

Bach Fan Writes Pop Songs

Module 4 of *Music: Under the Hood*

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Outline

- Biography of Thomas Wright "Fats" Waller
- Analysis of *Honeysuckle Rose*

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Biography

- Thomas Wright "Fats" Waller, 1904-1943
 - Born in NYC, youngest of 11 children.
 - Studied piano at age 6.
 - Organist at Lincoln Theater, Harlem, at age 14.
 - Studied with James P. Johnson, inventor of stride piano.
 - Published first compositions at age 18.
 - Early death due to pneumonia resulting from overwork.



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Biography

- Most famous songs
 - [Ain't Misbehavin' \(1929\)](#)
 - [Honeysuckle Rose \(1929\)](#)



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Biography

- Other...
 - Copyrights on over 400 songs.
 - Kidnapped to play at Al Capone's birthday party (1926).
 - Performed *Ain't Misbehavin'* in film *Stormy Weather* (1943)
 - Son Maurice wrote a [biography](#) (1977).



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Biography

- Musical interests
 - Known primarily as a formidable piano player
 - Especially stride style
 - Favorite composer was J. S. Bach
 - Played Bach fugues on church organ for his friends.
 - Wanted to write more "serious" music.
 - [London Suite](#), performed in London 1938-39



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Honeysuckle Rose

- Illustrates Waller's compositional sophistication.
 - Begins with extended appoggiatura.
 - Same idea later used by George Gershwin.
 - Heavy use of chromaticism
 - Also favored by Bach, as in [Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue](#).
 - A standard feature of Wagner's music.



[Audio file – original recording \(1934\)](#)
[Audio file – original sheet music \(below\)](#)

Honeysuckle Rose (1929)

Thomas "Fats" Waller
 Lyrics by Andy Razaf

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[Audio file – original sheet music \(below\)](#)

Honeysuckle Rose (1929)

Thomas "Fats" Waller
 Lyrics by Andy Razaf

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Repeat

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Chromatic progression

Piano
sing - er, it's sweet when you sit by When I'm tak - ing
from your fas - ty lips. When the bus - y ear - ly We're con - fer - ring

Signature chromatic progression

Piano
post - men. How - ey - ever

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Dominant 7th with suspended 3rd
Where it comes from

[Audio file](#)

Piano

♩ = 60

Cadence with dominant 7th Suspended 3rd Resulting chord

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