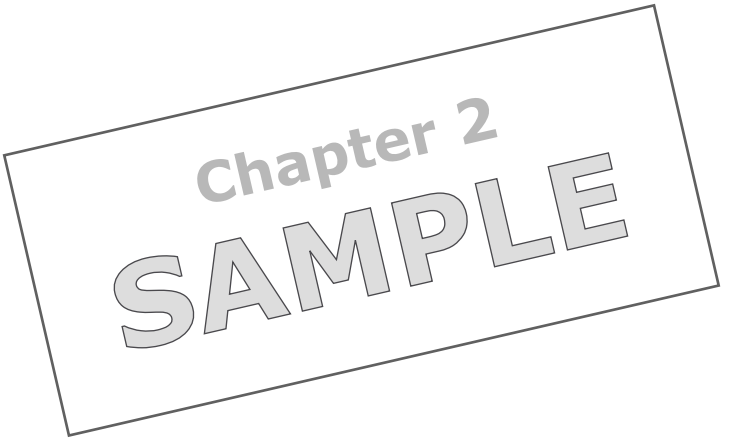


PLEASE NOTE -

The audio player for this book sample (see lower right sidebar) is the embed player provided by Spotify. By default, it will only play a 30 second preview of each song, taken randomly from the middle of the song track. To hear the full tracks from the beginning, you must log in with a free Spotify account, then come back and refresh this page. This is important, because most of the musical elements being discussed occur at or near the start of each song.

Unfortunately, Spotify does not provide full tracks when you use their embed player with iPads or Safari. For this reason, you will need to use a laptop or desktop with either a Firefox, Chrome, or Edge browser to hear the full songs in the player.

If you prefer, you can bypass the player completely and go directly to the playlist page on the Spotify website. Just use the “Alternate Link” button at the bottom, which will open Spotify in either a new tab or a new window. You will then have to resize (shrink) the new Spotify window so it fits on the right side of the chapter text.

The audio player provided in the paid version of Spinning Gold is a much-improved CUSTOM AUDIO PLAYER, built exclusively for this website. It will always play the full song on any laptop, desktop, or tablet with all major browsers.

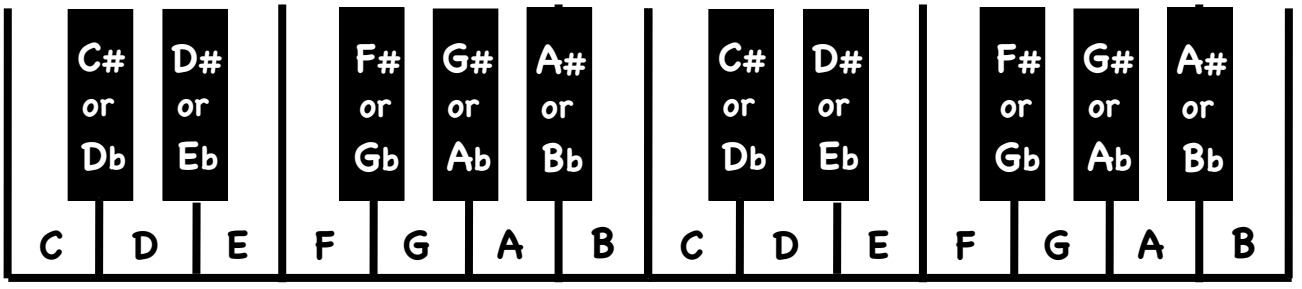
CHAPTER 2

Intro to the MAJOR KEY

Essential Concepts / Skills
covered in chapter 2

- Treble and bass clef notation
- Major scales, diatonic triads in major keys
- Common chord progressions in the major key using I, IV, V, VIm chords in pop song examples
- Signature major key riffs, major pentatonic scale
- Songwriting devices for creating focal points
- Ear training – listening for tension / resolution, key centers, I, IV, V, and VIm chords

Just to review some basics, you probably know that our system of music (Western European tradition) has 12 different pitches, named with the first seven letters in the alphabet. Occasional **sharps (#)** or **flats (b)** are then added between some letter names. The 12 notes are written below as they would appear on a piano keyboard, with the notes going up in pitch as you move left to right. (If you have downloaded a virtual keyboard for this course like Musicca or Online Pianist, play up and down to hear the pitches.)



Of course this represents only a small section of a full-sized piano keyboard (88 total keys). If you wanted to go beyond the diagram to the right, the next note after B would be another C, then another C#, and so on. Going down (to the left), the next note would be another B, then another Bb, etc. Notice that the note between C and D (the first black key) can be called "C sharp" (moving up from C) or "D flat" (moving down from D). This is called "**enharmonic spelling**" — all the black keys have two possible names like this. On rare occasions, the E note may also be called Fb or the F note may be called E#. This is also true for the other adjacent white keys — the B may be called Cb, and the C may be called B#.

When you move to the very next note, regardless of the key color, the distance between notes is called a **half step**. Therefore, going up in pitch, E to F is a half step, and F to F# would be another half step. Jumping up from E to F# is called a **whole step** (2 half steps = 1 whole step). If you take a big leap, the distance between E and the next higher E is called an **octave**.

WRITTEN EXERCISE

To practice moving up and down in half steps and whole steps, complete **Exercise 2.1** (see "Textbook Contents"/ "Volume 1"/ "Written Exercises").

In Chapter One, we introduced standard musical notation (5-line staff), and also our new alternative system of graphic notation. However, in that chapter we were only concerned with the rhythm values of notes. Now we want to learn the pitch names (ie. letter name) of each note.

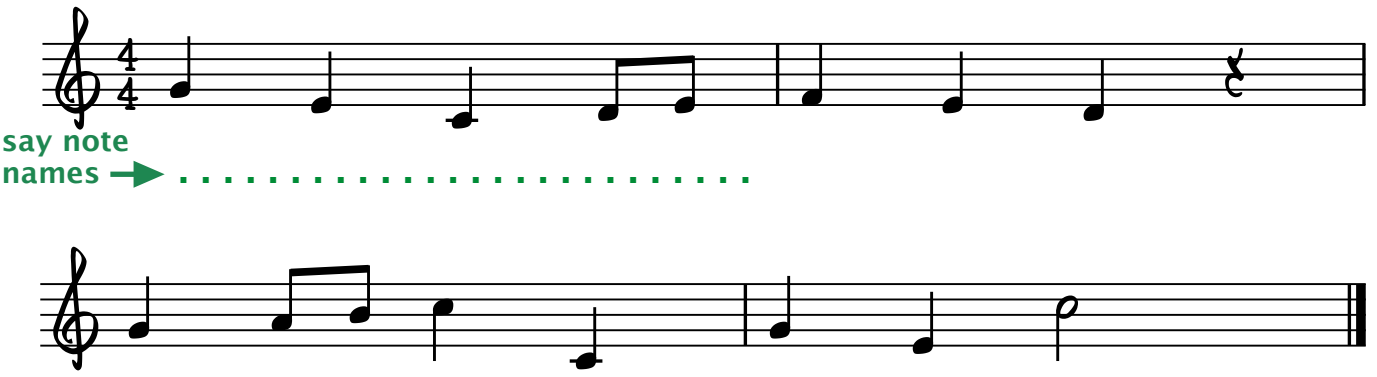
Like Chapter One, we will start by presenting this concept in standard notation first, then follow with the alternative system. You will recall from the Preface that both types of notation will be used in this book. Excerpts from pop songs will be written in the new graphic notation in an effort to keep the book at an affordable price (there are a large number of pop examples, and the expense of using copyrighted standard notation on all these excerpts would quickly become cost-prohibitive due to legal issues.) Theory concepts like scale and chord construction will still be presented in standard notation, however, the notes will also be clearly labeled with letter names for non-staff readers.

