

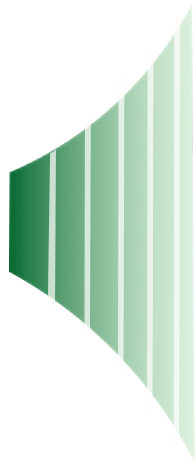
## CHAPTER 8



# DORIAN TONALITY



### Essential Concepts / Skills covered in chapter 8



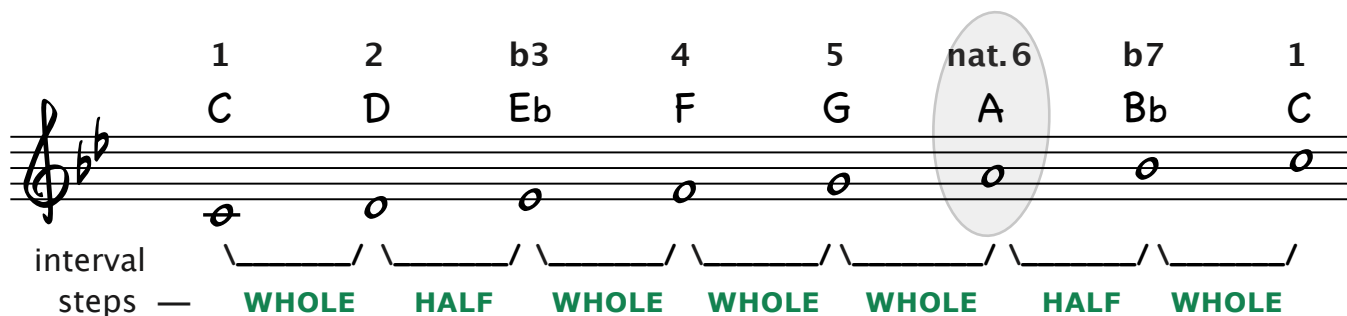
- Dorian scale, diatonic triads and seventh chords in dorian tonality
- Common chord progressions in dorian pop songs using diatonic triads and V major triad
- Signature dorian riffs
- Drones and drone riffs in dorian
- Songwriting devices for creating focal points
- Ear training – Im, IIm, bIII, IV, Vm, bVII, and V major chord in dorian tonality

## The Dorian Scale

As mentioned in the previous chapter, dorian tonality is a variation of the minor sound since it has a flatted 3rd degree in the scale (like the minor triad and scales). In fact, only one note is changed from the natural minor scale, with the flat 6th degree raised a half-step to a **natural 6th** (circled below).

C DORIAN SCALE  ex.1

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



1 2 b3 4 5 nat. 6 b7 1  
C D Eb F G A Bb C

interval steps — **WHOLE** **HALF** **WHOLE** **WHOLE** **WHOLE** **HALF** **WHOLE**

## WRITTEN EXERCISE

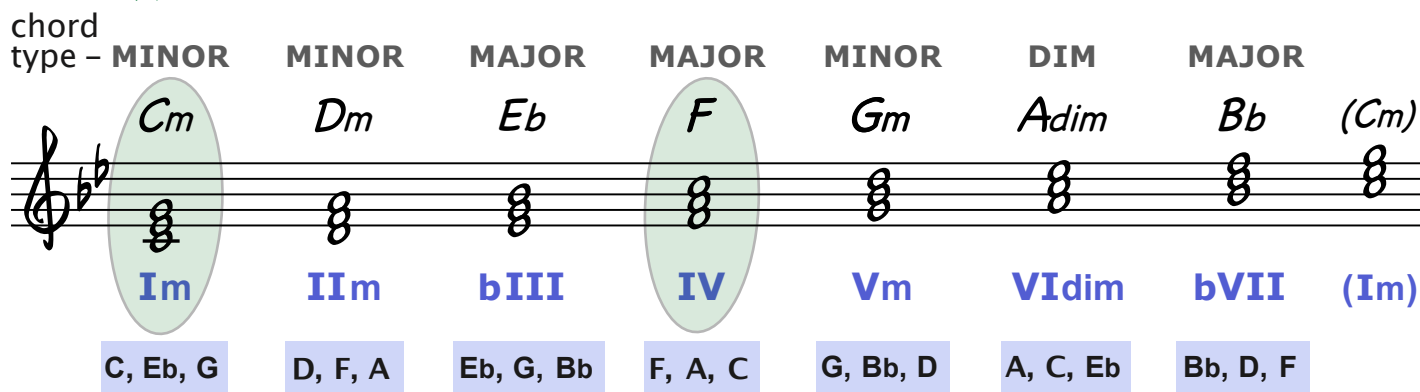
To practice spelling some common dorian scales, go to **Exercise 8.1** (see "Textbook Contents" / "Volume 1" / "Written Exercises").

