synchronisation with the bass to create a relaxed but locked-in groove.
- Backbeat: Emphasising the snare on the 2nd and the 4th beat to create a strong, driving rhythm essential to R&B. Often combined with a tresillo pattern to add syncopation and complexity.

3/ Common Music Structures

Verse-Chorus Form: The most prevalent form in R&B, usually structured as:

- **Intro:**
 - Mostly instrumental.
 - Often features a short instrumental section or a vocal phrase that establishes the mood and key of the song.
 - May include smooth instrumental riffs, soft vocal harmonies, or a simple chord progression that leads into the first verse.
- **Verse 1:** Introduces the narrative or emotional theme.
- **Chorus:** The catchy, memorable section that encapsulates the main message or emotion.
- **Verse 2:** Develops the narrative, often building on the themes from the first verse.
- **Chorus:** Repeats to reinforce the emotional core.
- **Bridge:** A contrasting section that provides a departure from the main themes, often heightening emotional tension before returning to the final chorus.
- **Instrumental Solo:** Frequently placed after the bridge or the final chorus, featuring instruments like guitar or saxophone, adding emotional depth and showcasing musicianship.
- **Final Chorus:** May include variations (e.g. additional vocal harmonies, key changes) to create a climactic conclusion.
- **Outro:**
 - Serves as the conclusion of the song, often repeating a phrase from the chorus or a key line from the lyrics.
 - May feature fading instrumentation, vocal ad libs, or a soft instrumental section that gently concludes the emotional journey of the song.

4/ Common Progressions

I-IV-V-vi Progression

- **Example: Frank Ocean - *Thinkin Bout You* (2012)**
 - **Progression:** The song uses a variation of the I-IV-V-vi progression throughout, creating a smooth and flowing sound.
 - **Chords:** An example would be Cmaj7 - Fmaj7 - G - Amin7, which contributes to its laid-back vibe.

ii-V-I Progression

- **Example: Stevie Wonder - *Isn't She Lovely* (1976)**
 - **Progression:** This classic ballad features a ii-V-I progression in parts of its arrangement, showcasing a jazzy feel.
 - **Chords:** Dm7 - G7 - Cmaj7 can be identified in the chord changes.

I-IV-ii-V Progression

- **Example: Righteous Brothers - *Unchained Melody* (1955)**
 - **Progression:** This song features a I-IV-ii-V progression, particularly in its verse sections.
 - **Chords:** Cmaj7 - F - Dm7 - G7 is a great example, providing emotional resonance throughout.

In contemporary R&B, the harmony often draws from **Western functional harmony**, meaning the progressions follow familiar tonal relationships, such as the movement from tonic to dominant chords. However, these are just **common progressions** — they're not strict rules. The choice of chords often depends on the song's context, mood, or the artist's creative direction. R&B frequently combines these progressions with **modal interchange** or **non-diatonic chords** to add emotional depth and variation. Flexibility is the key, allowing songwriters to break through these typical patterns and create something fresh and unique.

5/ The Development of R&B (around 1950s-1970s)

- R&B musicians began experimenting with syncopated rhythms and more Afrocentric lyrical content in the 1970s.
- African rhythms, and expanded instrumentation were added into R&B, leading to the development of funk and disco.
- 1969: Grammys Awards introduced the Rhythm and Blues category.
- **Soul, Funk** and **Disco** as the sub-category.

Music Examples:

- ⇒ Little Richard - *Long Tall Sally, In Color!* (1955)
- ⇒ Turner / Jackie Brenston - *Rocket 88* (1951)

Soul

Overview

- A blend of gospel, Rhythm and Blues, and jazz, characterised by emotionally expressive vocals and a strong connection to African-American culture.
- Popular for dancing and listening in the United States.

Characteristics

- **Call and response Vocals:** Reflects gospel roots, with interactive and communal performance style.
- **Catchy Rhythms:** Often accompanied by handclaps and body movements, making the music both engaging and danceable.
- **Improvisation:** There are various way to improvise in soul music.
- Singers can improvise by adding vocal embellishments, such as vocal ad libs (smooth transitions between notes) and riffs (repeated melodic phrases), to enhance the emotional intensity of a song. Soul music is all about conveying deep emotions. Singers and musicians often improvise by adding extra emotion to their delivery

⇒ Whitney Houston - *I Will Always Love You* (1992)

- Musicians, particularly on instruments like guitar, saxophone, or keyboards, can take solos where they improvise melodic phrases, adding their personal style to the music. Improvisation takes an important role, especially, on live performance.

