

To what extent has Stevie Wonder developed his  
compositional style throughout his “classic period”, with  
reference to harmony and rhythm?

Stevie Wonder: Inside the compositions of the most  
influential composer of modern music.

Subject: Music

May 2022 Exams

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## Introduction & Context

On May 13th, 1950, in Saginaw, Michigan, Stevland Hardaway Morris was born. Now known as 'Stevie Wonder', his musical compositions and performances have been life changing, influencing many around the world. Hit songs like "Sir Duke" (Stevie Wonder, 1977), "Superstition" (Wonder, 1972), "Overjoyed" (Wonder, 1985), and so many more have smashed Billboard charts, and remain popular decades later. Wonder, currently holding 25 grammys and 74 grammy nominations (The Recording Academy), has built a very successful career in the music industry. But there was one key era in his career that, in particular, not only showed plenty of growth in his compositional style, but would later be recognized as including the most popular portion of his discography. This was known as his "classic period", and is quite simply regarded as "the greatest run in the history of popular music" (Hamilton, 2016). The 5-album run began with Wonder's 1972 LP, *Music Of My Mind*, and ended in 1977 with Wonder's *Songs in the Key Of Life*. The run did so well that it won him three Album Of The Year grammys (1973, 1974, 1977 - The Recording Academy). In fact, when Paul Simon won the Album Of The Year grammy in 1976, he thanked Stevie Wonder in his acceptance speech for not putting out any records that year! This essay will target this era in Stevie Wonder's career, - analyzing three different pieces (each from a different record) - with the goal of answering this question: To what extent has Stevie Wonder developed his compositional style throughout his "classic period", with reference to harmony and rhythm?

# Analysis #1: “You Are The Sunshine Of My Life” - Stevie

## Wonder (1972)

Released on the 1972 record, *Talking Book*, “You Are The Sunshine Of My Life”, continues to be one of Wonder’s many hit songs. In the key of B, with tempo Allegro (126bpm), 4/4 time signature, and binary form, the harmony in this piece at first listen might sound somewhat simple. Although this piece doesn’t involve as many musical conventions as, say, *As* (Stevie Wonder, 1976), it remains to be an incredible composition, and after a closer look at the score, Wonder’s strategic placement of creative harmony becomes evident. Diatonic and non-diatonic chord extensions and alterations are abundant in this piece, and further analysis reveals the implementation of them to enhance tense passing harmony.

The main melody is mostly in Wonder’s vocal part, but creative harmony is not limited to that voice. In fact, the first place and possibly most significant section where non-diatonic harmony stands out is the intro. At this point in the song, the harmony is outlined by bass and piano. The intro incorporates two chords over a repeated four bars: Bmajor7 (add2) and F# augmented (F#+). The F#+ chord is what really stands out to the ear. F# is the fifth degree of the tonic, and so normally, a composer would write it as a regular dominant chord (F#7). Interestingly, Wonder writes the chord as augmented, effectively sharpening the fifth (Figure #1, measure 3, beat 1), as there is a D<sup>b</sup> in the right hand, underneath an F#. This is contradictory to the key, not only because it is a sharp 5th, but more so because it is the minor third (or sharp ninth) to a major tonic (Bmaj7, which contains a major third - D#).

Under closer analysis of measures 3-4 (Figure #1), the use of the Whole Tone Scale becomes explicit, as the ascending pattern continues in whole tones (F#→G#→A#→B#→D→E→F#→G#→A#). The notes further contradict the key, using non-diatonic passing tones like B# (Figure #1, m.3, b.3.5), which in the context of F#+ is the sharp 4th, or, in relation to the tonic, is the flattened 2. This tone is

considered to be one of the most dissonant when put alongside the tonic key. In this case, the B# is played over an already non-diatonic chord, and so it is only enhancing the dissonant harmony that exists there.

**Figure #1: You Are The Sunshine Of My Life, by Stevie Wonder. Measures 1-6.**  
Credit: musicnotes.com

Adding further dissonance to the same two measures, Wonder steps away from the initial groove by merging the rhythm in the drums with the rhythm played by left hand piano and electric bass (Figure #2, m.3-4). When placed against the rhythm of the right hand, this functions as a 3 on 2 polyrhythm (although the third note in the '3' component is anticipated), adding further tension to the section - which is later released in m.5, when the harmony revisits the tonic, Bmajor (m.5 is the same as Figure #1, m.1).

