

Thumb King

Stuart Clayton

♩=115 Jazz Funk

A

E D A Gmaj⁷ Play 4 times

mf

B

E⁷

f

† Audibly mute string with left hand

C

A⁷

Thumb King

SONG TITLE: THUMB KING
GENRE: JAZZ FUNK
TEMPO: 115 BPM
KEY: E MIXOLYDIAN

TECH FEATURES: INTRICATE FINGERSTYLE
SLAP LINES
10TH INTERVALS

COMPOSER: STUART CLAYTON

PERSONNEL: STUART CLAYTON (BASS & KEYS)
NOAM LEDERMAN (DRUMS)
ROSS STANLEY (KEYS)

The image shows musical notation for the song 'Thumb King'. At the top right, it specifies a tempo of 115 BPM and the genre 'Jazz Funk'. The notation includes a bass line in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). A box labeled 'A' is placed above the first measure of the bass line. To the right of the bass line is a chord diagram for an E major chord, with notes E, P, and P. Below the chord diagram is a dynamic marking of *mf* and another 'P' marking. At the bottom, there are two staves labeled 'T', 'A', and 'B' with fret numbers 11, 13, and 0 respectively.

OVERVIEW

'Thumb King' is a jazz funk tune written in the style of bassist Mark King of Level 42. As is common with many of King's pieces, the bassline uses a complex 16th-note based slap groove. There are also some chordal sections and busy fingerstyle lines, all of which are common in this genre of music.

STYLE FOCUS

Jazz funk has its origins in the late 1960s and evolved as the result of jazz musicians incorporating elements of funk, soul and R&B into their music. The bass guitar plays a prominent role in this style, more so than the guitar, and the main melodies are often played on synthesizers. Improvisation is an important part of the genre and many of the grooves and solos found on jazz funk songs would have been largely improvised in the studio.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

King has made his name as one of the most important exponents of the slap bass technique. As frontman for the British jazz funk group Level 42, King took the slap technique that had been

popularised by Stanley Clarke, Larry Graham and Louis Johnson and developed it further, creating a 16th-note based slap style; a result of his original training as a drummer. His percussive lines were the focal point for Level 42, somehow playing complex bass grooves while handling lead vocal duties. Although the band started out playing instrumental jazz funk music inspired by jazz luminaries such as Billy Cobham, Chick Corea, John McLaughlin and Jan Hammer, they evolved into a slick, pop funk outfit and by the mid 1980s were enjoying mainstream chart success. The majority of their hits were still underpinned by King's energetic slap basslines.

King's influence as a bassist remains strong 25 years after Level 42's heyday.

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Classic Level 42 tracks 'Lessons In Love', 'Hot Water', 'Something About You' and 'Running In The Family' will give an insight into King's inventive playing in a pop context. For instrumental jazz funk, *Level 42* (1981), *Strategy/The Early Tapes* (1980) and the live album *A Physical Presence* (1985) come highly recommended. Highlights drawn from these albums include '43', 'Mr. Pink', 'Sandstorm', 'Foundation And Empire' and 'Heathrow'.