

GEAR SETUP

JAMERSON'S BASS RIG

When he graduated from high school, Jamerson bought a German upright acoustic bass, which he played for the rest of his life. He bought a refinished black '57 P-Bass (Fender Precision Bass®) from a friend in 1960, replacing it, when it was stolen, with an early Sixties sunburst model. When that bass was likewise stolen he purchased a '62 sunburst P-Bass, nicknamed the "Funk Machine," that he owned up until it too was taken just before he died. Over the years, he experimented with a 5-string Fender and an 8-string Hagstrom, as well as a fretless model. His string choice consisted of LaBella, heavy gauge flatwound strings. An Ampeg B-15 and a blue Naugahyde Kustom were his two regular gigging amps. With few exceptions, Jamerson always recorded directly into the board at Motown.



Excerpt from:

Motown Bass Signature Licks

by Dave Rubin

This book/CD pack by blues expert Dave Rubin provides bassists with a step-by-step breakdown of the styles and techniques of Motown, with an emphasis on the legendary James Jamerson - 'the bassman in demand.' Songs include: "Dancing in the Street," "For Once in My Life," "Get Ready," "I Heard It Through the Grapevine," "It's the Same Old Song," "My Girl," "Stop! In the Name of Love," "What's Going On," "You Keep Me Hangin' On" and more Motown masterpieces.

Inventory # HL 695506. **Book/CD pack \$16.95 (US).**

THE FUNK MACHINE

Jamerson played three Fender bass® guitars throughout his life, but the one that we hear on most of those Motown recordings is a 1962 Fender P-Bass with a sunburst finish. On the heel of the bass's neck, Jamerson had carved the word "funk" into the wood, and the guitar that produced more hits than any other in history was officially dubbed the "Funk Machine."

To most other musicians, that bass was unplayable. Jamerson kept his action very high, and his neck was bowed due to lack of truss rod maintenance. He rarely cleaned his guitar, and he never cleaned the fretboard. To Jamerson, the sweat and dirt on the bass was the secret of his sound, the essence of the funk.

Just days before Jamerson died in 1983, the Funk Machine was stolen from his house. To this day, it still has not resurfaced. There are stories of bassists who stumble across a '62 P-Bass in pawn shops who then take them home and unscrew the neck plate, hoping to find the word "funk." It's become a legend -- the holy grail of all basses.

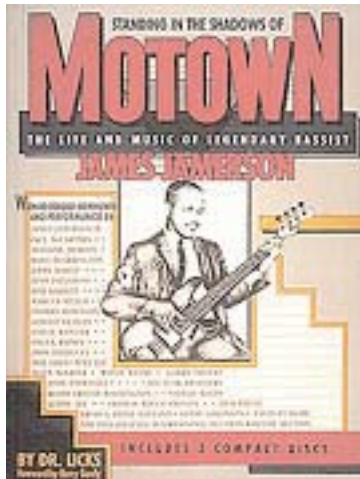
-- Morgan Ringwald, from *Fender Frontline*, Vol. 27.

FENDER PLAYERS CLUB JAMES JAMERSON

There was nothing extraordinary about it [the Funk Machine]. The unique sound that Jamerson got out of his bass had a lot to do with the way it was set up. For starters, the foam mute was usually pressed up against the strings, and the string height was extremely high, which accounts for the absence of fret buzzing on any of James' recorded tracks. The neck was also bowed a bit because the truss rod was not sufficiently tightened. Musicians who had the chance to try out his bass usually found it to be almost unplayable, but for James it was fine because of his unusual hand strength. The strings were exclusively heavy gauge LaBella flat wounds that usually weren't changed unless they broke. It wasn't uncommon for Jamerson to be playing with strings that were several years old.

At home, Jamerson played around with some effects pedals, but never cared for them because he felt they diminished the bass quality of the instrument.

James had two basic amplifier setups. For clubs and concerts in smaller venues, he used an Ampeg B-15 with an occasional extension cabinet. For large halls, he used a blue padded Kustom amplifier with two 15" speakers. Both amps were set with the bass knob all the way up and the treble control on half. His Fender bass was always set with the volume and tone controls all the way up.



Excerpt from:

Standing in the Shadows of Motown: The Life and Music of Legendary Bassist James Jamerson
by Dr. Licks

James Jamerson was the embodiment of the Motown spirit and groove - the invisible entity whose playing inspired thousands. His tumultuous life and musical brilliance are explored in depth through hundreds of interviews, 49 transcribed musical scores, two hours of recorded all-star performances, and more than 50 rarely seen photos.

Features a 120-minute CD!

Inventory # HL 698960. **Book/CD pack \$35.00 (US).**