**Figure #2: You Are The Sunshine Of My Life, by Stevie Wonder. 3:2 Polyrhythm in measures 3-4. Piano part taken from score in Figure #1. Electric Bass and Drum parts transcribed by the author of this paper.**

After the introduction, the piece maintains an interesting groove, that mainly emphasises the offbeat, and has a striking resemblance to patterns commonly seen in Bossa Nova music. The pattern is consistent throughout the song, with little subdivisions past the eighth note (Figure #3a). This is a similar groove one would hear in a standard Bossa Nova piece (shown in Figure #3b), with the only difference between the two grooves is the placement of the snare. This proves to be an interesting rhythmic choice in the context of an R&B song.

a)  $\text{♩} = 126$  m.9

Electric Bass

Drums

b)  $\text{♩} = 126$

Electric Bass

Drums

Detailed description: Figure 3a shows the eighth note groove in 'You Are The Sunshine Of my Life' by Stevie Wonder. It consists of two staves: Electric Bass and Drums. The Electric Bass staff is in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The bass line consists of quarter notes on the offbeats: G2 (first measure), A2 (second measure), B2 (third measure), and C3 (fourth measure). The Drums staff shows a consistent pattern of eighth notes on the offbeats, with 'x' marks indicating snare hits. Figure 3b shows a standard Bossa Nova groove. It also consists of two staves: Electric Bass and Drums. The Electric Bass staff is in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps. The bass line consists of quarter notes on the offbeats: G2 (first measure), A2 (second measure), B2 (third measure), and C3 (fourth measure). The Drums staff shows a consistent pattern of eighth notes on the offbeats, with 'x' marks indicating snare hits.

**Figure #3: a) Eighth note groove in “You Are The Sunshine Of my Life” by Stevie Wonder. Begins at measure 9 and continues throughout the piece. b) Standard Bossa Nova groove. Transcribed by author of this paper**

Furthermore, not only does the rhythm section place emphasis on the offbeat, but so does the melody. Figure #4 illustrates the vocal melody in the verse, which also syncopates using the eighth note subdivision. Note that the circled notes are played on the off beat, and appear frequently in this melody, which is repeated in each verse. The majority of the notes in the main melody are played on the offbeat, with only four notes played on the downbeat here.



**Figure #4: "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life" by Stevie Wonder. Syncopation in the main melody (verse).**

Wonder's use of non-diatonic extensions as passing harmony is also significant in the chorus. Figure #5 illustrates a G#13(b9) chord in measure 12. G#, being the 6th degree of the tonic key (Bmajor), should be a G#-, but here it is written as major. It is noticeable that there are multiple C#s written (functioning as the major 3rd of G#), as well as F#s and A#s (functioning as the major 13th and b9 - Figure #5, m.12). It should be noted that the next bar (Figure #5, m.13) is occupied by a C#-7, and all of the right hand notes in m.13 are down a half-step from those in m.12, b.4 (C→B, F→E, A→G#). This shows a masterful job of using alterations to voice chords, with minimal jumps when shifting between chord blocks.

The image shows a musical score for three measures of the song "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life" by Stevie Wonder. The score is divided into two staves: Voice and Piano. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). Measure 11 has a D#m7 chord. Measure 12 has a G#13b9 chord. Measure 13 has a C#m7 chord. The lyrics "That's why I'll al -" are written under the voice staff. A box highlights a chord progression in measure 13: A -> G#, F -> E, C -> B.

**Figure #5: You Are The Sunshine Of My Life, by Stevie Wonder. Measures 11-13. Credit: musicnotes.com**

“You Are The Sunshine Of My Life” serves as a great starting point for this essay. It is a perfect example of a Stevie Wonder song that implements nuances that aren’t seen in popular music. Complexities like the F# Whole Tone Scale, and the Bossa Nova groove show a mastery of compositional approaches, that fuse genres like Bossa Nova Jazz with R&B - something that was very uncommon at the time. It’s hard to believe that a composition such as this one is on the lower end of complex musical writing for Stevie Wonder, but it’s true. The next tune to be analyzed is “Living For The City”, from the record, *Innervisions* (Wonder, 1973). After this next analysis, it will become clear how Wonder’s musicality has developed during that year, and which musical conventions will show it.