(Page 3 omitted from this sample)

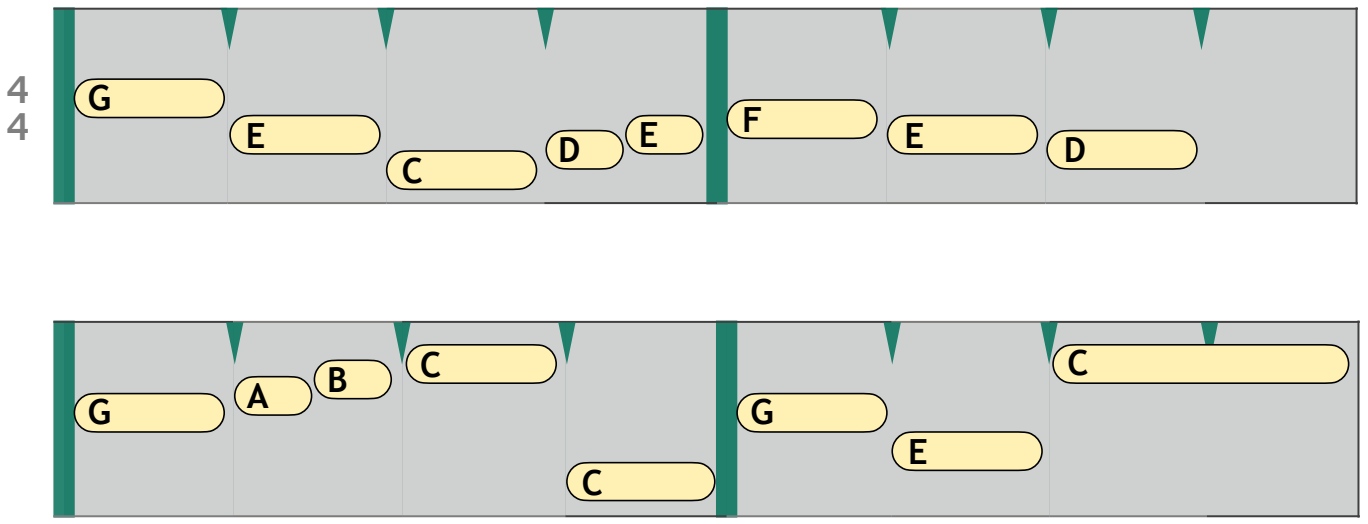
PRACTICE DRILLS

The following drills will help introduce or review the notes on the staff. Practice 1 is in treble clef, and Practice 2 is written in bass clef. **Say the note names out loud - first without any rhythm.** Then after some practice, try saying the note names in the **correct rhythm at a slow, steady tempo.** Once again, if you have a musical instrument or virtual keyboard, play the notes as you say them.

Practice 1



Here is what the previous drill would look like in the new graphic notation discussed in Chapter One:



(Pages 5 & 6 omitted from this sample)

WRITTEN EXERCISES

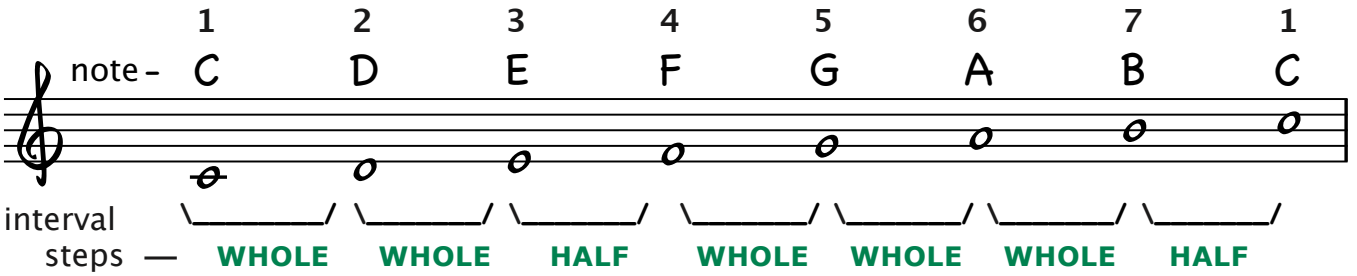
For extra practice reading note locations in standard notation, complete **Exercises 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5** (see "Textbook Contents"/ "Volume 1"/ "Written Exercises").

Major Scale

Songs in a major tonality (key) are built from the **major scale**. This means that the melody and accompanying chords are predominantly or exclusively constructed from notes of the scale. The C major scale starts on a C note, then progresses upwards in a series of whole or half steps until arriving at another C, one octave higher:

C MAJOR SCALE ex. 1

For AUDIO, see "Theory Examples" on top-right sidebar, and click on ex. 1



Although the starting point used above is a C note, the major scale can be constructed by starting on any of the 12 different pitches in our music system. As long as the sequence of intervals remains exactly the same, the sound will always be a major tonality. When starting on C, the interval formula never falls on a black key, so the key of C major has no sharps or flats. If the starting point is shifted to G, the sequence of intervals would produce the following notes, landing on one black key (F#) on the seventh note:

(Pages 8 – 11 omitted from this sample)

WRITTEN EXERCISE

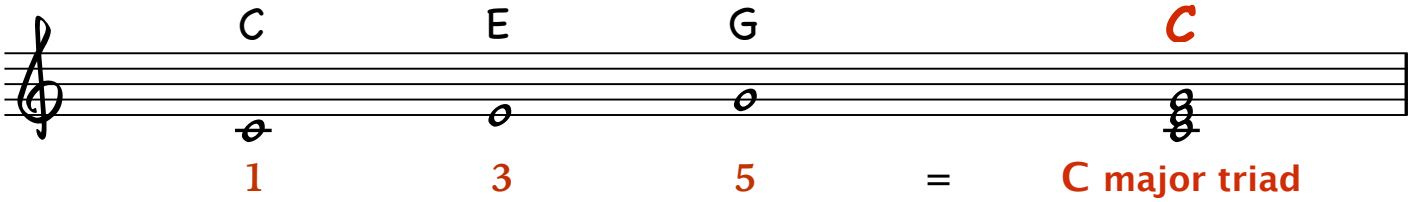
For extra practice spelling some of these major scales, complete **Exercise 2.6** (see "Textbook Contents"/ "Volume 1"/ "Written Exercises").

Triad Chords

MAJOR TRIAD

When several notes are sounded together, it is called a **chord**. This book will cover many types of chords, but we will start with just a few basic ones. The first is a major triad, built with the 1st, 3rd, and 5th degrees of the major scale. The word "**triad**" refers to chords that have exactly 3 different notes.

ex. 3



Notice that the chord symbol C (just the letter name) is written over the chord. You can apply this formula using any major scale, so there are 12 major triads. For example, if you combine the 1st, 3rd, and 5th degrees of the D major scale (D, F#, and A) you hear a D major chord.