## Diatonic Triads

Building chords on each step in the dorian scale results in the following diatonic triads. You will notice that since the IV chord contains the natural 6th of the scale (A), it becomes a major triad (F major). This is a signature chord of the dorian sound. Overall, the two most common chords in dorian are the Im and IV, circled below.

 ex.2

chord type — **MINOR** **MINOR** **MAJOR** **MAJOR** **MINOR** **DIM** **MAJOR**



*Cm* *Dm* *Eb* *F* *Gm* *Adim* *Bb* (*Cm*)

**Im** **IIIm** **bIII** **IV** **Vm** **VI dim** **bVII** (**Im**)

C, Eb, G D, F, A Eb, G, Bb F, A, C G, Bb, D A, C, Eb Bb, D, F


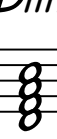
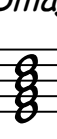



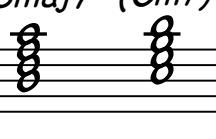
Shown below is the chart of diatonic triads for all the dorian keys.

<b>DIATONIC TRIADS – DORIAN TONALITY</b>						
(key)						
<b>I m</b>	<b>II m</b>	<b>bIII</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>V m</b>	<b>VI dim</b>	<b>bVII</b>
<b>Am</b>	Bm	C	<b>D</b>	Em	F#dim	G
<b>Bbm</b>	Cm	Db	<b>Eb</b>	Fm	Gdim	Ab
<b>Bm</b>	C#m	D	<b>E</b>	F#m	G#dim	A
<b>Cm</b>	Dm	Eb	<b>F</b>	Gm	Adim	Bb
<b>C#m</b>	D#m	E	<b>F#</b>	G#m	A#dim	B
<b>Dm</b>	Em	F	<b>G</b>	Am	Bdim	C
<b>D#m</b>	E#m	F#	<b>G#</b>	A#m	B#dim	C#
<b>Em</b>	F#m	G	<b>A</b>	Bm	C#dim	D
<b>Fm</b>	Gm	Ab	<b>Bb</b>	Cm	Ddim	Eb
<b>F#m</b>	G#m	A	<b>B</b>	C#m	D#dim	E
<b>Gm</b>	Am	Bb	<b>C</b>	Dm	Edim	F
<b>G#m</b>	A#m	B	<b>C#</b>	D#m	E#dim	F#

## Diatonic 7th Chords

Adding a fourth note to the triads of dorian will generate the following set of diatonic 7th chords.

 ex.3

<i>Cm7</i>	<i>Dm7</i>	<i>Ebmaj7</i>	<i>F7</i>	<i>Gm7</i>	<i>Am7b5</i>	<i>Bbmaj7 (Cm7)</i>
						
<b>I m7</b>	<b>II m7</b>	<b>bIII maj7</b>	<b>IV 7</b>	<b>V m7</b>	<b>VI m7b5</b>	<b>bVII maj7 (Im7)</b>
C, Eb, G, Bb	D, F, A, C	Eb, G, Bb, D	F, A, C, Eb	G, Bb, D, F	A, C, Eb, G	Bb, D, F, A

## Common Chord Progressions

### ONE CHORD or RIFF

Like all the tonalities in previous chapters, dorian has its share of one-chord songs, including this 1983 hit by The Fixx. In the intro, a **Bbm7 chord** drones in syncopated rhythm over the top. Entering bar 2, a riff in the mid-range (scored below) provides the characteristic **natural 6th** (G notes in the key of Bb dorian, shown in purple). With the presence of the Eb and G notes in the riff, there is a partial “suggestion” of a IV chord (spelled Eb, G, Bb), but the overall effect is of one chord throughout (the Bbm7).