## Analysis #2: “Living For The City” - Stevie Wonder (1973)

One of the three hit singles off of the 1973 LP, *Innervisions*, “Living For The City” is a masterpiece of musical and political expression. With homophonic texture - melody in the vocals - tempo Andante (99bpm) and 4/4 time signature, this piece carries some very provocative complexities. The non-diatonic harmony shows growth from Wonder’s “You Are The Sunshine Of My Life” (1972), as it is prevalent in more sections. Furthermore, Stevie Wonder prioritizes other musical conventions such as groove, structure, and syncopation. Stevie Wonder expands his compositional style in “Living For The City” by furthering his use of musical conventions, and improving recycled compositional elements.

In analyzing “You Are The Sunshine Of My Life”, the use of non-diatonic harmony in the intro, and chord extensions were explained. Here, Wonder takes these methods, and grows them by incorporating them throughout the entire song, effectively making it a pivotal part of the song’s tone, while also finding use for non-diatonic lines in the vocal part. Contextually, dissonant harmony makes sense in this song, as it is all about the hardships of inequality for the Black American - an important issue, especially to Wonder, who grew up in poverty. The original recording of this piece is in F#. However, for the purpose of this commentary, and reference to score, it will be referred to as in the key of G - though it’s very hard to tell that this song is in a major key. The first line heard writes a sharp ninth (A#) at the top of the right hand, and plays a dominant seventh (F<sup>b</sup>) in both hands (Figure #6, m.1, b.4.5). Notice that these alterations produce the same harmony as a G-7 chord (as A# = B <sup>b</sup>), allowing Wonder to switch between sounds effortlessly. This is significant because it continues through all six verses, altering the harmony for the majority of the song (as opposed to “You Are the Sunshine Of My Life”, which includes most of its non-diatonic alterations in the introduction).

Piano

Funky Ballad-Moderato

measure. 1

m.2

G A A# F#

**Figure #6: “Living For The City” by Stevie Wonder. Measures 1-2. Non-diatonic pattern in the right hand. Credit: The *Innervisions* Songbook**

Another crucial factor to *Living For The City* is its consistent quarter-note groove. Figure #7 shows the correlation between rhythmic patterns in the drums and electric bass (starting in the second verse and continuing throughout the song). This groove establishes the almost walking-like tone of the song, and sets a foundation for the rest of the instrumentation, as it continues through most of the song.

15 16

+ =99

Drums

Electric Bass

**Figure #7 - *Living For The City* by Stevie Wonder. Quarter-note groove in Drums and Electric Bass. Transcribed by author of this paper.**

Much like the melody in “You Are The Sunshine Of My Life”, the melody in “Living For the City” is very syncopated. However, the syncopation in this piece is more developed, due to further subdivision (sixteenth notes are now in use), and a shift away from what is played by the rhythm section (shown in Figure #7). Figure #8 notates the verse melody (Voice, heard first at measure 5). Notice the larger amount of syncopated rhythms. Contrasting from the melody in “You Are The Sunshine Of My Life”, this melody has sixteenth notes (annotated with arrows), and emphasises the downbeat (circled in purple). Notes circled in red indicate other notation features that weren’t seen in “You Are The Sunshine Of My Life” (ties, dotted notes).

The image shows a musical score for the voice part of "Living For The City" by Stevie Wonder, covering measures 5 through 17. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. A tempo marking of ♩ = 99 is present at the beginning. The score is divided into three systems of staves. The first system contains measures 5, 6, 7, and 8. The second system contains measures 9, 10, and 11. The third system contains measures 12, 13, 14, 15, and 17. Annotations include purple circles around notes on the downbeat of each measure, red circles around notes with ties or dotted rhythms, and blue arrows pointing to sixteenth notes. The word "voice" is written at the start of the first staff.

**Figure #8: “Living For The City” by Stevie Wonder. Syncopation in the melody (verse). Measures 5-17. Transcribed by author of this paper.**

Other features of rhythm that Wonder plays with in this song are odd time signatures. First modified in the hook of the piece, Wonder switches the time signature to 3/4, and then to 2/4 before bringing the tune back to 4/4 for the coming verse (Figure #9 - circled in red). This inevitably modifies the groove as well, as it replaces beat 1 in different spots. The other time Wonder plays with time signature in this piece is during the interlude. The keyboard is faint, as the ambience and dialogue is louder in the mix, but the listener can still hear the switch to 3/4, which the tune stays in for a longer period of time as the hook comes directly after (which starts in 3/4).