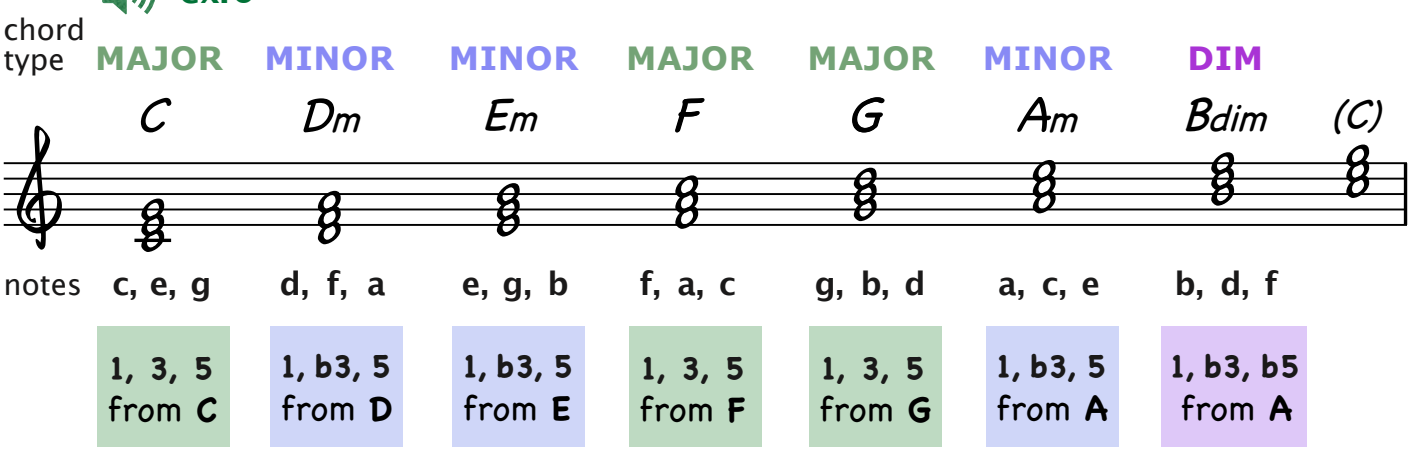
(Pages 13 omitted from this sample)

Diatonic Triads

As mentioned earlier, a song in a major key is generally based on a major scale. This means that the melody and chords come directly from the scale. It is fairly easy to see how a melody could be constructed — simply re-arrange the scale tones in a specific order until it sounds like a "tune." But what about the chords? How can you know which chords will sound good with a given melody? It turns out there are a whole set of triads built directly from the notes of the major scale. These are called **diatonic triads**. (The word "diatonic" means constructed exclusively from notes of the scale.)

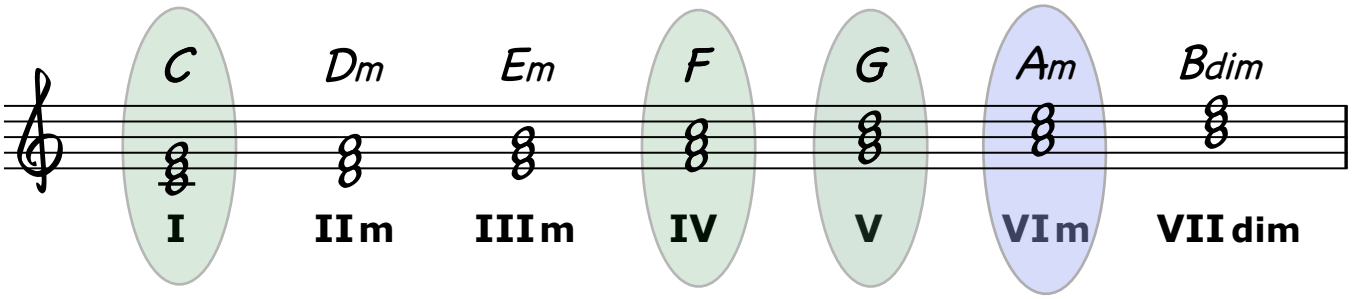
A triad chord can be built on each step of the major scale, stacking the notes in a specific order, as in the following diagram.

ex.6



The three notes of each chord represent either a 1, 3, 5 (major triad), 1, b3, 5 (minor triad), or 1, b3, b5 (diminished triad), figured from the lowest note (**root note**). Notice that there are no sharps or flats in any chord, meaning that every note must be part of the overall C major scale. This is what determines whether a given chord will be major, minor, or dim.

The formula for constructing diatonic chords can be applied to any major scale, so there are 12 sets of diatonic triads, one for each key. Although the letter names may change, the chord types will remain constant. Therefore, the first chord is always major, second chord always minor, etc. In standard musical analysis, the chords are given **roman numerals**, as shown below:



Although any of these diatonic chords could be used to accompany a melody in C major, certain chords will sound better than others when paired with a given melody note. Usually, the melody note is a **chord tone** (a note found somewhere inside the chord). For example, in the key of C major, an A note would sound best with either the Dm, F, or Am chords because all these chords contain an A note. However, some melody notes can be **non-chord tones**, which may temporarily clash or harmonize with the chord before moving on to the next note. More will be said about chord / melody relationships in later chapters.

Overall, there are certain chords that occur more often than others in a typical major key song. The most common chords are **I, IV, and V**, also known as the **tonic, sub-dominant,** and **dominant**, respectively. These are highlighted in green in the previous diagram. In fact, there are dozens of well-known pop and rock hits that only have these three chords. The next most common chord would be the **VIm** (highlighted in blue), and the least common is the VIIdim. The following chart shows the diatonic triads for all 12 major keys, with the I, IV, V, and VIm chords highlighted.

(Chord Chart omitted from this sample)

The preceding chord chart should eventually be memorized, for it is extremely useful to all musicians who improvise or write songs. Aspiring songwriters can use it as a starting point, instead of staring at a blank sheet and wondering where to begin. The chart would be especially helpful if a song needed to be written on deadline or literally on the spot. Writers can also use the chart to flesh out an existing melody that has no accompaniment.

Improvisers playing along with either a recording or in a live jam session might not have the music score in front of them, and they need to recognize the chord changes by ear in order to keep up. If the chart is memorized, it will help guide the ears, and even predict what chord will come next. Finally, the chart is for all those players who get frustrated by mistake-filled song postings online. Sometimes it is just better to figure out the chords yourself from the recording.

WRITTEN EXERCISE

Start your memorization of the chord chart by writing the diatonic triads for some common keys in **Exercise 2.13** (see "Textbook Contents"/ "Volume 1"/ "Written Exercises").

Further Exercises –
USING THE SONG EXAMPLES THROUGHOUT THIS BOOK

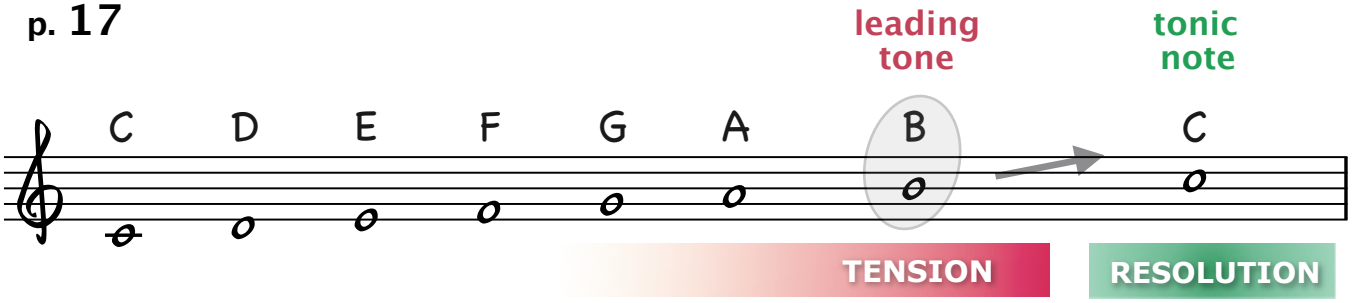
The numerous song examples throughout this book can be used for further practice memorizing diatonic chords (similar to Written Exercise 2.15). **The key of each song** is shown in a **blue box** to the right of the song title, and the chord progressions are usually written with only roman numeral analysis. Initially, you could write out the chord letter names like Exercise 2.15. However, the best way to eventually memorize the diatonic triads is to play the chords on your instrument reading only the roman numerals (without writing out letters). This may strike some as cruel and unusual punishment, but alas, the purpose of this book is to learn theory and harmony, not just new songs. Besides, it's a lot more fun than memorizing the chord chart like a shopping list.

