

SUPERSTITION

STEVIE WONDER

APPEARS IN
ROCK & POP
2018

⚡ Released: 1972 ⚡ Album: *Talking Book* ⚡ Label: Tamla Records

ABOUT THE SONG

'Superstition' was released in 1972, at a time when Stevie Wonder was taking complete artistic control over his music. It was the lead single on Wonder's 1972 album *Talking Book* and reached No. 1 in the USA. It is considered a seminal track from what has become known as Wonder's 'classic period'.

'Superstition' was originally written by Wonder for guitarist Jeff Beck, who appears 5th on Rolling Stone's list of the 100 greatest guitarists of all time. Beck had agreed to be involved in the *Talking Book* album sessions in return for Wonder writing him a song. Delays on Beck's version led to Motown releasing Wonder's recording of the song first. Influential blues guitarist and producer Stevie Ray Vaughan recorded a live version in 1986.

“
WHEN YOU BELIEVE
IN THINGS THAT YOU DON'T
UNDERSTAND
THEN YOU SUFFER
SUPERSTITION
AIN'T THE WAY
”

RECORDING AND PRODUCTION

Recorded at Jimi Hendrix's Electric Lady studios in New York, Wonder wrote and produced the track, and played the drums and all the keyboard tracks himself. The irresistible funky groove of 'Superstition' is created by a riff played on the clavinet – an electronic keyboard with a harpsichord-like sound. What you hear on the track is actually eight separate clavinet tracks mixed together to create a unique thick texture. Add to this a Moog synth bass and distinctive trumpet/sax countermelodies, and a sound was created that would influence the direction of pop music for the rest of the decade.

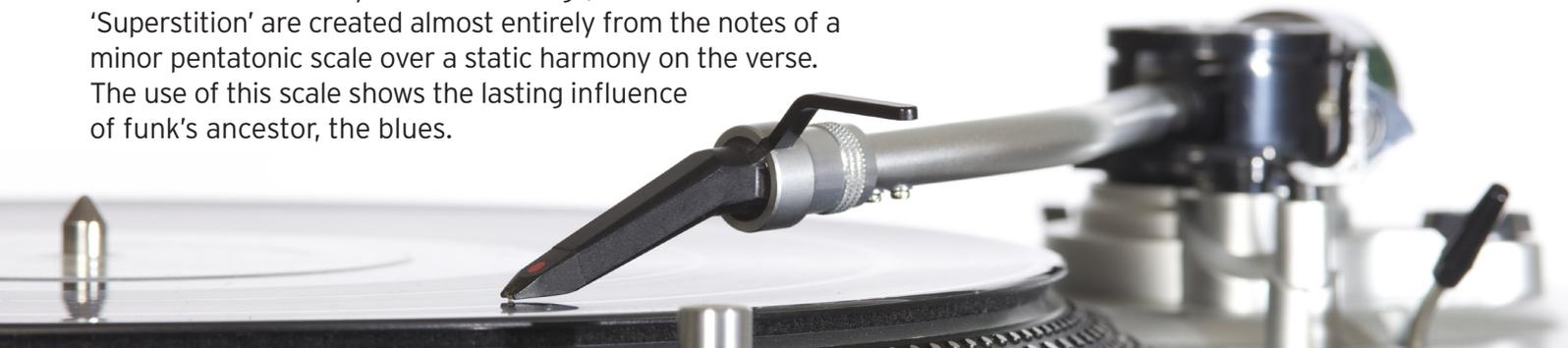
COMPOSITION

One of the features of 'Superstition' that makes it a sure-fire floor-filler is its syncopation – its avoidance of the strong beats of the bar. This danceability comes straight from the groove created by the drums, combined with the syncopated layers provided by keyboard riffs, the vocal line, and the horn section over the top.

In common with many other funk songs, the melodic lines of 'Superstition' are created almost entirely from the notes of a minor pentatonic scale over a static harmony on the verse. The use of this scale shows the lasting influence of funk's ancestor, the blues.

AWARDS

- ⚡ **Best Male R&B Vocal Performance**
Grammy Awards 1973
- ⚡ **Best R&B Song**
Grammy Awards 1973



THE ALBUM

Talking Book was released on 28 October 1972 and was Stevie Wonder's 15th studio album. 'Superstition' was released as the first single and hit No. 1 on Billboard's Hot 100 and Hot Soul Singles charts. The single also won Best Male R&B Vocal Performance and Best R&B Song at the 1973 Grammy Awards. The second single from *Talking Book*, 'You Are the Sunshine of My Life', hit No. 1 on Billboard's Hot 100 and Easy Listening charts and won Wonder a Grammy Award in 1973, for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Signed to Tamla Motown in 1961 at the age of 11, Stevie Wonder has made the perfect transition from child star to music legend. Despite being blind almost from birth, Wonder excelled on piano, drums and harmonica from an early age. After performing one of his own songs to Ronnie White of The Miracles he was taken to audition at Motown, and CEO Berry Gordy signed him to Motown's Tamla Records label. After securing his record deal, he teamed up with producer and songwriter Clarence Paul and released his first album when he was still 11 years old. *Tribute to Uncle Ray* mainly consisted of pioneer of soul music Ray Charles songs but included a composition by Wonder and Paul called 'Sunset'. Over the following years, the creative powerhouse that was Motown nurtured his songwriting talent and by the early 1970s Wonder was spreading his wings, touring with the Rolling Stones and carving out his unique blend of soul, pop, funk and R&B. Huge commercial success followed – Wonder has received 25 Grammy awards and sold over 100 million records worldwide.

COLLABORATIONS

Stevie Wonder has collaborated with many artists over his career, including Paul McCartney ('Ebony & Ivory', 1982), Elton John ('I Guess That's Why They Call It The Blues', 1984), Chaka Khan ('I Feel For You', 1984) and Michael Jackson ('Just Good Friends', 1987). In 2006 Wonder made a guest appearance on Busta Rhymes' album 'The Big Bang' and on Snoop Dog's 'Tha Blue Carpet Treatment'.

MORE TO EXPLORE

Songs: 'Superstition', Stevie Wonder (1973), 'You Are the Sunshine of My Life', Stevie Wonder (1973), 'Ebony & Ivory', Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder (1982), 'I Guess That's Why They Call It The Blues', Elton John (1984), 'I Feel For You', Chaka Khan (1984), 'Just Good Friends', Michael Jackson and Stevie Wonder (1987).

Artists & collaborators: Busta Rhymes, Chaka Khan, Clarence Paul, Elton John, Jeff Beck, Paul McCartney, Snoop Dog, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Ray Charles, The Miracles. **Trinity Rock & Pop syllabus:** Keyboards, Grade 6.

'EVEN AT ITS DREAMIEST, THE MUSIC HAS A GLOWING VIBRANCY... ALTOGETHER, AN EXCEPTIONAL, EXCITING ALBUM, THE WORK OF A NOW QUITE MATURED GENIUS.'
ROLLING STONE



REAL SONGS. REAL SKILLS. REAL PROGRESS.

TRINITY
COLLEGE LONDON

TRINITYROCK.COM

ROCK
& **POP**