Key Artists

- Ray Charles: Pioneered the soul genre.
- Marvin Gaye: Known for his soulful voice.
- Aretha Franklin: The “Queen of Soul” known for her powerful and emotive vocal style.
- The Supremes: Influence most of the girl groups from the 90s.

Funk / Disco

Background:

- With Rock and Roll¹ moving towards a heavier sound, R&B musicians wanted to try different moods and atmospheres, creating a more danceable form of R&B.

Characteristics:

- **Grooves:** Funk emphasises tight, repetitive grooves and rhythmic patterns, often centred around the bass and drums.
- **Short Bass Riffs:** Features slap² bass techniques, adding a percussive element to the bassline.
- **Vamping:** Extended sections that focus on a single chord or riff, creating a hypnotic, danceable atmosphere. Usually towards the end of the music.

⇒ Earth Wind Fire - *September* (1978) (starts from 2:34)

Key Artists:

- James Brown: Known as the “Godfather of Soul”, his music laid the groundwork for funk with its emphasis on rhythm.
- Donna Summer: Known as the “Queen of Disco”, Donna Summer was one of the most successful and influential artists of the disco era.

¹ Rock and Roll is a style of popular music that started in the United States in the 1950s. It’s known for its energetic beats, strong rhythms, and catchy melodies. Rock and Roll often features electric guitars, bass, drums, and vocals. The music combines elements of blues, country, and jazz, creating a lively and rebellious sound that connected with young people.

² Slap: using the edge of one’s knuckle, where it is particularly bony, to quickly strike the strings against the fretboard.

6/ Contemporary R&B (around 1980s – Present)

Blend of influences:

- Combines soul, funk, hip-hop, and pop, evolving with advancements in technology and shifts in cultural trends.

Music Characteristics:

- **Smooth, lush, vocal style:** Emphasises emotional delivery and vocal skills, often with ad libs and melisma.
- **Keyboard-based instrumentation:** While early R&B was driven by guitars, most contemporary R&B is based around keyboards, synthesizers, drum machines and software loops. Distortion guitars are rarely found, where smooth sound gear such as Fender Rhodes and acoustic piano are commonly found.
- **Syncopated rhythm:** Rhythm tends to feel loose and off beat (similar as those in funk, soul). With rapid sixteenth note on hi-hat or triplets are now a signature sound in modern R&B.
- Tempo in contemporary R&B tends to vary but generally falls between 60-100 bpm, allowing for smooth vocal phrasing, emphasise emotion. Tempo can range up to mid-tempo for groovier, danceable vibes.
- Bass line usually follows the drum groove and play a supporting role.
- **Incorporation of hip-hop:** In recent years, the line between hip-hop and R&B has blurred.

Theme:

- **Love and Relationships:** Central themes in contemporary R&B, often exploring complex emotional landscapes.
- **Sexuality:** Open and candid exploration of sensuality, particularly in the works of artists like Prince and Beyoncé.

Eras and Artists:

1980s

- Use of synthesizers, drum machines and other electronic instruments.
 - Pioneers in bringing R&B to a global audience.
 - Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston and Prince.
- ⇒ Whitney Houston - *I Wanna Dance With Somebody* (1987)
- A pop-R&B anthem with glossy production, showcasing Whitney's powerful vocal style.
 - Synth-heavy production, catchy melodies.
- ⇒ Michael Jackson - *Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'* (1982)
- Features a blend of electronic instruments, funky rhythms, and infectious hooks. Helped establish R&B's global appeal.
 - Drum machines, synthesizers, and upbeat, danceable grooves.

1990s

- Use of hip-hop beats (mainly repetitive pattern with not much variations).
 - Use of samples in making drum beats.
 - Boyz II Men, TLC and Mary J. Blige.
- ⇒ Boyz II Men - *End of The Road* (1992)
- Slow tempo, lush vocal harmonies
- ⇒ TLC - *No Scrubs* (1992)
- Combines R&B melodies with hip-hop beats.
 - Use of samples and modern production techniques, empowering lyrics.