Ear Training

In order to find the key of a song by ear or distinguish the difference between basic chords like the I, IV, and V, you must improve your ability to hear a basic element of all music — tension vs. resolution.

TENSION vs. RESOLUTION

Most pieces of music, regardless of style or genre, have certain periods where there is a feeling of temporary tension or anticipation, followed by a satisfying resolution. This is what helps give music its power and emotion. In terms of major scales or melodies, the first note of the scale, also called the **key note** or **tonic note**, is the resolving point or "home base" where all other notes eventually return. The note with the most tension is the seventh degree, also called the **leading tone**. These notes are labeled below for the C major scale.



The leading tone B is considered most unstable because it is only a half step away from returning to home base (the tonic C). Try playing or singing the scale in ascending order, but **stop on the B note** . . . . . You will feel the tension until you eventually play the tonic C note to resolve the sound. For this reason, the last melody note at the very end of a song is almost always the tonic note.

The diatonic chords have similar characteristics in terms of tension and resolution. The I chord acts as home base and all other chords will carry some tension until the progression eventually resolves back to I. Therefore, most songs also end on the I chord (unless there is a fade out).

In terms of tension, the VII dim triad (B dim chord in the key of C) certainly has instability with the leading tone B as its root note, but this chord is very rare in pop and rock. We will focus instead on the V chord — another strong tension producer with the leading tone in the middle of the chord. (In the key of C, this would be a G chord, containing the notes G, B, and D.) Of the three most common chords in any major key - I, IV, and V - it is the dominant V that has the greatest feeling of anticipation:

tonic	**I chord**	**"home base" resolution point — no tension**
sub-dominant	**IV chord**	**transition — small amount of tension**
dominant	**V chord**	**building anticipation — maximum tension**

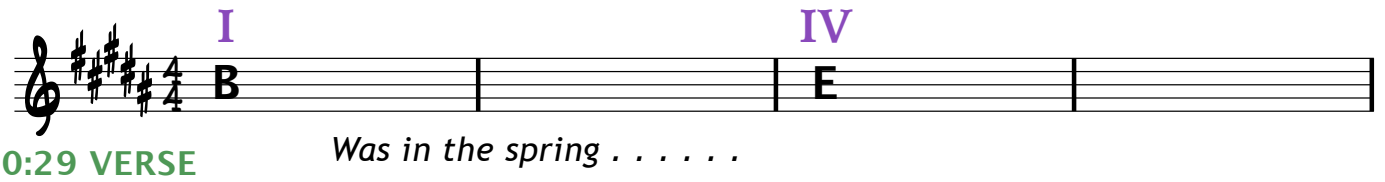
In pop & rock songs, tension is often at its greatest in the last two or three bars of the verse or pre-chorus, leading into the chorus. In the following example, **try stopping the recording briefly at 1:02 just before the chorus**. You will feel the tension until you press start again and let the song continue into the chorus. The key is B major. START LISTENING AT **0:29**

"Sweet Caroline" — Neil Diamond — 1969

B major

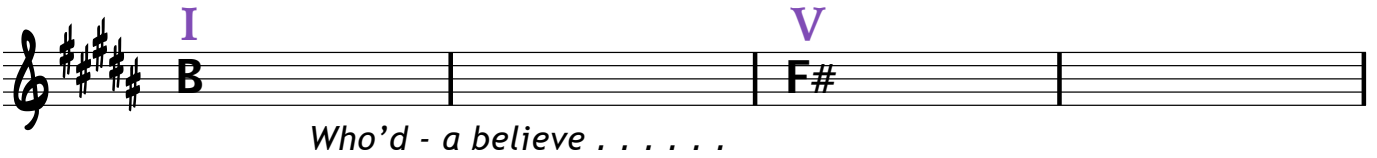
1

For AUDIO, see the "Song Examples" playlist in the right sidebar, and click on track 1 song title. To navigate within the audio track, slide the progress bar forward to the desired starting point.

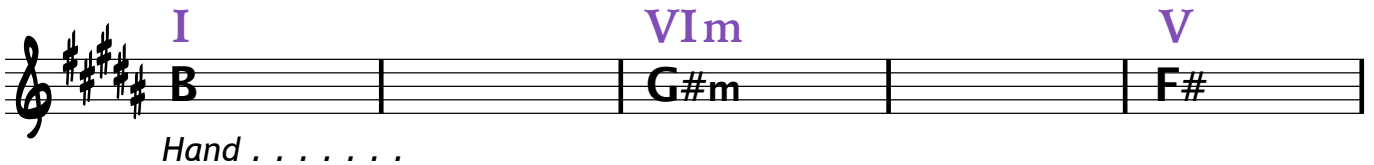


0:29 VERSE

Was in the spring . . . . . .

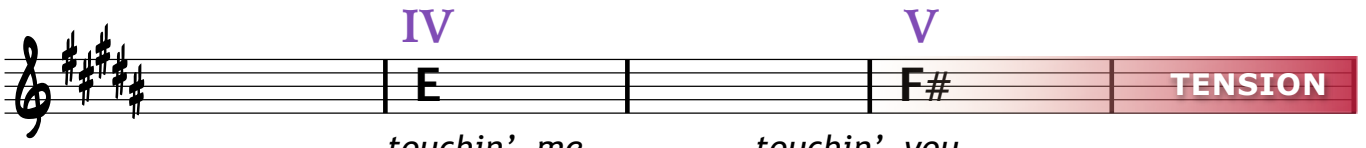


Who'd - a believe . . . . . .



Hand . . . . . .

0:44 PRE-CHORUS



touchin' me *touchin' you*

Sweet Caro - line . . . . . .

1:03 CHORUS

In "Sweet Caroline," there is maximum tension during the V chord at the end of the pre-chorus. When the resolving chorus enters, there is a satisfying, uplifting feeling created by the brief return to the "home" chord (I). Also note that the I chord is avoided during the last eight bars of the pre-chorus. This only increases the tension, for the longer you avoid the I chord, the more tension is built up.

The place where the tension is resolved (beginning of the chorus) can be called a **focal point**. There are many other devices in rhythm, melody, and harmony that can create tension and a focal point, but these devices will be discussed at the end of the chapter in a section called “Songwriting Focal Points.” For now, we are focusing on just the chord progression.

(Pages 19 – 22 omitted from this sample)

Common Chord Progressions

TWO CHORD VAMP

Most pop & rock hits have at least three or more chords, arranged in a specific sequence. However, a chord progression can be as simple as only two chords alternating for the entire piece. When a short progression like this is repeated for an extended period it is sometimes called a “**vamp,**” with the chords changing every one or two measures. Playing a vamp in the intro section of a song is quite common in live performances, because it is an easy way to coordinate the start of a piece. The band members just keep “vamping” until the singer is finally ready to start.

