

CHAPTER THREE

Sound and Feel

How do we describe Sound? How do we define Feel? There seem to be endless discussions and debates on how to get the Motown sound. I would like to offer a simple checklist as a way to identify some of the elements that go into producing a Motown, Jamersonesque sound. I know some of the terms listed may seem a bit out of genre, but clear descriptions are a good place to start.

Let's assume we want to sound like James Jamerson. Most folks who learn Motown bass start there.

How would describe the **tone**?

- is it dark or light sounding?
- is it bright?
- is it warm?
- is it thick and fat sounding?
- is it clear and cutting?
- is it thin?
- is it low sounding, or more high texture?
- is it muted sounding?
- would you describe it as, full?
- by today's standards, is the tone old sounding?

Can you hear a specific **touch** or **attack**?

- is it strong?
- is it smooth?
- is it percussive?
- can you describe the sound as solid?
- what makes it solid?
- is it sustaining?
- is it staccato?
- clean?
- long?

How does it feel?

- bouncy?
- big?
- fast?
- solid?
- energetic?
- like dancing?
- supportive?

Other descriptive terms

- fun
- exciting
- background
- boring
- simple
- complicated