2000-2010s

- Use of EDM³.
 - More emphasis on visual aesthetic and fashions.
 - Beyoncé, Rihanna and Usher.
- ⇒ Beyoncé - *Crazy in Love ft. JAY Z* (2003)
- A blend of R&B, hip-hop, and pop with vibrant horns and heavy beats.
 - The music video sets trends in visual aesthetics.
- ⇒ Usher - *Yeah! ft. Lil Jon, Ludacris* (2004)
- Combines R&B vocals with EDM beats.

³ Electronic Dance Music (EDM) is a genre of music produced primarily with electronic instruments and digital tools. It features strong, repetitive beats, synthesized sounds, and is often used in dance clubs, festivals, and raves. Subgenres including house, techno, trance, dubstep, and drum and bass, each with distinct rhythms and styles. The music is typically designed to energise and engage listeners, making it popular for its fast tempo, intense drops, and the use of electronic effects to create immersive soundscapes.

2020s

- More elements, such as indie music⁴.
 - Incorporation of hip-hop.
 - Focus on distinctive sound.
 - Frank Ocean, Solange, Bruno Mars, John Legend
- ⇒ Bruno Mars, Anderson .Paak, Silk Sonic - *Leave the Door Open* (2021)
- Blend 70s soul influences with modern R&B, adding elements of funk and retro aesthetics, and lush instrumentation.
- ⇒ Frank Ocean - *Nikes* (2016)
- Experimental, genre-blurring R&B integrates indie, soul, and hip-hop.
 - Sparse instrumentation, introspective lyrics, emotional depth.
 - Using technology (Autotune) in vocal production.

Cultural Impact:

Broader Influence

- Shaped modern music, influencing genres like hip-hop, pop, and rock.
- Influenced fashion, dance, and social movements, particularly in the context of African-American identity and civil rights.

Expression of African-American Experiences

- Themes of pain, freedom, joy, and resistance are central to R&B, reflecting the struggles and triumphs of African-American communities.

⁴ Indie music, short for independent music, refers to music produced independently from major commercial record labels. It's characterised by a DIY approach to recording and publishing, giving artists greater creative freedom. Indie music often associated with a raw, authentic, and sometimes unconventional sound. Artists in the indie scene focus more on artistic expression than mainstream appeal, resulting in a wide range of unique and experimental styles. The culture around indie music also emphasises grassroots promotion and close artist-fan connections.

7/ Glossary

Grooves:

A repeated pattern in the rhythm section most common in funk playing; a repeated rhythm pattern that creates the dominant feel of a piece.

Drum groove examples

Three examples of drum grooves, labeled A, B, and C, shown on a single staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. Groove A features a steady eighth-note pattern with accents. Groove B features a more complex pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes. Groove C features a pattern with eighth notes and rests.

⇒ Stevie Wonder - *Superstition* (1972)
keyboard transcription

Funk ♩ = 95

A keyboard transcription of the Superstition groove, showing a piano accompaniment in 4/4 time with a tempo of 95. The piece is in a key with four flats (F major or D minor). The melody is primarily in the right hand, while the left hand provides a steady bass line.

Bass Riffs

A brief and relaxed phrase repeated over changing melodies. “A riff is a short, repeated and memorable musical phrase, often pitched low on the guitar, which focuses much of the energy and excitement of a rock song”. In jazz and R&B, riffs are often used as the starting point for longer compositions.

⇒ Herbie Hancock - *Chameleon* (1973)
Bass riff transcription

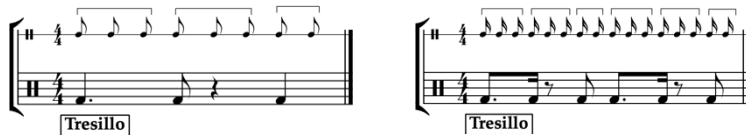
♩ = 101

A bass riff transcription for the Chameleon groove, showing a single bass line in 4/4 time with a tempo of 101. The piece is in a key with four flats (F major or D minor). The riff consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Tresillo

Tresillo Pattern

- A tresillo is a rhythmic pattern common in Afro-Cuban music but also found in R&B.
- It creates a syncopated feel where beats are grouped unevenly, adding energy to the groove.
- Pattern: (X -- X -- X -)



Backbeat

- A rhythm where the emphasis is placed on the 2nd and 4th beats, forming the foundation of R&B's signature groove, driving the music with a steady, danceable pulse.
- Combining the tresillo and backbeat creates a rhythmic pattern that serves as the backbone of R&B music.