Here’s an example of a two-chord vamp that lasts for the entire recording. The key is F# major and the alternating chords are F# and G#m (I and IIm in the key). Each chord lasts for one bar. START LISTENING AT **0:31**.

“Heaven” — Los Lonely Boys — 2004 | **F# major** | 2

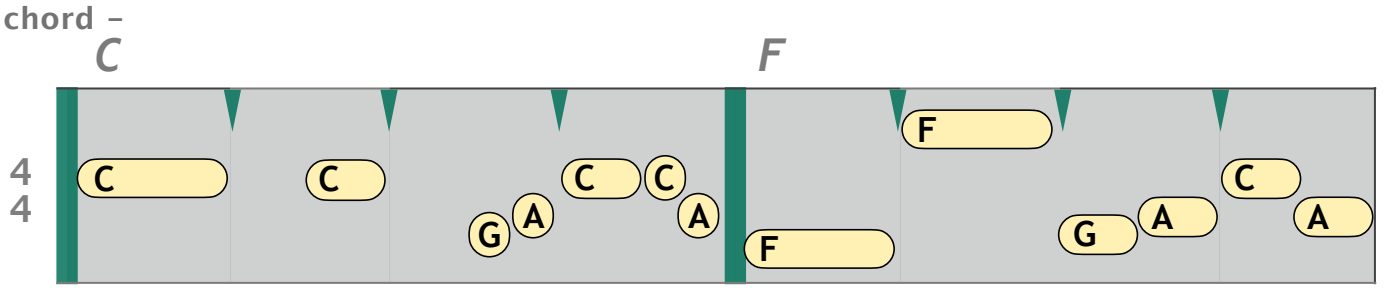
— 0:31 (verse) - Listen for the **organ** and **guitar**. The **I** chord alternates with the **IIm** chord. (Alternations are approximately every 2 ½ seconds.)

On their 1972 hit “I’ll Take You There,” The Staple Singers’ also used a two-chord vamp, alternating between the I and the IV chord. START LISTENING AT **0:12.**

“I’ll Take You There” — Staple Singers — 1972 | **C major** | 3

— 0:12 (verse) **-** Listen for the **guitar** and **bass**. The **I** and **IV** alternate, one bar each (approximately every 2 ½ seconds).

If you have trouble hearing when the chords change on “I’ll Take You There,” listen closely to the **bass line**. The root note is heard on the first beat of each chord change. Although this bass pattern is fairly active (other notes are introduced later in the measure), you should focus on beat one to hear the switch between the C and F chords. The repeating two-bar bass pattern is shown below in our graphic notation.



0:12 VERSE – bass pattern

(Page 25 omitted from this sample)

The following list features more songs with a clear root in the bass. As mentioned earlier, there are many “Additional Listening” lists like this throughout the book that can be used for ear training or improvisation practice.

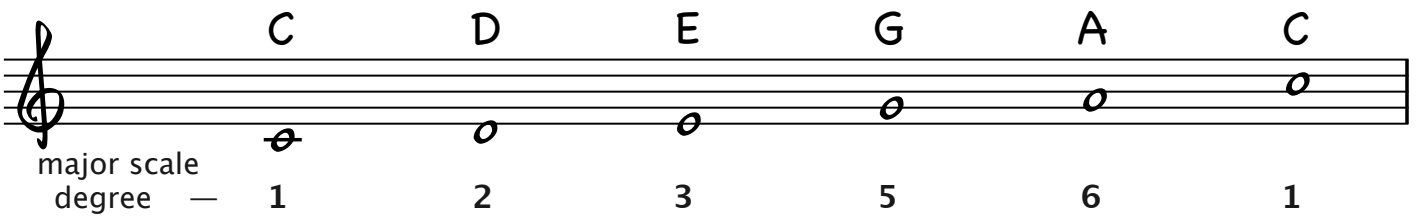
Additional songs with I, IV, V CHORDS – ROOT BASS

1960	*He'll Have To Go*	Jim Reeves	Db major
1963	*Another Saturday Night*	Sam Cooke	A major
1965	*Mr. Tambourine Man*	Byrds (orig. Bob Dylan)	D major
1971	*Me and Bobby McGee*	Janis Joplin	G, A major
1974	*Willie & the Hand Jive*	Eric Clapton	A major
1984	*Sad Songs Say So Much*	Elton John	C major
1988	*End of the Line*	Traveling Wilburys	D major
2000	*How Do You Like Me Now*	Toby Keith	C major

Regarding improvising with this list, one of the first steps for improvising is to find the key of the song. This will help you pick the right scale for soloing. Since sheet music (with key info) is rarely used in pop and rock performance settings, pop musicians are often expected to find the key by ear. Think of situations like playing along with the radio, CD's, audio files, or simply sitting in with other musicians during an informal jam session. There's nothing more embarrassing than having to ask "what key are we in" if you're trying to fit in with some good players.

To practice finding the key by ear, follow the steps outlined earlier under Exercise 2.24. Of course the key will give you the letter name for your potential improv scale, and since all songs in this chapter are in a major key, the 7-note major scale is an obvious choice. However, the melodies, riffs, and instrumental solos of many pop hits are actually based on a simpler 5-note scale known as the **major pentatonic** (a sub-scale using only the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, and 6th degrees of the full major scale). The C major pentatonic scale is shown below.

C MAJOR PENTATONIC SCALE ex. 7

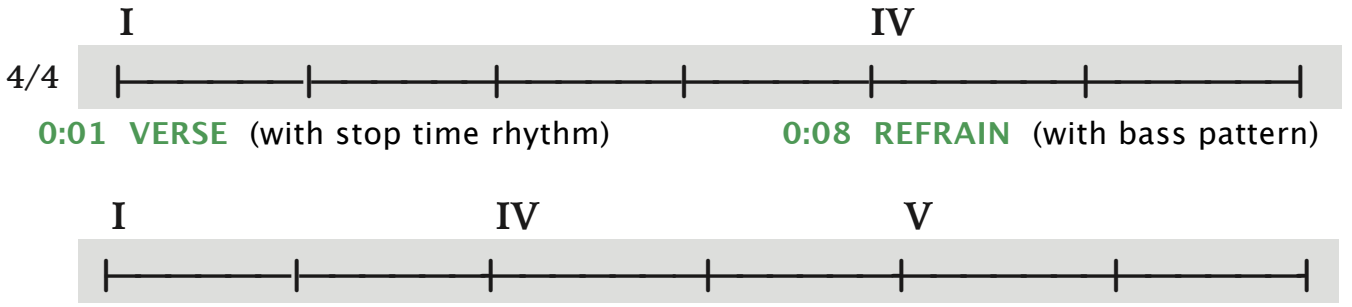


As with the full major scale, there are 12 different major pentatonic scales, one for each key. For much more information about scale patterns and improvisation, see the supplemental guitar workbook that is meant to accompany this main text. The workbook follows the same chapter outline found here, providing scales for practicing improv with every song example in this book.