***“One Thing Leads to Another” — The Fixx — 1983***

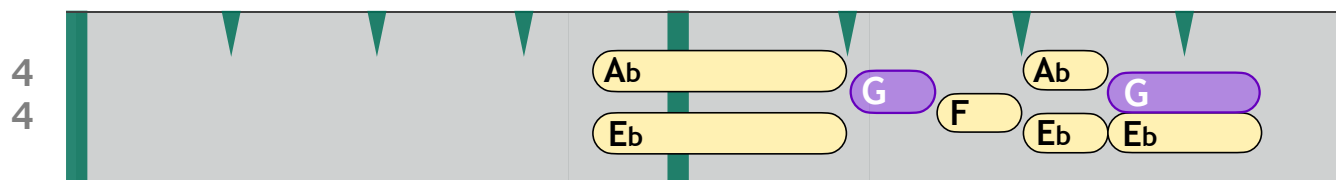
Bb dorian



For AUDIO, see the “Song Examples” playlist in the right sidebar, and click on track 1 song title.

0:00 INTRO RIFF

chord – *Bbm7*



### Additional ONE-CHORD SONGS (dorian tonality)

1973	<i>Papa Was a Rolling Stone</i>	Temptations	Bb dorian
1974	<i>Jungle Boogie</i>	Kool & The Gang	G dorian
1992	<i>My Lovin' (You're Never Gonna Get It)</i>	En Vogue	Bb dorian
1993	<i>Boom! Shake the Room</i>	D.J. Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince	Eb dorian
2001	<i>Play</i>	Jennifer Lopez	Ab dorian

## TWO CHORD VAMP, $\text{Im}(7) - \text{IIIm}(7)$ or $\text{Im}(7) - \text{IV}(7)$

The next example features a dorian version of the two-chord vamp, alternating between the **Im7 and IIIm7** during the entire song.

**"Last Time Lover" — Spice Girls — 1997**

F# dorian



This Jack Johnson song uses a **Im - IV vamp** throughout the verse. START LISTENING at 0:23.

To navigate within an audio track, first click on the song title, then slide the progress bar forward to the desired starting point.

**"Staple It Together" — Jack Johnson — 2005**

A dorian



### Additional songs in DORIAN with TWO-CHORD VAMP

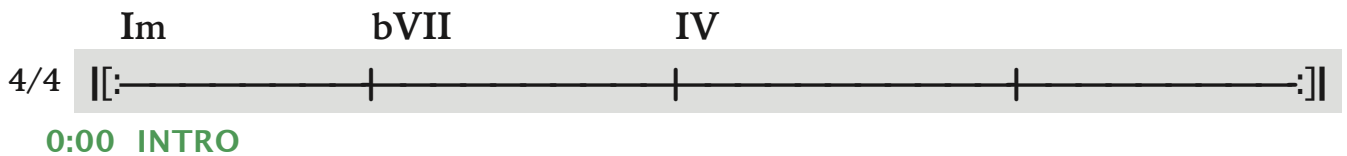
1973	<b><i>Right Place, Wrong Time</i></b>	Dr. John	Eb dorian
1979	<b><i>Le Freak</i></b>	Chic	A dorian
1999	<b><i>Wild Wild West</i></b>	Will Smith	Eb dorian
2014	<b><i>Uptown Funk</i></b>	Mark Ronson feat. Bruno Mars	D dorian
2017	<b><i>Money</i></b>	Beaches	E dorian

## Im – bVII – IV

Chris Isaak's "Wicked Game" features a dorian version of the I - bVII - IV mixolydian progression heard in the previous chapter, this time starting on a Im chord.

### "Wicked Game" — Chris Isaak — 2010

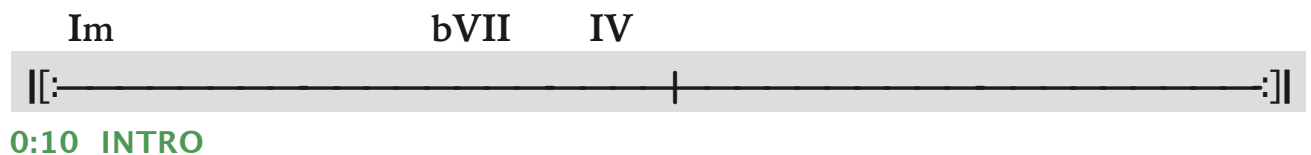
B dorian



Here's another example of the Im - bVII - IV dorian progression, starting at 0:10.