Ballad

- Slow, emotional songs
- Ballads are characterised by their slow tempo and lyrical content, often exploring themes of love, heartbreak, and relationships.
- Emphasis on strong, memorable melodies and emotive vocal delivery.
- Builds emotional intensity, often leading to powerful climaxes in the chorus.

⇒ John Legend - *All of Me* (2013)

Ad lib, Runs, Melisma

- Ad lib is about lyrical improvisation.
- Runs are about rapid note movement.
- Melisma is about extending a single syllable over many notes.

8/ Music Analysis

The Temptations - *My Girl* (1965)

Key instruments:

The arrangement is well-layered, with each instrument playing a distinct role. This creates a rich tapestry of sound that feels full but not cluttered.

- **Bass Guitar:** one of the most recognisable in the music history. The bass provides a **steady groove** that anchors the song.
- **Drums:** The drumbeat is characterised by a **steady backbeat** on the snare and a soft kick drum
- **Guitars:** **Guitar 1** plays melodic lines that change according to the chords, adding a **harmonious texture** to the song. **Guitar 2** plays a supporting role by providing **rhythmic strumming** on the backbeat, contributing to the overall groove of the song.

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system, labeled 'INTRO', consists of four measures in 4/4 time. The top staff is for Guitar, showing a melodic line starting in the fourth measure with a C chord above it. The middle staff is for Drum Set, showing a steady backbeat pattern with a 'fill in' in the fourth measure. The bottom staff is for Bass, showing a steady eighth-note groove. The second system, labeled 'Verse', starts at measure 5 and consists of four measures. The top staff shows a melodic line with chords C, F, C, and F above it. The middle staff shows rhythmic strumming patterns. The bottom staff shows the bass line continuing the groove.

- **Horns:** The song features a bright trumpets section that adds a lively, celebratory feel. It first appears in second verse (0:46), as a response to the vocal.



- **Strings:** Strings, including violins and cellos, create a lush backdrop that adds warmth and richness to the arrangement. The strings also play counter-melodies. E.g. [Verse 3] (1:50)

Structure

[Intro]

[Verse 1]

I've got sunshine on a cloudy day When it's cold
outside, I've got the month of May
I guess you'd say
What can make me feel this way?

[Chorus]

My girl, my girl, my girl Talkin' 'bout my girl, my girl

[Verse 2]

I've got so much honey, the bees envy me
I've got a sweeter song than the birds in the trees
Well, I guess you'd say
What can make me feel this way?

[Chorus]

My girl, my girl, my girl Talkin' 'bout my girl, my girl

[Music Break]

Hey, hey, hey Hey, hey, hey Ooh, yeah

[Verse 3]

I don't need no money, fortune, or fame
I've got all the riches, baby, one man can claim
Well, I guess you'd say
What can make me feel this way?

[Chorus]

My girl, my girl, my girl Talkin' 'bout my girl, my girl

[Outro]

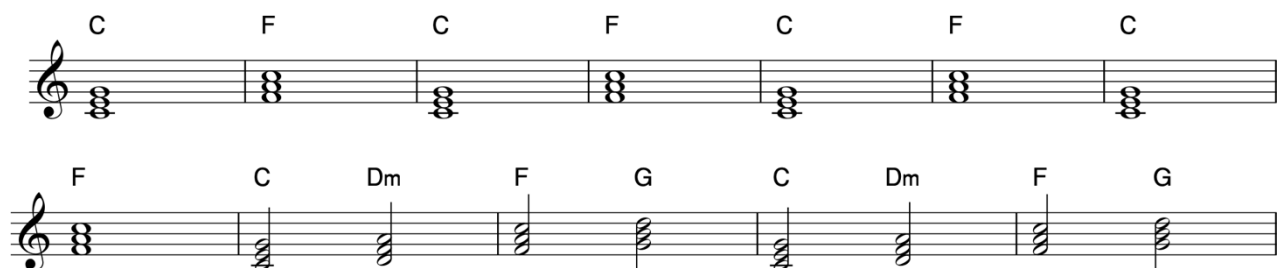
I've got sunshine on a cloudy day With my girl
I've even got the month of May With my girl
Talkin' 'bout, talkin' 'bout, talkin' 'bout my girl