I, IV, V CHORDS – Active Bass

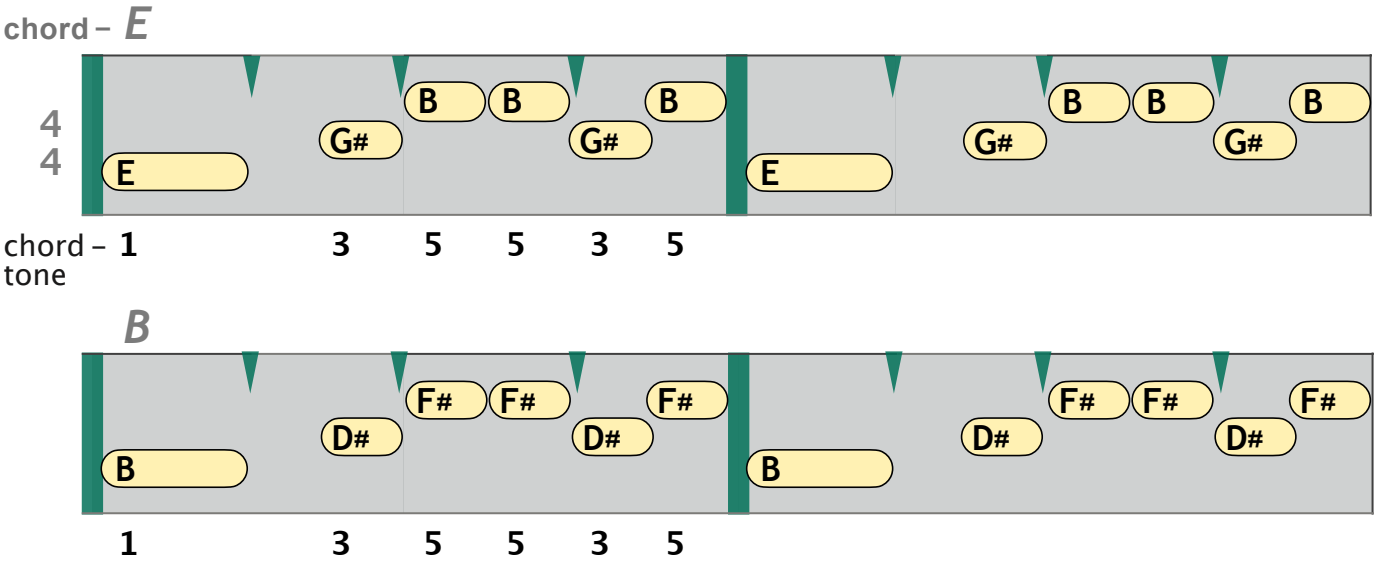
While the previous "Additional Listening" list contained I - IV - V songs with a clear root in the bass, other songs like "I'll Take You There"(heard earlier) can have quite an active bass with more than just root notes. See if you can hear the **repeating bass pattern** in the refrain of the next classic by Fats Domino. The pattern is doubled on the guitar/sax, and shifts to follow each chord change:

"Ain't That a Shame" — Fats Domino — 1955 **B major** 4



The bass pattern uses all the chord tones of the triad (1, 3, and 5), and is shown below for the IV and I chords that start the refrain.

0:08 bass pattern



(Pages 28 –31 omitted from this sample)

Project for Further Study & Discussion

I, IV, V PROJECT –

Pick any major key song that features exclusively I, IV, and V chords and write out the chord progression from the beginning of the verse to the end of the chorus. Include roman numeral analysis along with the chord names. Songs from the previous three "Additional Listening" lists are ok to use.

If you don't have notation software, you may type the chord names in a word program, but make sure you clearly mark barlines with large slash marks like this 6 bar example:

I		V	IV	I	V	I	
D	/	/ A	/ G	/ D	A	/ D	/

For this project, you may either figure the chords out by ear (recommended), or use online sheet music sites like Sheet Music Direct or Sheet Music Plus. These sites usually have one or two pages available for free as a preview - enough to cover most of the music and get you started in the right direction. Be aware that the sheet music chords do not always match the recording 100%. Do not use guitar tab sites because they are often amateur posts with lots of mistakes.

Also listen for the bass line. Are the notes simply root notes or is there an active bass with a repeated pattern? If so, does the pattern shift to follow each chord change? Include your comments regarding the bass line with your score of the chord progression.

(Pages 33 – 35 omitted from this sample)

DOOWOP I – VIm – IV – V

Many songs have the sequence I - VIm - IV - V, a progression so common in the 1950s and 60s that it helped define the sound of the doowop era. Rick Nelson's "Poor Little Fool" is a perfect example, with the doowop sequence continuing for the entire song. Each chord lasts for four beats (one bar)

"Poor Little Fool" — Rick Nelson — 1958 **C major** 5

Although the I - VIm - IV - V sequence is often called the "doowop progression," it has proven to be quite resilient, appearing in numerous songs over the decades, including various genres like country, pop, rock, and reggae. Here's a recent example from D J Khaled, hitting the charts in 2017. Once again there is one bar per chord, and the sequence is repeated over the entire song.

"I'm the One" - DJ Khaled feat. J. Bieber, Quavo - 2017 Chance the Rapper, & Lil Wayne **G major** 6

A WORD ABOUT REPEATED 4-CHORD / 4-BAR PROGRESSIONS

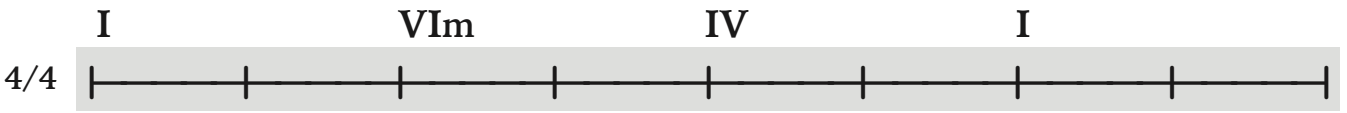
The use of a repeated, short chord progression throughout an entire song (covering all parts, including verse, pre-chorus, chorus, etc.) is not uncommon in pop and rock. Earlier in this chapter, we heard 3 songs that were based exclusively on a 2-chord vamp, alternating between I and IV. We also noted that "Hang On Sloopy" repeated the same 4-chord, 4-bar circular progression over the entire song. In fact, the repetition of a 4-bar sequence, usually with 4 different chords like the circular major or doowop progressions, will be encountered many times again — not only in this chapter, but throughout the remaining chapters of Spinning Gold.

Songs based on these repeated progressions are found in all decades of the rock era. However, there has been a decided increase in their usage since 2010. Also of note is the fact that most earlier song examples, particularly from the '50s and '60s, would use the 4-

bar progression for only 80 or 90% of the song. At some point, these songs would introduce a brief release (aka. “bridge”) section with a different chord sequence. This practice has mostly disappeared in the last 15 years, as songwriters have increasingly been content to stick with the same 4-bar progression throughout the entire song. This may be influenced by the recent popularity of performing with audio loops, but there is not usually a literal loop of the exact same audio material. The harmonic progression may be the same, but it is expressed with different instruments and textures in different parts of the song. Since other elements like melody, rhythm, and lyrics are also changing, the listener is not always aware that the same short sequence is repeating in the harmony.

The following 2010 hit by Bruno Mars features the doowop progression without the V chord. START LISTENING AT **0:52.**

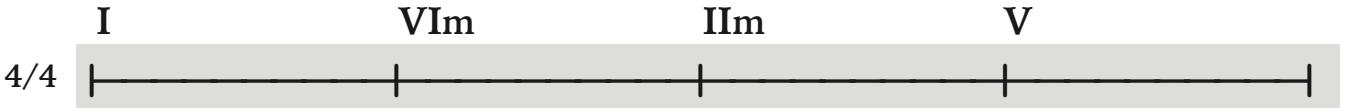
“Just the Way You Are” — Bruno Mars — 2010 | **F major** | 7



0:52 CHORUS

The Elegants’ 1959 hit “Little Star” uses the typical four-bar doowop progression, but **substitutes a IIm chord** in place of the IV. There have been several other songs over the years that also feature this variation, including “Come Go with Me” by The Dell-Vikings, and “Twenty-Six Miles,” by The Four Preps.