### "Swim" — Madonna — 1998

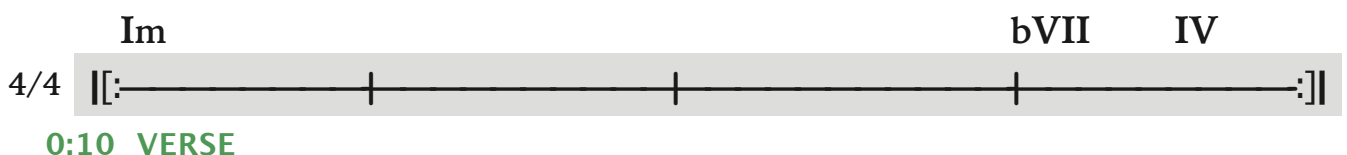
C# dorian



The following 2010 hit by the Revivalists uses the Im - bVII - IV dorian sequence on the verse, shown below starting at 0:10. (However, if you listen a little longer, you will notice that the song switches to the minor key for the chorus at 0:50, using a IV minor chord in the Im - IVm - bVII - bIII chorus progression).

### "Wish I Knew You" — Revivalists — 2010

C dorian



## Additional songs with Im – bVII – IV PROGRESSION


1987	<i>White Wedding</i>	Billy Idol	B dorian
2010	<i>The High Road</i>	Broken Bells	D dorian

## OTHER DORIAN

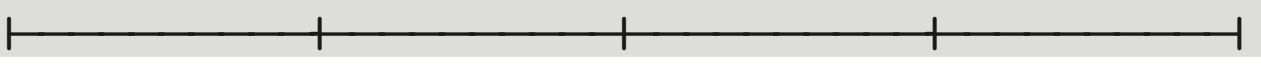
The Bee Gees' disco anthem "Stayin' Alive" contains an extended variation of the Im - bVII - IV dorian progression, as shown below starting at 0:14.

**"Stayin' Alive" — Bee Gees — 1978**

**F dorian**

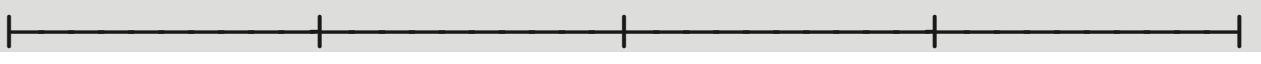
 **7**

4/4      Im                      bVII      Im                                      bVII      Im



**0:14 VERSE**


IV7



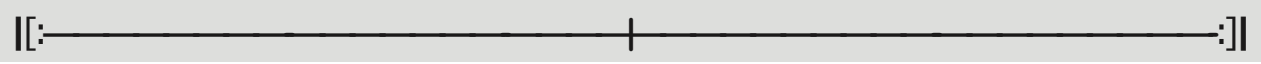
On the 2022 song "Need a Favor," a **bIII** chord is inserted into the progression. This 2-bar sequence is repeated throughout the entire song.

**"Need a Favor" — Jelly Roll — 2022**

**G# dorian**

 **8**

4/4      Im                      bIII                      bVII                      IV




**0:00 ENTIRE SONG**


The following classic from Jefferson Airplane changes the mixture on the verse, and also features a bIII in the chorus.

**"Somebody to Love" — Jefferson Airplane — 1967**

**F# dorian**


 **9**

4/4      Im                      IV      bVII      Im



**0:00 VERSE**

bIII                      bVII                      Im                      IV

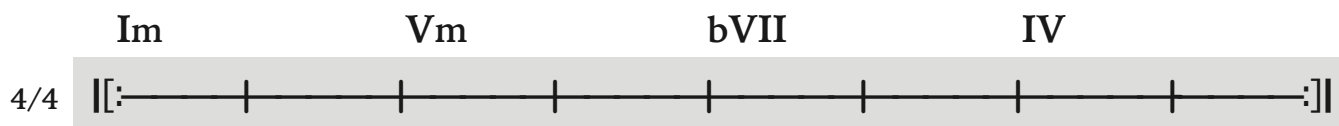


**0:15 CHORUS**

The Weeknd's hit "Blinding Lights" adds a **Vm** chord to the mix. START LISTENING at 0:17.

**"Blinding Lights" — The Weeknd — 2019**

F dorian

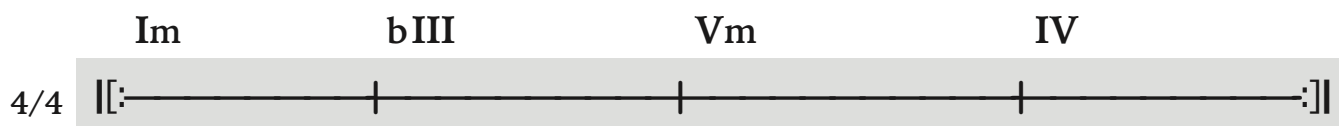


0:17 INTRO

This dorian example features both the bIII and the Vm chords. START LISTENING at 0:49.