The image displays a musical score for measures 27-36 of 'Living For The City' by Stevie Wonder. It features two staves: Voice and Piano. The piano part includes chord diagrams and accidentals above the notes. A blue circle highlights measures 27-31, and a red circle highlights measures 32-34. Time signature changes are indicated by red circles. The score includes lyrics: 'da da da, da. da. Da ba da ba da ba, da. Da da da, da. da. Da da da, da.' and a 'To Coda' section starting at measure 34.

**Figure #9: *Living For The City* by Stevie Wonder. Measures 27-36. Hook is shown (not including the pickup to measure 27). Compositional techniques such as accidentals, time signature switches (red), non-diatonic harmony, are shown. Credit: The *Innervisions* Songbook**

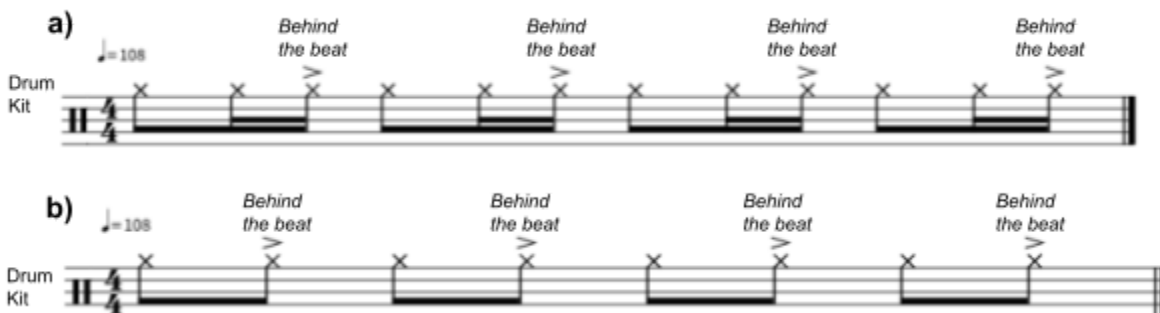
Finally, a musical convention that really sets “Living For The City” apart from “You Are The Sunshine Of My Life” is the structure. The seven-and-a-half minute long piece includes a complex 15-part form, but what really stands out in it is the use of the hook - a technique that would become very prevalent in Stevie Wonder’s musical works. The hook - shown in Figure #9, and referring to a short musical idea that is meant to catch the listener’s attention - in this piece appears five times, first in a pickup to bar 27. Each time, Wonder harnesses non-diatonic harmony to pull in the listener. He once again moves away from the tonic key, adding harmony like the minor seventh (F<sup>♮</sup> - Figure #9, Voice, m.29, b.1.5), minor sixth (E<sup>♭</sup> - Figure #9, Voice, m.29, b.1), and minor third (B<sup>♭</sup> - Figure #9, Piano, m.29, b.2), hinting at the parallel minor (G-7). Furthermore, Wonder applies an E to the bottom of a C7 chord (Figure #6, Piano, m.28, b.1), effectively inverting the chord (a development from Analysis #1). This could also be seen as a transformation into E locrian (non-diatonic, as the tonic would place E as aeolian), as a B<sup>♭</sup> is played, (the <sup>♭</sup> 5 of E - Figure #9, Piano, m.28, b.2-3), on an already minor chord. Additionally, the <sup>♭</sup> 2 of E (F<sup>♮</sup>) is implied as the fourth degree of C - which is what the chord is actually written as.

The enhancement of non-diatonic harmony by applying it to new structures and sections, in addition to the creation of a new and consistent groove in “Living For The City” shows definite growth from the composition, “You Are The Sunshine Of My Life”. And in the midst of these compositional techniques, the listener finds a connection to the song’s message. Wonder’s use of non-diatonic harmony and odd time signatures in the hook of the song simulate the dissonance of black indifference in America. The next piece to analyze comes from the final record from Wonder’s “classical period”, *Songs In The Key Of Life*. “Sir Duke” (Wonder, 1977), introduces plenty of new harmonic ideas that show an expansion in Wonder’s field of musical development in harmony and rhythm.

### Analysis #3: “Sir Duke” - Stevie Wonder (1977)

In 1977, Wonder released the full version of one of the most famous and influential records of all time: *Songs In The Key Of Life*. The 21-track-long LP won him album of the year, and still today is regarded as one of the greatest records of all time. It came in culmination of Wonders’s “classic period”, and brought many classic hits like “Isn’t She Lovely”, and “I Wish”. One track on this record that sticks out from most of the others is the high energy, “Sir Duke”, (released as a single in 1977) which is largely Jazz influenced, and highly complex. The piece is littered with references to the Jazz genre, praising Jazz culture and icons, as well as implementing musical conventions commonly found in Jazz. It comes in 4/4 and begins at a tempo Allegretto (108 bpm) and is in the key of B. Wonder’s influence from Bebop and Big Bad Jazz aids to develop harmony and rhythm in this piece by adding chromaticism and swung sixteenth notes all over.