“Little Star” — The Elegants — 1959 | **A major** | 8



0:13 VERSE

Additional songs with DOOWOP PROGRESSION

1957	*Diana*	Paul Anka	G major
1959	*Teenager in Love*	Dion & The Belmonts	Db major
1961	*Blue Moon*	Marcels	G major
1961	*Runaround Sue*	Dion	D major
1961	*Stand By Me*	Ben E. King	A major
1962	*Duke of Earl*	Gene Chandler	F major
1993	*Sweat (A La Long)*	Inner Circle	C major
1997	*I'll Be Missing You*	Puff Daddy & Faith Evans	G major
2000	*You Sang to Me*	Marc Anthony	Bb major
2002	*Just Like a Pill*	Pink	A major
2017	*Sweetheart*	Thomas Rhett	Eb major
2018	*Why So Serious*	Alice Merton	F major

(Pages 39 – 41 omitted from this sample)

Signature Riffs

Many pop & rock songs have a distinctive **repeated riff** (short instrumental phrase of one to four measures) that occurs in the intro, in-between verses or choruses, or even underneath the melody as a vocal accompaniment. If the riff is used only when the vocals are absent, it has basically a melodic function, like a traditional "melodic motif." If the riff is used underneath the vocals throughout the verse or chorus, it has a harmonic function, like the traditional term "ostinato." Of course some riffs can have both functions, depending on placement in the song.

A strong repeated riff is often the most interesting element of the entire song — even more memorable than the vocal melody or chord progression. In fact, some songs are basically "one-chord" songs, meaning there are no chord changes at all. This may sound boring in theory, but these pieces usually have a strong repeated riff that makes the accompaniment a little more interesting. As you will recall, the Staple Singers' "I'll Take You There" had only two chords throughout the entire piece. However, the distinctive repeating bass riff added interest to the otherwise simple accompaniment. (For more on "one-chord" songs see Chapters Three and Four.)

In terms of melody, many pop & rock songs have narrow, blues-based vocals that revolve around only two or three notes. In these songs, a strong ostinato riff can sound more interesting and important than a weak vocal melody. This is true for many of the most famous hits in rock history, like "Satisfaction," "Layla," "Back in Black," or just about any Led Zeppelin classic. Just try identifying "How Many More Times" or "Dazed and Confused" by whistling only the vocal melody, instead of the guitar riff. (For more on weak vs. strong melodies, see Chapter Nine.)

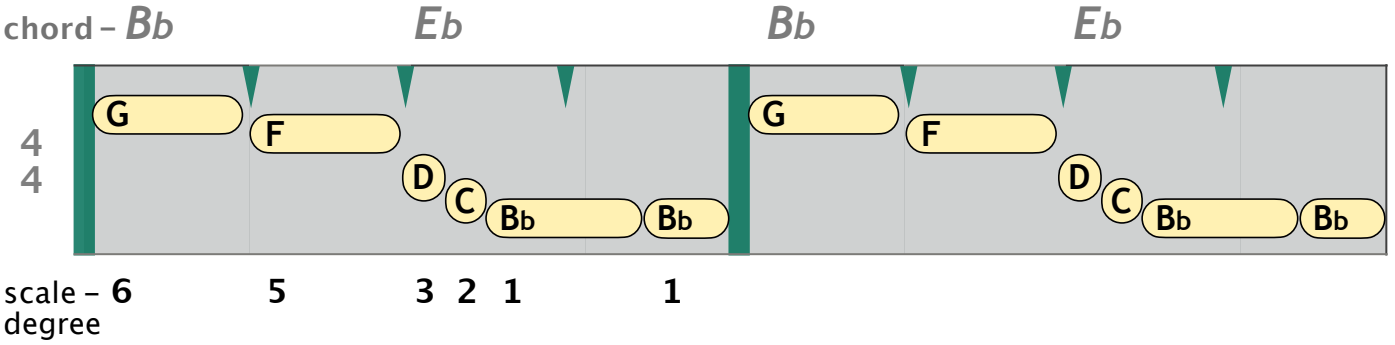
For songs in a major key, the repeated riff is usually based on the major pentatonic scale, discussed earlier in the chapter. (You will recall that the major pentatonic is a sub-scale of the full major scale, using only scale degrees 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6.)

MELODIC FUNCTION RIFFS

The following 1998 hit "Real World" by Matchbox 20 opens with a one-bar repeated guitar riff in the intro, based on the Bb major pentatonic scale (scale degrees are shown below the notes). Notice that the song features both the modern rock progression I - V - VIm - IV, and the circular major sequence.

"Real World" — Matchbox 20 — 1998 | **Bb major** | 9

0:00 INTRO RIFF (guitar)



— **0:09** (verse 1) - modern rock progression **I - V - VIm - IV**

— **0:33** - intro riff returns

— **0:41** (verse 2) - modern rock progression

— **1:06** - intro riff

— **1:14** (chorus) - circular major progression **I - IV - V - IV**

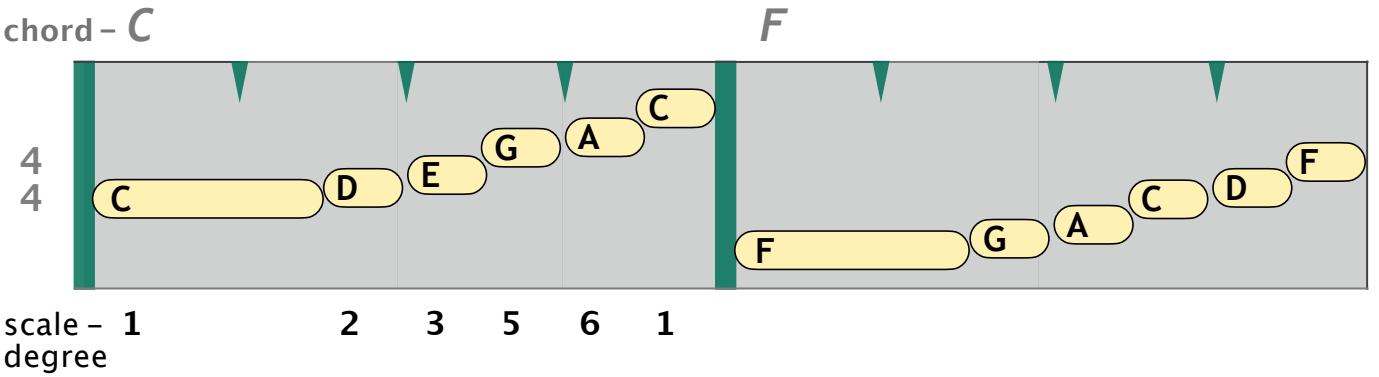
(Page 44 omitted from this sample)

HARMONIC FUNCTION RIFFS

The Temptations' classic "My Girl" features a major pentatonic guitar riff (shown below) with a harmonic function, used underneath the vocals of the verse. The riff shifts to follow the chord changes, just like the earlier bass patterns heard on "Ain't That a Shame," "Haunted House," and "Can't Turn You Loose." Note that the song changes key at the **1:50** mark, rising from C major to D major.