Harmony

The music starts in C major, modulates to D major on Verse 3

Verse (0:07)

- Featuring I-IV-I and I-ii-IV-V before the chorus



Chorus (0:36)

- The chorus features two chords: **I** and **ii**, with a **V chord** on the last beat serving as a pickup for the next section.
- The **I chord** also incorporates the **7th** and **9th** to add tension and colour. The **7th** and **9th** are played by the string section.



Music Break

- The arrangement returns to the **intro-like** structure, utilising the chord progression from the intro. The strings join in to play the melody afterwards. The section modulates to **D major** through two **V-I** progressions.



Vocal Style

Ad libs and melismatic singing can be found in the verses, with each instance featuring a different embellishment. In contrast, the pre-chorus remains consistent throughout.

Call and Response

Throughout the song, there are moments where David Ruffin interacts with the background singers, creating a call and response effect.

For example, during the chorus, when Ruffin sings “My girl”, the backup singers respond with “my girl, my girl” using an ascending melodic motion. This interplay not only highlights the main theme but also adds depth and a sense of community to the song.

Lyrics

Love and Affection:

The central theme of “My Girl” is about romantic love. The lyrics express deep admiration and affection for a partner, highlighting the joy and happiness that love brings. Phrases like “I’ve got sunshine on a cloudy day” convey how the presence of the loved one brightens even the darkest moments.

Imagination:

The lyrics are rich with natural imagery, such as references to “sunshine”, which symbolise warmth and happiness, and “cloudy days”, representing challenges or sadness. This contrast emphasises how love can illuminate one’s life.

Repetitive Phrases:

The repeated phrases, such as “My girl”, create a catchy hook that is memorable and engaging. This repetition not only emphasises the central theme of the song but also invites listener participation, making it a popular choice for sing-along.

VERSE 1



I've got sun-shine___ on a cloud - y day When it's



cold out - side,___ I've got the month of May. I guess you'll say

Chorus (my girl,) (my girl,)



what can make me fell this way? My girl, talk-in' 'bout

VERSE 2 (my girl.)



___ my_ girl._ I've got so___ much hon - ey, the bees en-vy me.



I've got a___sweet-er song___ than the birds in the trees.



Well, I guess you'll say what can make me fell this way?

Beyoncé - Irreplaceable (2006)

Key instruments:

- **Acoustic guitar:** as a lead role, playing throughout the entire song
- **Bass:** only appears on chorus, and bridge
- **Drum Machine:** playing the same pattern throughout the song
- **Synths:** mostly playing pad, and some strings lines in between

Drum and Bass Pattern

The drums have a **steady, programmed beat** with soft snares and light hi-hats, giving it a laid-back feel. (tempo 88bpm)



Bass plays long notes only

B \flat F(sus4) C m ⁷(add4) E \flat (sus2)

Bass

Drum Set

Musical notation for the bass and drum set patterns in 4/4 time. The top staff shows the bass line with long notes corresponding to the chords Bb, F(sus4), Cm7(add4), and Eb(sus2). The bottom staff shows the drum set pattern with a steady beat of eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

Structure

Intro > Verse 1 > Chorus > Verse 2 > Chorus > Bridge > Chorus > Chorus

Harmony

- The song uses simple, repetitive progressions (rooted in functional harmony).
- The acoustic guitar plays **open chords**, which gives it an organic, folk-like sound.
- Harmonic shifts in the bridge section.

