

**TRANSCRIPTION OF WILLIE WEEK'S BASSLINE TO  
"WHAT'S GOING ON"  
by DONNIE HATHAWAY**



**by PAUL WOLFE**  
**[www.how-to-play-bass.com](http://www.how-to-play-bass.com)**

## **TRANSCRIPTION OF “WHAT’S GOING ON” by DONNIE HATHAWAY/BASS LINE BY WILLIE WEEKS**

Donnie Hatheway’s version of What’s Going On - from the live album of 1974 - is a very cool remake of an already very cool original! The bass line has a very subtle swing 16th note feel which i’ve not noted on the score. So when you interpret it please bear that in mind. And it’s a serious groove masterclass.

A lot of contemporary hip hop/r&b type bass lines have a swing 16th note feel. And you can find this feel in “smooth jazz” too. The bass line that Willie Weeks plays is very, very cool. There is a ton of stuff you could take from this to work on in your own playing.

I’ve been working on the transcription on and off for four months or so. Please note that I consider this a first draft - at some stage I’ll take another detailed pass, there are a few bars where I want to relook at the rhythmic notation.

The transcription is presented in notation, and then notation with tab. The tabbed positions reflect my current pre-occupation with playing in first position - feel free to change it around to suit your own fingering system and fretboard scale.

**A**

Musical notation for section A, bass clef, key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and 4/4 time signature. The first three measures contain whole rests. The fourth measure contains three eighth rests. The fifth and sixth measures feature a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G#, A) followed by a triplet of eighth notes (B, C, D), and the seventh measure contains a quarter note (E).

**B**

Musical notation for section B, bass clef, key signature of three sharps, and 4/4 time signature. The first three measures consist of eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The fourth measure contains a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G#, A) followed by a triplet of eighth notes (B, C, D), and the fifth measure contains a quarter note (E).

**C**

Musical notation for section C, bass clef, key signature of three sharps, and 4/4 time signature. The first measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The second measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The third measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The fourth measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E).

Musical notation for section C, bass clef, key signature of three sharps, and 4/4 time signature. The first measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The second measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The third measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The fourth measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E).

Musical notation for section C, bass clef, key signature of three sharps, and 4/4 time signature. The first measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The second measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The third measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The fourth measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E).

**D**

Musical notation for section D, bass clef, key signature of three sharps, and 4/4 time signature. The first measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The second measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The third measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The fourth measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E).

Musical notation for section D, bass clef, key signature of three sharps, and 4/4 time signature. The first measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The second measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The third measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The fourth measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E).

Musical notation for section D, bass clef, key signature of three sharps, and 4/4 time signature. The first measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The second measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The third measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E). The fourth measure contains eighth-note pairs (F#, G#), (A, B), and (C, D) with a dotted quarter note (E).

**E**

Two staves of bass notation for section E. The first staff contains measures 1-2, and the second staff contains measures 3-4. The music is in a key with three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a common time signature. It features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

**F**

Two staves of bass notation for section F. The first staff contains measures 1-2, and the second staff contains measures 3-4. The music continues with eighth and sixteenth notes. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' below it in the second measure of the second staff.

**G**

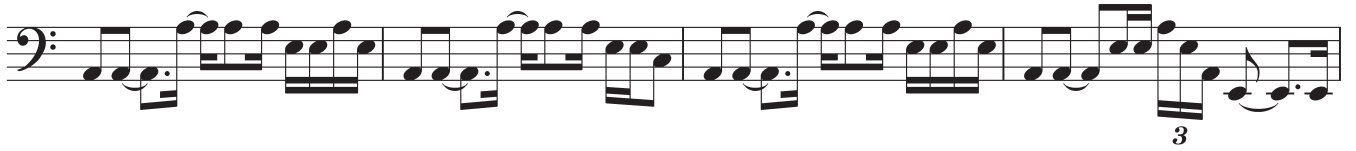
Two staves of bass notation for section G. The first staff contains measures 1-2, and the second staff contains measures 3-4. The music features eighth and sixteenth notes. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' below it in the second measure of the second staff.

**H**

Two staves of bass notation for section H. The first staff contains measures 1-2, and the second staff contains measures 3-4. The music features eighth and sixteenth notes. Some notes in the second measure of the second staff are marked with an 'x'. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' below it in the fourth measure of the second staff.