One thing to notice about this song is how Wonder uses groove to his advantage. The intro to the song starts with a horn section and a drummer accompanying with straight eighth notes on the hi-hat. However, at a closer listen, the listener recognizes that the hi-hat is swinging the last sixteenth subdivisions (Figure #10a, b.1.75). The inclusion of this puts more of an emphasis on the groove as it leads into the next beat, and is similar to how the swung eighth note works in Swing Jazz. (where the eighth note is pushed closer to the last sixteenth subdivision - Figure #10b, b.1.5). The choice to keep the eighth note straight in this song fuses typical R&B grooves with that of Swing Jazz, adding to the rhythmic component of this song.



**Figure #10: a) Groove in “Sir Duke” by Stevie Wonder, with straight eighths and swung sixteenths. b) Typical jazz groove with swung eighths. Transcribed by author of this paper**

An element of harmony that Wonder uses a lot in this piece, once again referencing Jazz, is chromaticism. Chromaticism is the consecutive playing of notes that are one semitone away from each other (some being non-diatonic), and is most prevalent in the bebop subgenre of Jazz. Wonder uses this technique to once again fuse Jazz with R&B, by twisting a simple 4-chord progression, used in popular music. It's called the 'Doo-Wop Progression' and follows the 1-6-4-5 scale degrees. In "Sir Duke", Wonder replaces the 4-chord with a  $\flat$  6-chord, creating a chromatic movement between the 6 and 5. In the context of this key, the progression becomes  $B_{maj7} \rightarrow G\#-7 \rightarrow G7 \rightarrow F\#7$ .

One couldn't speak of this song without mentioning the most famous section of its structure: the shout chorus. Shout choruses are common structural components of Big Band Jazz, where large horn sections will come together to play a series of energetic riffs. "Sir Duke's" shout chorus is quite triumphant and energetic, and derives from the B Major Pentatonic Scale (Figure #11a) - but also includes components from other scales, such as the B Dorian Bebop scale (shown in Figure #11b). The 'Bebop Scales' are derived from Bebop Jazz, and add one chromatic passing note to create an eight-note-long scale (Chase, 2020). There are various permutations of the Bebop Scales, which add passing notes in different places. Wonder uses the B Dorian Bebop Scale here, as it adds a passing note ( $D^{\flat}$ ) between the 2nd ( $C\#$ ) and 3rd ( $D\#$ ) degrees (Figure #11b, b.2). Figure #11c shows a combination of the scales in Figure #11ab, which is used in "Sir Duke's" shout chorus.

a)

b)

c)

Passing note (D $\flat$ )

**Figure #11: a) B Major Pentatonic Scale. b) B Dorian Bebop Scale. c) Notes used in "Sir Duke" shout chorus. Transcribed by author of this paper. (Circled notes are common notes)**

Piano

$\text{♩} = 108$

m.25

m.26

C#  $\Rightarrow$  D  $\Rightarrow$  D#  
(Chromatic Movement)

m.27

m.28

B Major Pentatonic Scale

**Figure #12: First 4 measures of the shout chorus in "Sir Duke" by Stevie Wonder. Outlined chromatic movement between the 2nd and 3rd degrees. Transcribed by author of this paper.**



The shout chorus outlines the B Major Pentatonic Scale explicitly (Figure #12, m.26, b.1-2.75). Notice the outlined movement between the 2nd and 3rd degrees ( $C\# \rightarrow D\flat \rightarrow D\#$  - Figure #12, m.26, b.1.5-2). Wonder places a  $D\flat$  in between to create a chromatic passing movement. This movement wouldn't otherwise be seen in a standard major pentatonic scale (once again shown in Figure #11c, b.1.5-2.5, and Figure #11a, b.1.5-2).

Taking another look at the shout chorus (now Figure #13), we notice the syncopation. In it's bare bones, its elements are similar to the syncopation analyzed in "Living For The City". Notated in Figure #13 are sixteenth notes, ties, dotted notes, and an emphasis on the downbeat; all rhythmic components that were noticed in the melody in "Living For The City". Once again, notes circled in purple indicate downbeat placement, and notes circled in red indicate other rhythmic components (such as ties and dotted eighth notes). The development is found in the instrumentation, as the same set of riffs (notated in Figure #13) is played by almost the entire band.

