

Spinning Gold

A Musical Analysis of Pop & Rock

Volumes I and II

With over 1,400 hits spanning seven decades of music history, **Spinning Gold** is the definitive collection of pop & rock for all music students and educators. This book has the detailed analysis and terminology of traditional theory books, but there are no old folksongs or classical music examples — only songs from the pop charts. Each song is carefully selected to illustrate specific topics in music theory, ranging from basic elements of rhythm, melody, and chords, to more advanced discussions about modulations, secondary dominants, and modal interchange.

All songs can be heard on **AUDIO PLAYLISTS** embedded directly in the chapter pages. Individual chapters also feature:

- **WRITTEN EXERCISES,**
- **EAR TRAINING EXERCISES** (with audio),
- **QUIZZES** (also with audio),
- Numerous **SONG LISTS** for “Additional Listening”
- Special sections on **SONGWRITING FOCAL POINTS.**
- **PROJECTS** for further study & discussion

Spinning Gold is based on an original database, created from analysis of over 4,200 chart hits. Songs were equally sampled across seven decades of pop music history, including roughly 60 hits from each year 1955 to 2025. All songs made at least the top 40 of either the Billboard singles or album charts in a variety of genres. Thanks to this wealth of information, topics throughout the book are backed up with numerous song lists that provide suggestions for further listening.

With its historic sweep, the book is also a musicological study of sorts, tracing the arc of many theoretical elements in pop music history. This will make it useful as a reference work for many educators, as well as a textbook. Despite its comprehensive nature, Spinning Gold does not get lost in endless statistics and data lists. It is written in a clear and engaging tutorial style, sequentially progressing through the following topics in music theory as they apply to pop & rock music :

Volume I (semester 1)

Elements of Rhythm & Timbre (meter, note values, time signatures, backbeat, listening for layers in the instrumental mix, syncopation, swing 8ths & 16ths)

The Major and Minor Keys (pitches, scale & chord spelling, diatonic triads, 7ths, harmonic analysis with roman numerals, sus2 & sus4 chords, inversions, common chord progressions, drones, signature riffs)

The Blues: major meets minor (roots, blue notes, melisma, scales & improvisation, 12-bar form, boogie bass patterns, signature riffs)

Mixolydian and Dorian Modes (scales, diatonic triads, 7ths, common chord progressions, drones, signature riffs)

Volume II (semester 2)

Melodic Analysis (contour, pitch range, leaps, sequences, note & phrase lengths, lyric connection, strong vs. weak I.D.)

Modulations (half-step, whole-step, P4th, parallel keys, relative keys, pivot chord)

Blues-Rock Tonality (scales, common chord progressions, signature riffs)

Secondary & Substitute Dominants (root motion 5th, secondary IIIm – V’s, extended doms, interpolated IIIm)

Modal Interchange (chords borrowed from parallel minor, mixolydian, dorian)

Line Cliches & Advanced Chords (6th, m6, aug, dim7, 9th, maj9, m9, 7b9, 7#9, 9sus4, hybrid structures, add9, 13th)

Curriculum Options

Educators will find that Spinning Gold can fit into music curriculums in a variety of ways, including the following options –

1 As a **specialized, two-semester theory track** that supplements traditional theory courses. This would be suitable for ALL MUSIC MAJORS, particularly SONGWRITING MAJORS.

2 As an **alternative theory track**, replacing traditional theory courses. This would be especially appropriate for MUSIC BUSINESS or AUDIO ENGINEERING MAJORS.

[Note: The ear training is harmonic only (chord progressions). If ear training is included, the instructor or department may choose to require a beginning solfege course as a prerequisite).

3 If ear training is made optional, this book could also be an **elective for non-majors**, especially for amateur songwriters, performers, or any student with a general interest in pop music.