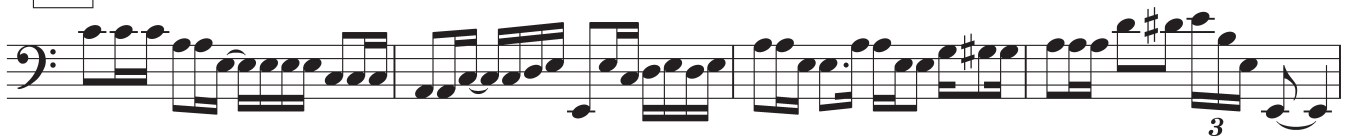
I



J



K





**A**

Musical notation for section A, featuring a bass line and a guitar line. The bass line starts with a whole rest for three measures, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (G2, A2, B2) and another triplet (C3, B2, A2). The guitar line has a whole rest for three measures, followed by a sequence of fret numbers: 1 2 3 4 2 4 2 2.

**B**

Musical notation for section B, featuring a bass line and a guitar line. The bass line consists of eighth-note patterns: two eighth notes (G2, A2), a dotted quarter note (B2), and a quarter note (C3). The guitar line has fret numbers: 0 0 2 2 4 2 4 2, 0 0 2 2 4 2 4 2, 0 0 2 2 4 4 2, and 1 2 3 4 2 4 2 2.

**C**

Musical notation for section C, first system, featuring a bass line and a guitar line. The bass line consists of eighth-note patterns: two eighth notes (G2, A2), a dotted quarter note (B2), and a quarter note (C3). The guitar line has fret numbers: 0 0 2 2 4 2 4 2, 0 0 2 4 2 2 4 3, 4 4 4 4 4 4 2 3, and 4 4 2 2 2 4 4 2 4.

Musical notation for section C, second system, featuring a bass line and a guitar line. The bass line consists of eighth-note patterns: two eighth notes (G2, A2), a dotted quarter note (B2), and a quarter note (C3). The guitar line has fret numbers: 0 0 2 2 2 4 4 2, 0 0 2 4 2 2 4 4, 4 4 4 4 4 4 2 3, and 4 2 2 4 2 4 4 4.

Musical notation for section C, third system, featuring a bass line and a guitar line. The bass line consists of eighth-note patterns: two eighth notes (G2, A2), a dotted quarter note (B2), and a quarter note (C3). The guitar line has fret numbers: 2 2 2 4 4 4 X 4, 2 2 4 4 4 4 4, 2 2 4 2 2 2 4 3, and 2 2 2 2 2 4 2 4.

**D**

Musical notation for section D, featuring a bass line and a guitar line. The bass line consists of eighth-note patterns: two eighth notes (G2, A2), a dotted quarter note (B2), and a quarter note (C3). The guitar line has fret numbers: 0 0 2 2 4 2 4 2, 0 0 2 4 2 2 4 4, 4 4 4 4 4 4 2 3, and 4 4 2 2 2 4 4 2 4.

0 0 2 2 2 4 2 4 2 | 0 0 4 2 4 2 4 4 1 | 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 2 3 | 4 2 4 2 4 2 4 4

2 2 2 4 4 X 4 | 2 2 4 4 4 4 | 2 2 2 4 2 2 2 2 3 4 | 2 2 2 4 2 4

**E**

4 4 4 4 4 4 4 | 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 4 4 | 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 | 2 2 2 4 2 2 2 3 4 4

4 4 4 4 4 4 4 | 2 2 2 4 2 3 4 4 | 0 0 2 2 2 3 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 4 2 2

**F**

0 0 0 2 2 2 3 4 | 4 4 4 4 2 4 2 2 | 0 0 0 2 2 2 2 2 2 | 0 0 0 2 2 2 2 2 3

0 0 0 2 2 2 2 2 2 | 0 0 0 2 2 2 0 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 2 2 2 2 2 2 | 0 0 0 2 2 2 2 2 3

0 0 0 2 2 2 2 2 | 0 0 0 2 2 2 0 0 0 1 | 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 | 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 4 4



G

2 2 2 2 2 2 4 2 4 4 | 2 2 2 2 2 1 2 4 2 4 || 0 0 2 2 2 4 2 4 2 | 0 0 2 3 4 1 1 1 0

1 6 1 1 1 6 1 | 1 6 1 0 1 4 | 2 2 2 4 2 2 2 4 2 2 4 2 4 | 2 4 2 0 0 2 2 4 2 4

4 4 4 4 4 4 2 3 | 4 4 4 5 6 1 1 6 | 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 X 0 X | 2 4 4 4 4 4 X 3 X

2 2 2 1 1 4 4 4 1 4 | 2 2 2 4 2 4 2 X | 4 4 4 2 4 4 2 4 4 4 | 2 X 2 2 0 2 2 2 2 4

4 4 4 2 4 4 4 2 4 3 | 2 2 2 2 2 4 2 2 0 1 2 X | 4 4 1 X 2 X 3 4 4 2 2 4 4 2 4 2 4 2 2 2 4

0 0 0 2 2 2 3 | 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 4 2 2 | 0 2 0 0 2 4 2 2 3 4 | 4 4 4 4 2 4 2 2 2

I

2 2 2 2 2 2 | 0 0 0 2 2 2 2 2 | 0 0 0 2 2 2 2 2 | 0 0 0 2 2 2 0 0 0 0

Musical notation for the first system, featuring a bass line and a guitar tablature line with fret numbers.