"My Girl" — The Temptations — 1965 | **C, D major** | 10

0:10 VERSE RIFF (guitar)



Additional songs with HARMONIC FUNCTION RIFFS (major key)

1980	*You Shook Me All Night Long*	AC / DC	G major
2008	*River of Love*	George Strait	D major
2010	*From the Clouds*	Jack Johnson	G major
2010	*Lover, Lover*	Jerrod Niemann	G major
2011	*All For One*	Chikinki	G major

Songwriting Focal Points

(Devices for Creating the "Hook")

Already in Chapter Two of this book, the mechanics of harmony and melody seem to have taken over the discussion. A quick scroll from the beginning will show lots of number groupings, such as 1, 3, 5, or 1, b3, 5, or 1, 2, 3, 5, 6. Roman numerals are even more frequent, including sequences like I - IV - V, or I - VIm - IV - V, or I - V - VIm - IV. Indeed, music is often compared to mathematics, but don't forget a crucial difference. In

math, numbers are not connected to emotions. In music, however, the roman numeral V (dominant chord) often represents a feeling of tension, and the numeral I (tonic chord) signals a satisfying return to the stability of home.

As we begin to learn more and more about music theory in subsequent chapters, it is essential to remember that music should ultimately be experienced as a feeling, not just numbers. Earlier in this chapter we discussed the importance of recognizing tension and resolution regarding ear training, improvisation, and the ability to distinguish between the I, IV, and V chords. In a typical piece of music, there are several peaks and valleys where tension is built up and then released (like the twists and turns of the plot to a movie or book). This is true of virtually all types of music — whether hard rock, cool jazz, country ballads, or classical symphonies. (Music without these periodic episodes does exist, but it is probably meant to be meditative or soothing and can quickly fall into the background.)

Pop & rock songs are definitely meant to grab the listener's attention, so song-writers try to carefully manipulate the tension so that it peaks at the end of one section (verse or pre-chorus) and resolves at the beginning of the next section (usually a chorus). Earlier in the chapter we noted the focal point that occurred from pre-chorus to chorus on Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline." That exact moment of maximum tension, a musical "hook," can be very arresting, and often a listener that has begun to daydream will tune back in for those few seconds. It is no wonder that the song's title and strongest melodic phrase are placed here — whatever happens at the hook will usually be remembered long after the song is done.

Starting with this chapter, and continuing throughout the rest of the book, there will be a brief section titled "Songwriting Focal Points" at the end of each chapter. In these sections one hit song will be analyzed. This song will feature an example of a strong musical hook and also contain several of the new music theory elements that were presented in that chapter.

In addition, the discussion will include various individual devices that the song's composers used to create the memorable focal points. Keep in mind that these song examples serve as merely an introduction to the world of songwriting. Those who wish to explore songwriting and focal points in much greater detail should study the companion book The Art of the Hook after completing this current volume.

Our first example of a strong focal point comes from Bruce Springsteen and his 1973 song "Rosalita," shown below. There are four devices used on this song to create tension and highlight the entrance of the chorus:

V to I Tension - Resolution

The dominant V chord (C in the key of F major) is placed at the end of the pre-chorus, and it resolves to the tonic I (F) chord at the chorus entrance.

I Chord is Avoided

One way to make the tension - resolution point more dramatic is to avoid the I chord for several measures before arriving at the hook. Basically, the longer you stay away from the I, the more you want to hear it. On “Rosalita,” the I chord (F) is avoided for 12 measures leading up to the chorus. This is fairly close to the limit. If a song goes too long without anchoring back to the I, the sense of key center can begin to drift, and soon a new chord will start to sound like “home base,” changing the key.

Extension of V Chord

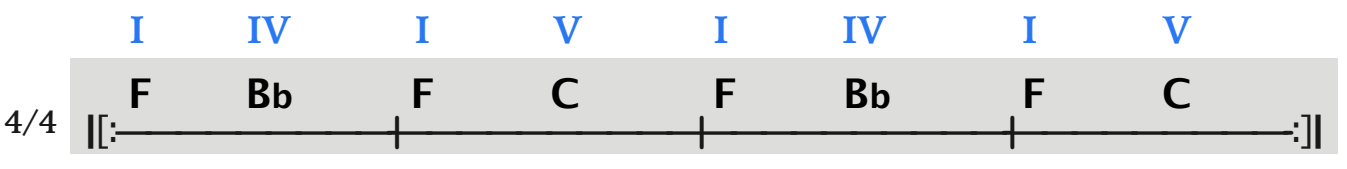
Another way to increase the tension is to linger on the V chord. You will note that the V chord lasts 4 bars at the end of the pre-chorus — twice as long as any previous chord.

Ascending Pitches in Harmony

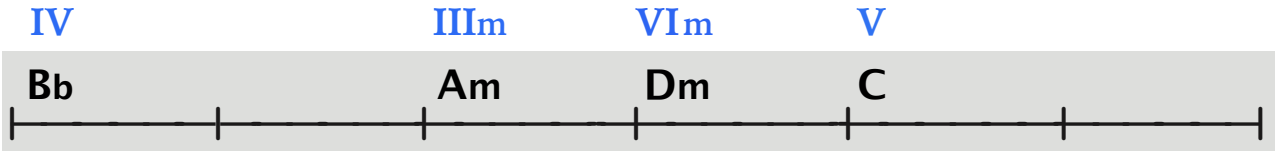
Ascending pitches in either the melody or harmony can create extra excitement and tension leading to the chorus. During the long V chord at the end of the pre-chorus, the saxophone plays a sequence of four short figures that gradually rise in pitch, helping to focus our attention and point towards the hook.

Listen for all these devices, and how they work together to create the strong focal point on “Rosalita.” START LISTENING AT **1:23.**

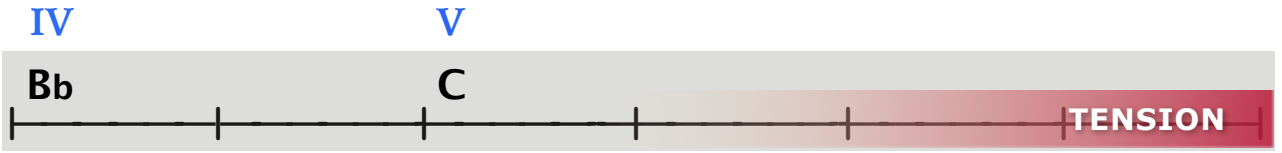
“Rosalita” — Bruce Springsteen — 1973 **F major** 11

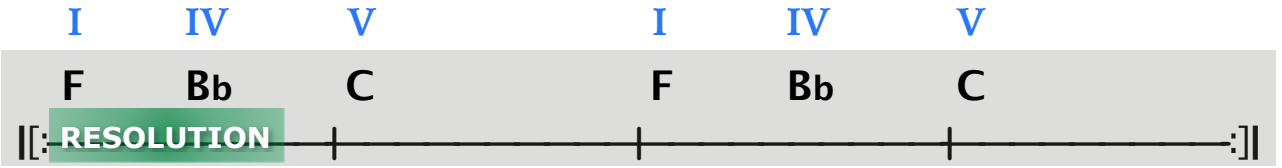


1:23 VERSE



1:36 PRE-CHORUS





1:54 CHORUS w Song Title

As we move forward through the remaining chapters, be on the lookout for many additional song examples that also contain the devices introduced here. This concludes our introduction to the major key, but much more will be said about the major tonality in Chapter Five.