**"Love Me Again" — John Newman — 2014**

G dorian

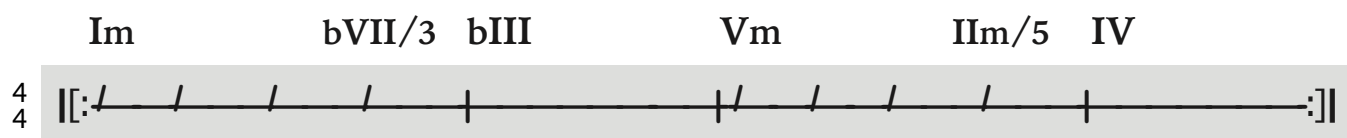


0:49 CHORUS

Here's the same basic progression as the previous song, but with passing chords on bars one and three. START LISTENING at 0:26.

**"Burn It Down" — Linkin Park — 2012**

D dorian



0:26 INTRO & VERSE

## Additional songs in DORIAN TONALITY

1989	<i>Bushfire</i>	B 52's	B dorian
1997	<i>If U Can't Dance</i>	Spice Girls	E dorian
2009	<i>Canvas</i>	Imogen Heap	B dorian
2009	<i>Million Dolla Baby</i>	Robin Thicke	D dorian
2012	<i>Take a Little Ride with Me</i>	Jason Aldean	E dorian
2013	<i>Scream &amp; Shout</i>	will.i.am feat. Britney Spears	G dorian
2017	<i>Back of My Heart</i>	Beaches	G# dorian

## EAR TRAINING EXERCISES

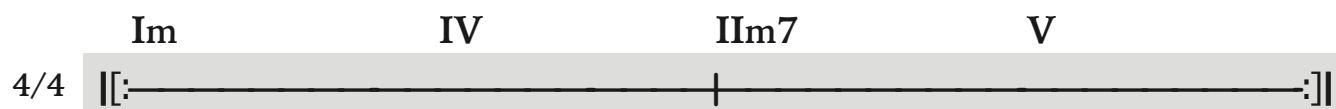
For additional practice hearing chord progressions in the dorian tonality, go to **Exercises 8.1e – 8.5e** (see “Textbook Contents”/ “Volume 1”/ “Ear Training Exercises”).

## DORIAN with V (major) CHORD

As we have seen with the minor and mixolydian tonalities in previous chapters, the Vm chord is sometimes changed to a **V major** chord in dorian songs. The Calvin Harris hit “Feels” offers an example, featuring a V major chord at the end of the repeating four-bar progression shown below.

**“Feels” — Calvin Harris, feat. Pharrell Williams, — 2017**  
**Katy Perry, & Big Sean**

E dorian



0:12 ENTIRE SONG

The next dorian song by Three Dog Night also contains the V chord. Notice that the V is not placed at the end of the pre-chorus, where it would have produced optimum tension leading into the chorus. Instead, the music comes to rest on the IV chord. However, the **suspension of the rhythm** on bar three of the pre-chorus (kind of a “gentle” stop time) is pretty dramatic, and there is still a strong focal point when the song’s title is suddenly shouted to announce the chorus.

[ NOTE: The bVII add 4 /3 chord (F add 4 /A in the key of G dorian) heard on the first line is quite unusual. It consists of the notes A, C, F, and Bb - low to high.]

## "Liar" – Three Dog Night – 1971


## G dorian



**Im**                      **bVII<sub>add4/3</sub>**    **II<sub>m7</sub>**    **Im**

4/4 ||[:—|—|—|—|—|—|—|:]||

0:09 VERSE



## 0:46 PRE-CHORUS

**STOP TIME . . . . .**

[illegible]

0:54 CHORUS w title

## EAR TRAINING EXERCISES

For additional practice hearing the V major chord in the dorian tonality, go to **Exercises 8.6e – 8.8e** (see “Textbook Contents”/ “Volume 1”/ “Ear Training Exercises”).