Musical notation for the second system, featuring a bass line and a guitar tablature line with fret numbers.

**J**

Musical notation for the third system, featuring a bass line and a guitar tablature line with fret numbers.

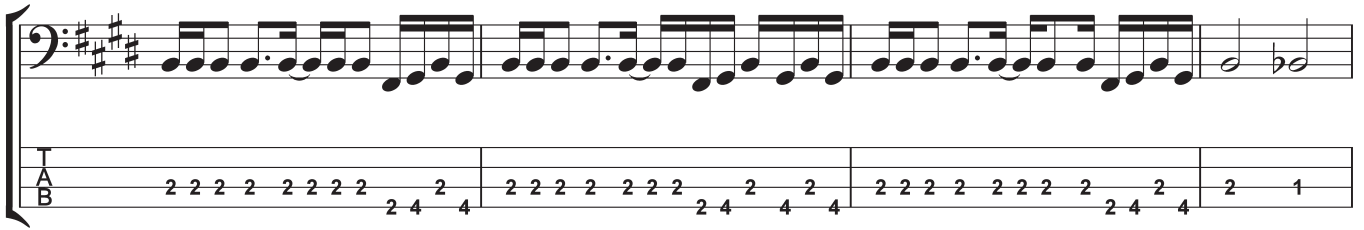
Musical notation for the fourth system, featuring a bass line and a guitar tablature line with fret numbers.

Musical notation for the fifth system, featuring a bass line and a guitar tablature line with fret numbers.

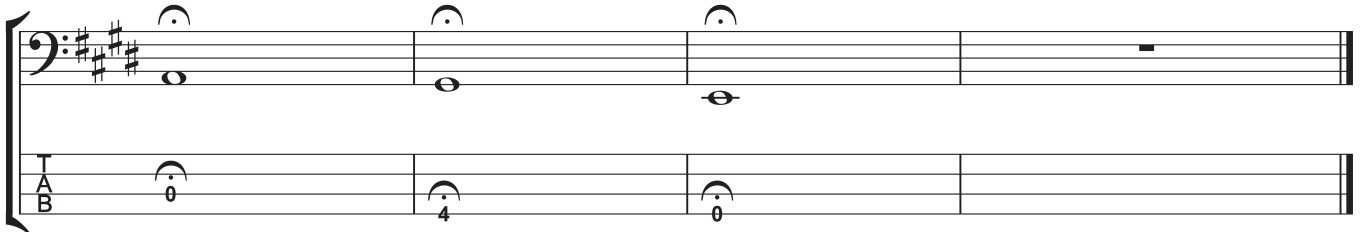
**K**

Musical notation for the sixth system, featuring a bass line and a guitar tablature line with fret numbers.

Musical notation for the seventh system, featuring a bass line and a guitar tablature line with fret numbers.



The first system of music shows a bass line in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The bass line consists of eighth-note patterns:  $\text{G}^{\flat} \text{A} \text{B} \text{C} \text{D}$ ,  $\text{E} \text{F} \text{G} \text{A} \text{B}$ ,  $\text{C} \text{D} \text{E} \text{F} \text{G}$ , and  $\text{A} \text{B} \text{C} \text{D}$ . The TAB line below it provides the corresponding fret numbers:  $2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 4\ 4$ ,  $2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 4\ 4\ 4$ ,  $2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 2\ 4\ 4$ , and  $2\ 1$ .



The second system of music shows a bass line with whole notes:  $\text{G}^{\flat}$ ,  $\text{A}$ , and  $\text{B}$ . The TAB line below it shows the fret numbers for these notes:  $0$ ,  $4$ , and  $0$ .

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Paul Wolfe has been playing since he was 15...which is wayyyy too long.

He is based in London in the UK where he runs one of the most sought after cover bands for weddings, corporate parties, charity balls and events.

Paul also runs a how to play bass website focusing on beginners. Paul's teaching philosophy is song based rather than scale based - as most private teachers seem to be. Paul is the author of Bass Hannon Volume 1 and Deliberate Practice: How To Make Constant And Consistent Progress In Your Bass Playing.

This is his second contribution to the [www.bassbooks.com](http://www.bassbooks.com) website. There will be more to come.

This transcription originally appeared in one of his free Ezines. These ezines are now monthly - all you have to do is head over to his website and subscribe to join the mailing list.

As of this writing -April 2010 - the current issue features the transcription to the very cool "Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick" by Norman Watt Roy as played with Ian Dury and The Blockheads.