

1. Styles Series Part 2/8 – Funk

- a. The funk genre is less about what you play and definitely more about how you play it. Funk music strongly emphasizes the bass, drums and groove that is created by both in combination. The melody and harmonies in funk music take a lesser role than jazz and other genres while rhythmic hits of the band take a strong role. For a pianist, funk music is actually pretty easy. For most tunes, you're only vamping on one to four chord changes, that repeat for the entire song. The main focus of the pianist, keyboardist, in a funk groove is simply lay down the harmonies as a nice palette for the drums and bass to create rhythmic grooves over. If the comping of the pianist starts to get too rhythmic, it can begin to destroy the whole groove of the band. All the chord changes in a funk piece can be played like jazz harmonies, but predominantly you will see more triads in most tunes.

- i. You'll want to think about different textures you can create with the piano while laying down harmonies in a funk tune. Here are a few to play around with.

1. Low End – While your RH plays voicings around the middle register of the piano, your LH simply plays and holds bass notes. Don't worry this won't interfere with what the bass is doing as long as you hold the note down. This will give a real nice thick voicing texture for the rest of the band to play over. If you want to add a rhythmic component to your RH that is okay. Definitely don't do much with your LH though!

2. Middle – In the middle of the piano, similar to jazz, your LH should play something thin such as the shells of the chord, (3 & 7, or 7 & 3) while your right hand plays rootless voicings. You'll want to use this middle register with a variation of short rhythms and holds since you have more harmonies that will cut through the sound of the band.

3. High end – This is a great register to use in funk. The high end should usually only be used with short rhythmic comps. The notes are too high to be held and used has harmonic support. Your comps are going to be used more for a quick texture to make a statement. After, you should jump back down to play some supportive harmonies in the middle to low end of the piano.