The image shows a piano accompaniment score for the first four measures of the shout chorus in "Sir Duke" by Stevie Wonder. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 108. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system covers measures 25 and 26, and the second system covers measures 27 and 28. Purple circles are drawn around notes on the downbeat (beats 1 and 3) in both hands. Red circles are drawn around notes that are slurred or dotted, primarily on beats 2 and 4. The key signature is B major (three sharps).

**Figure #13: First 4 measures of the shout chorus in "Sir Duke" by Stevie Wonder. Outlined rhythmic components: Downbeat placement (purple), slurs and dotted notes (red). Transcribed by author of this paper.**

And just in case all of these Jazz components weren't enough, Wonder threw in yet another one. One major part of Big Band Jazz is how the horn section interacts with and works around the melody. In "Sir Duke", Wonder incorporates shots from the horn section as a counter-melody to his own vocal melody during the chorus, but also to help outline the harmony. This is shown in Figure #14, only of course, picture the horn section being much larger - in terms of how many musicians are playing those shots. Shots like these don't exist in the songs from Analyses #1-2, and so the development here is in the extraction and implementation from Big Band Jazz.

The image displays a musical score for the chorus of "Sir Duke" by Stevie Wonder. It is transcribed in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 108. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 49 and 50. In measure 49, the voice part begins with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The horn section provides accompaniment with a quarter rest, followed by eighth notes G4 and A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. In measure 50, the voice part continues with a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter rest. The horn section continues with a quarter rest, eighth notes G4 and A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The second system covers measures 51 and 52. In measure 51, the voice part begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The horn section provides accompaniment with a quarter rest, eighth notes G4 and A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. In measure 52, the voice part continues with a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F#4. The horn section continues with a quarter rest, eighth notes G4 and A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The score concludes with a double bar line.

**Figure #14: Horn section shots under vocal melody in the chorus of "Sir Duke" by Stevie Wonder. Transcribed by author of this paper.**

To conclude, Wonder expands his compositional expertise in "Sir Duke" by fusing his comfortable styles of composing with another completely different genre that influenced him. Again, the references are everywhere; even the title of the song is named after renowned jazz pianist, Duke Ellington. By applying Jazz instrumentation and harmony to the shout chorus, he is improving his 'break' technique, which was looked at earlier in "Living For The City". And by swinging his sixteenth notes just a little, he shows growth from the solid quarter-note-grooves mentioned earlier in the essay. With this piece, Stevie Wonder expands the boundaries of R&B and Soul, by adding musical conventions that are foreign to those styles, clearing a path for musicians all around the world to use at their discretion.

## Conclusion

To recap, Stevie Wonder is an incredible composer, and his compositional growth in his “classic period” becomes evident once the listener realizes the extent of complexities and nuances that he produces to grow his own sound. Discussed earlier, some of the musical conventions were new to his compositions, and in some cases new to the R&B genre in its entirety. This presents that not only did Stevie Wonder refine his own voice as a musician and composer in the 1970s, but in the process, expanded the boundaries of R&B music for later generations of musicians and composers to come. The way Wonder composed in the 1970s is not uncommon to hear today, however it was uncommon to hear back then. Wonder has pioneered that for modern music. We have seen that sort of compositional style in so many ways in the versatility of modern music, with more artists stitching musical conventions together from completely different musical styles - effectively creating new and captivating sounds (ie. Tom Misch, who implements Jazz harmony into Funk and Pop songs). This essay has pointed this out in Wonder’s work, and realized the creative extent to his compositional approaches. But how has this furthered *his* growth as a composer? Wonder showed much growth through his “classic period” by constantly trying new things, and adding musical conventions to his compositional palette. His development of harmony grew to become more significant and prevalent in his pieces, starting with non-diatonic chord extensions and culminating with focused chromatic movements that are the centerpiece of the song. Wonder’s perception of rhythm develops from writing simple syncopations, to implementing odd time signatures, to adding swung sixteenths to his grooves and really developing the rhythm throughout one piece. Stevie Wonder’s musicality grew significantly in his “classic period”, however it’s important to note that the pieces analyzed in this essay are merely examples. If one were to put *Songs In The Key Of Life* (Wonder, 1977) on shuffle - no matter which track came on - they would still experience that masterful level of musicality.

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