Intro / Verse: I – V – ii- IV

Chord progression: B \flat ⁵, F(sus⁴), C \flat m⁷(add⁴), E \flat (sus²)

Pre chorus: IV – vi – IV- iii – ii – V

Chord progression: E \flat maj⁹, G \flat m⁷(add⁴), E \flat maj⁹, Dm⁷, C \flat m⁷(add⁴), F(sus⁴)

Chorus: I – V – ii- IV

Chord progression: B \flat ⁵, F(sus⁴), C \flat m⁷(add⁴), E \flat (sus²)

Bridge: IV – V – I – V – vi – V – II – IV – V

Chord progression: E \flat maj⁷, F, B \flat , F/A, G \flat m⁷, F
 C(add⁴), D⁵ [passing], E \flat (sus²), F, F

Vocal style

- Beyoncé's vocal delivery is measured and controlled, prioritising emotional clarity over vocal embellishments.
- **Minimal Ad libs and Melisma:** Ad libs and melisma only appear towards the end of the song, i.e. final chorus.
- **Vocal dynamics:** Soft in the verses → Builds in the pre-chorus → Powerful delivery in the chorus.

Call and response

- In the **chorus**, Beyoncé repeats lines such as “You must not know about me”. While not a traditional call and response between two distinct vocal parts.

transcription of the last chorus

you must now know about me__ you must not know about me

ba - by_____ I could have an-

oth - er you__ in a min-ute mat-ter of fact he'll be here in a min-utes you can pack

you must now know about me__ you must not know about me

all your bags we're fin - ish cause you made your bed__ now lay in it I could have an -

oth-er you to-mor-row Don't you ev-er far a sec-ond get to think-ing you're ir-re-place-a - ble__

Lyrics

- The song is about strength, self-confidence, and independence. Beyoncé tells someone who hurts her that she's ready to move on and won't put up with disrespect.
- The lyrics feel like a conversation between Beyoncé and the person she's leaving.
- Each part of the song tells a different part of the story:
 - **Verses:** She explains what went wrong.
 - **Pre-Chorus:** She reminds them that she's confident and in control (“I could have another you in a minute”).
 - **Chorus:** She repeats “to the left”, telling them to take their things and leave.

9/ Suggested Learning Activities

A. Listen to the music and answer the questions below.

Beyoncé - Love On Top (2011)

- **What instruments (besides vocal) do you hear in the intro?**

Ans: Guitar, electric piano, drums, synth bass, synthesizer

- **What instrument(s) carry the groove?**

Ans: Guitar and vocal

- **Write down the groove:**



- **What is the structure of the music?**

Ans: Intro > Verse > Pre Chorus > Chorus > Break > Chorus > Chorus > Chorus > Chorus

- **Is the vocal delivery smooth or rhythmic? Does Beyoncé use any embellishments?**

- *In the verses, Beyoncé uses **legato** phrasing, smoothly connecting notes to create a flowing, soulful vibe. This smoothness aligns with the **romantic, uplifting theme** of the song, particularly in lines like, “Honey, honey, I can see the stars all the way from here”.*
- *In the **Pre-chorus, chorus and the music break**, her phrasing becomes more rhythmic, closely following the groove of the instruments (e.g. “Baby, it’s you... You’re the one I love”). This rhythmic approach adds **energy and emphasis**, making the chorus catchy and engaging.*

- **Identify the backbeat, clap it**

- **Is there any call and response in the song? Tell me the role of backup singers in this song**

Pre-chorus:

*Now everybody asks me why I'm smiling out from ear to ear
(They say love hurts)
But I know (it's gonna take the real work)*

Chorus:

*You're the one I love (love)
You're the one I need (I need)

You're the only one I see
Come on, baby, it's you (It's you)

You're the one that gives your all
You're the one that always calls (always calls)*

- **How does the bridge or music break affect the flow and energy of *Love On Top*? What would happen to the song if this section was removed?**

Suggested answer:

Role of the Bridge/Music Break:

- Acts as a **reset** or **transition** after the chorus.
- **Builds anticipation** for the key modulations.
- Highlights **instrumental parts**, especially the horns, giving them more prominence.
- Adds variety by shifting focus from vocals to **instrumental interplay**.

Impact on the Flow and Energy:

- Provides a **contrast** to the high-energy chorus, preventing the song from becoming repetitive.
- Keeps the listener engaged by **introducing dynamic variation**.
- The **upward key changes** are more impactful because of the temporary pause in energy.
- The horns and backing vocals **interact rhythmically**, adding groove and excitement.

If the Break Were Removed:

- The song might feel **too rushed or repetitive** without a break in momentum.
- The key changes would feel **less surprising or impactful**.
- The song would lose **dynamic contrast**, making it less engaging for the listener.