## CIRCULAR DORIAN Im - IV - Im7 - IV

A dorian version of the circular progressions we have heard in previous chapters anchors the 1997 song “Walking on the Sun,” as shown below, starting at 0:15. The sequence is Im - IV - Im7 - IV, basically a variation of the Im - IV vamp.

***“Walking on the Sun” — Smashmouth — 1997***

G# dorian



### 0:15 VERSE & CHORUS – repeated circular progression

chord –

	G#m	C#	G#m7	C#
4				
4	D#	E#	F#	E#
4	B	C#	D#	C#
	treble chords . . . . .			
4				
4	G#	B	F#	G#
		C#		D
				C#
				D#
	bass line . . . . .			

The iconic 80s dance hit “Billie Jean” features a different version of the circular progression, moving through a triad riff in the treble (starting at **0:20**) over a chugging, droning bass line. Technically, the riff itself spells the chords F#m/A, G#m/B, A/C#, G#m/B. However, an F# bass note occurs on the important downbeat of each chord, changing the chord names to F#m, G#m7/F#, F#m7, G#m7/F# (as shown below). You will recognize this as a variation of the Im7 - IIm7 two-chord vamp discussed earlier.

***“Billie Jean” — Michael Jackson — 1983***

F# dorian



To review the three types of circular progressions discussed in this and previous chapters, go to **Exercise 8.2** (see “Textbook Contents” / “Volume 1” / “Written Exercises”).

## Signature Riffs

### HARMONIC FUNCTION RIFFS

While the signature bass riff from Pink Floyd's "Money" contains only notes from the minor pentatonic scale, the full dorian scale is represented by a characteristic **natural 6th note** (G#, in purple below), heard as part of the treble chords STARTING AT **0:54**. Also notice the unusual time signature with seven beats per measure.

**"Money" — Pink Floyd — 1973**

B dorian



0:54 MID-VERSE repeated riff

chord – *Bm7* *E*

7 4

chords ..

7 4

bass riff .....

Here's another example with a minor pentatonic bass riff, underlying a dorian chord progression (IV - Im - bVII - Im).

**"Super Freak" — Rick James — 1981**  
(also "U Can't Touch This" — M.C. Hammer — 1990 )

A dorian

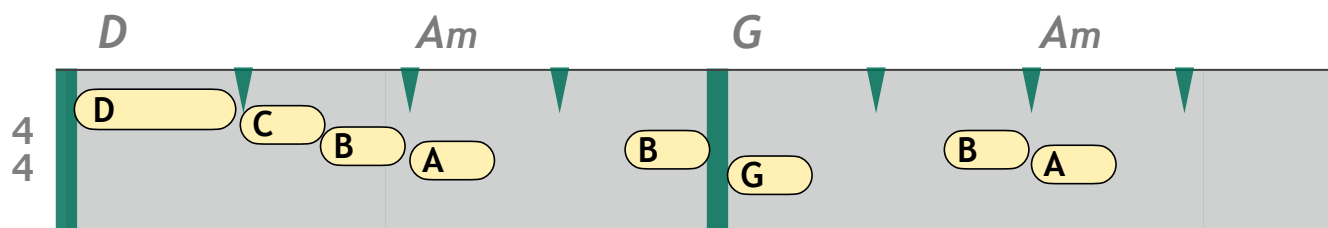


0:00 VERSE RIFF

chord – *D* *Am* *G* *Am*

4 4

4 4



Thomas Rhett's "Vacation" features a pentatonic riff with an **added #4 passing note** ( B#, in purple below, starting at 0:10 ). (You will recall the lengthy discussion of the #4 added to the minor pentatonic in Chapter Four.)