- **How many times does *Love On Top* modulate to different keys throughout the song? And how do the key changes contribute to the emotional intensity of the song?**

*Ans: Four times. The key changes in **Love on Top** serve to heighten the emotional intensity, creating a sense of **progression and excitement** as the song unfolds. Each modulation lifts the energy and mirrors the song's theme of love and joy.*

More questions:

- **What is the tempo of the song?**

- a. 70-80bpm
- b. 110-120bpm
- c. 90-100 bpm
- d. 130-140 bpm

Ans: c. (94bpm)

- **In *Love On Top*, which of the following elements most significantly enhances the song's energetic feel, particularly during the chorus?**

- a. Syncopated rhythms and strong backbeat
- b. Complex time signatures
- c. Extended instrumental solos
- d. Slow tempo with melodies

Ans: a. Syncopated rhythms and strong backbeat

- **If you could change one element (like tempo or instrumentation), what would you change and why?**

B. Composing: Create a short piece of music in R&B style

1. Set Up Your DAW Project

- Open your DAW (e.g. **Logic Pro, GarageBand, Reaper, Cakewalk**).
 - **Set the tempo to 70 BPM** to capture the smooth, laid-back feel of R&B.
-

2. Build the Rhythm Section (Drums + Bass)

- **Start with the drum pattern:**
 - Choose between **Drum A - Pattern** / **Drum B – Pattern** to form the main beat
 - Use **Drum Intro** to begin the song smoothly and **Drum End** / **Drum Outro** to close it off
 - **Add ONE of the basslines** (from the provided 4 options) to complement the drum pattern.
 - Focus on **locking the bass with the kick drum** to create a strong groove
 - You can switch basslines midway or layer two together for variety
 - **Add **Percussion – Bongos**** for extra rhythmic texture.
-

3. Incorporate Chords and Harmony

- **Layer chords** using:
 - **Electric piano** (**Electric Piano 01** / **Electric Piano 02**)
 - **Piano** / **Guitar** to add warmth
 - **Keyboard – Clav** for a funkier sound
 - Optional: Use **Strings** / **Strings (High)** to add depth or emotional intensity. Strings can work well during the intro, bridges, or outro sections.
-

4. Introduce Melodic and Synth Layers

- Add **Synth 01** or **Synth 02** to bring a modern touch to the track. These can be used as a subtle melody or background texture.
 - Experiment with **melodic lines** using either the synths or guitar. Keep it simple — melody in R&B should complement the groove, not overpower it.
-

5. Add Vocals and Vocal Ad libs

- Use **Vox 01** and **Vox 02** to introduce vocal elements.
 - You can place these in verses, choruses, or bridges to give the track structure
 - Use the **Vox - Ad Lib** to enhance energy in specific moments (such as during transitions or the outro)
 - Feel free to experiment by repeating certain vocal phrases to reinforce the hook
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Summary: Arrange and Structure Your Track

- Use the **Drum Intro** to start your song smoothly.
 - Build your rhythm and harmony gradually:
 - Start with drums and bass → Add electric piano → Introduce vocal elements → Build up with synths or strings toward the end
 - Finish the track with **Drum Outro** / **Drum End** to give it a clean and satisfying conclusion.
-

Tips for Success

- **Start simple:** Focus on creating a strong drum and bass groove first. Once you have a solid foundation, build up the other layers gradually.
 - **Use space effectively:** In R&B, leaving room between notes and phrases is just as important as the notes themselves. Avoid overcrowding the arrangement.
 - **Play with dynamics:** Introduce subtle changes in volume, texture, and instrumentation to keep the listener engaged.
-

Expected Outcome

- A short R&B piece (30–60 seconds) with:
 - **A clear rhythm section** (drums and bass)
 - **Chords and harmonic layers** (electric piano, guitar, or strings)
 - **Optional melodic elements** (synths or vocals)
 - **A beginning, middle, and end** using drum intro and outro sections

List of musical examples for references

1	Anita Baker - <i>Sweet Love</i> (1986)	R&B/Soul
2	Aretha Franklin - <i>Respect</i> (1967)	R&B/Soul
3	Arizona Dranes - <i>God's Got a Crown</i> (1928)	Gospel
4	Beyoncé - <i>Love On Top</i> (2011)	R&B/Soul, Pop
5	Beyoncé - <i>Crazy In Love</i> ft. JAY Z (2003)	R&B, Hip-hop
6	Boyz II Men - <i>End Of The Road</i> (1992)	R&B
7	Bruno Mars, Anderson .Paak, Silk Sonic - <i>Leave the Door Open</i> (2021)	R&B, Pop
8	Chaka Khan - <i>Ain't Nobody</i> (1984)	R&B/Funk
9	Chic - <i>Good Times</i> (1979)	Funk, Disco
10	Count Basie - <i>One O'Clock Jump</i> (1943)	Jazz
11	David Tao - 《愛，很簡單》 (1997)	R&B
12	David Tao - 《普通朋友》 (1999)	R&B
13	David Tao - 《太美麗》 (2006)	R&B
14	Early 1920's Jazz	/
15	Earth, Wind & Fire - <i>September</i> (1978)	R&B/Funk, Disco
16	Elva Hsiao - 《薔薇》 (2000)	R&B
17	Frank Ocean - <i>Nikes</i> (2016)	R&B
18	Frank Ocean - <i>Thinkin Bout You</i> (2012)	R&B
19	G.E.M. - <i>Where did you go</i> (2014)	R&B
20	Gin Lee - 《下一位》 (2013)	R&B
21	Grover Washington Jr. - <i>Just the Two of Us</i> (1980)	R&B/Soul
22	Harlem Hamfats - <i>Oh! Red</i> (1936)	Swing
23	Herbie Hancock - <i>Chameleon</i> (1973)	Funk
24	Jam Hsiao - 《只能想念你》 (2011)	R&B
25	Jay Chou - 《開不了口》 (2001)	R&B
26	Jay Chou - 《黑色幽默》 (2000)	R&B
27	Jay Chou - 《星晴》 (2000)	R&B
28	Jay Chou - 《龍捲風》 (2000)	R&B
29	Jay Chou - 《可愛女人》 (2000)	R&B
30	Jay Chou - 《青花瓷》 (2007)	R&B

List of musical examples for references (Cont'd)

31	John Legend - <i>All of Me</i> (2013)	R&B
32	John Legend - <i>Ordinary People</i> (2004)	R&B/Soul
33	Khalili Fong - <i>Love Song</i> (2007)	R&B
34	Khalil Fong – <i>Singalongsong</i> (2008)	R&B
35	Khalil Fong - 《愛愛愛》 (2006)	R&B
36	Khalil Fong - 《紅豆》 (2009)	R&B
37	Khalil Fong - <i>Nothing's gonna change my love for you</i> (2009)	R&B
38	Leehom Wang - 《公轉自轉》 (1998)	R&B
39	Mariah Carey - <i>Vision Of Love</i> (1990)	R&B/Soul, Pop
40	Marvin Gaye - <i>Let's Get It On</i> (1973)	R&B/Soul
41	Michael Jackson - <i>Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'</i> (1982)	Disco, Funk
42	Mississippi Fred McDowell - <i>Freight Train Blues</i>	Blues
43	Ray Charles - <i>What'd I Say</i> (1959)	R&B/Soul
44	Righteous Brothers - <i>Unchained Melody</i> (1955)	R&B
45	Ronghao Li - 《我看著你的時候》 (2017)	R&B
46	Stevie Wonder - <i>Isn't She Lovely</i> (1976)	R&B/Soul
47	Stevie Wonder - <i>Superstition</i> (1972)	R&B/Funk
48	Tanya Chua - 《下一次愛情來的時候》 (2005)	R&B
49	TLC - <i>No Scrubs</i> (1992)	R&B, Hip-hop
50	Tyson Yoshi - <i>Growing Up</i> (2024)	R&B
51	Usher - <i>Yeah!</i> ft. Lil Jon, Ludacris (2004)	R&B
52	Whitney Houston - <i>I Wanna Dance With Somebody</i> (1987)	R&B, Pop

Disclaimer:

The above learning and teaching resources were prepared by field experts invited by the Education Bureau. Schools should make appropriate adjustments and apply them flexibly based on learning and teaching objectives and the actual needs of their students.