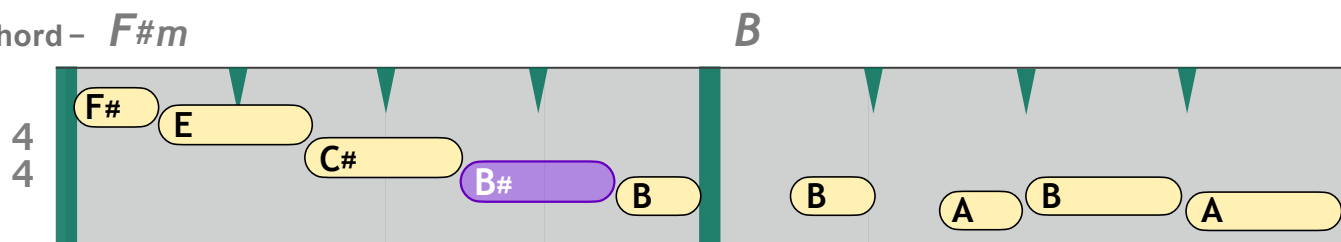
**"Vacation" — Thomas Rhett — 2015**

F# dorian



### 0:10 VERSE RIFF

chord - F#m



## Drones

### DRONE RIFF

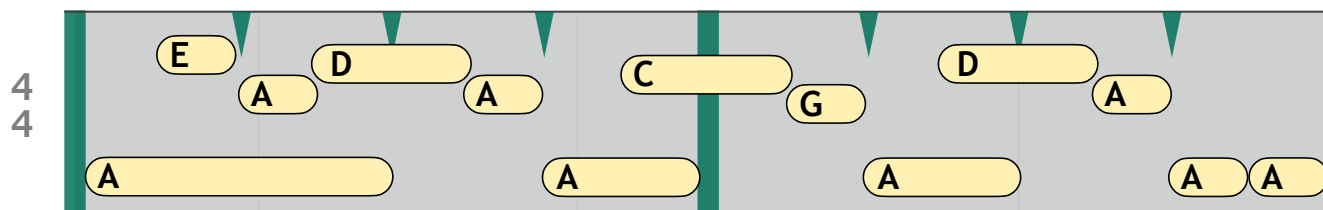
AC/DC's "Hell's Bells" features a classic guitar riff anchored by **droning tonic bass notes** (low A notes).

**"Hell's Bells" — AC / DC — 1980**

A dorian



### 0:19 INTRO DRONE RIFF



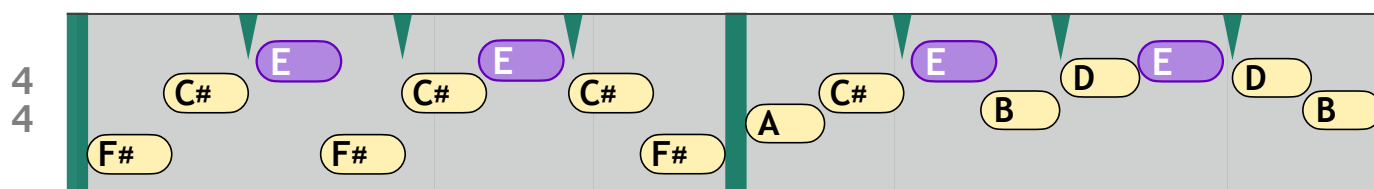
The main droning notes in this next dorian riff are the **treble E notes**, shown in purple. The C# notes also occur frequently but are not quite as prominent.

**"Run to You" — Bryan Adams — 1985**

F# dorian



0:00 INTRO DRONE RIFF



## Songwriting Focal Points

### V to I Tension - Resolution, Dorian Tonality

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the Vm chord is sometimes changed to a V major chord in dorian songs. This restores the tension quality of the V and gives the songwriter another device to help create a focal point. On the 1970 song "Evil Ways," recorded by rock band Santana and written by Clarence Henry, the V chord is placed at the end of the verse. However, instead of transitioning to a dramatic chorus, the song settles back down to start another verse on the Im chord. This is like the turnaround at the end of a 12-bar blues, where the V chord helps propel the song back to the beginning of the form. We have to wait until the 2:25 mark before the song finally explodes from the tension V chord into the double-time frenzy of the outro. Adding to the tension of the V chord is the use of **stop time** at the focal point.

Also note that most of the song is based on the **circular dorian progression** heard earlier on "Billie Jean" and "Walking on the Sun."

## "Evil Ways" – Santana – 1970

## G dorian



4/4

Im IV Im7 IV Im IV Im7 IV

Gm C Gm7 C Gm C Gm7 C 3x

0:10 VERSE

A horizontal bar with a gradient from light gray to dark red. The left end is labeled 'D' in black. Above the left end is a blue 'V'. Below the bar, a vertical line marks a point, and the text 'STOP TIME' is written below it. The right end of the bar is labeled 'TENSION' in white.

0:38 repeat VERSE

## RESOLUTION

This concludes Volume 1 of Spinning Gold , covering Chapters 1 through 8. For further study, see Volume 2, which continues with Chapters 9 through 15. Topics will include modulations, secondary dominants, modal interchange chords, and melodic analysis, as well as more songwriting focal point devices.