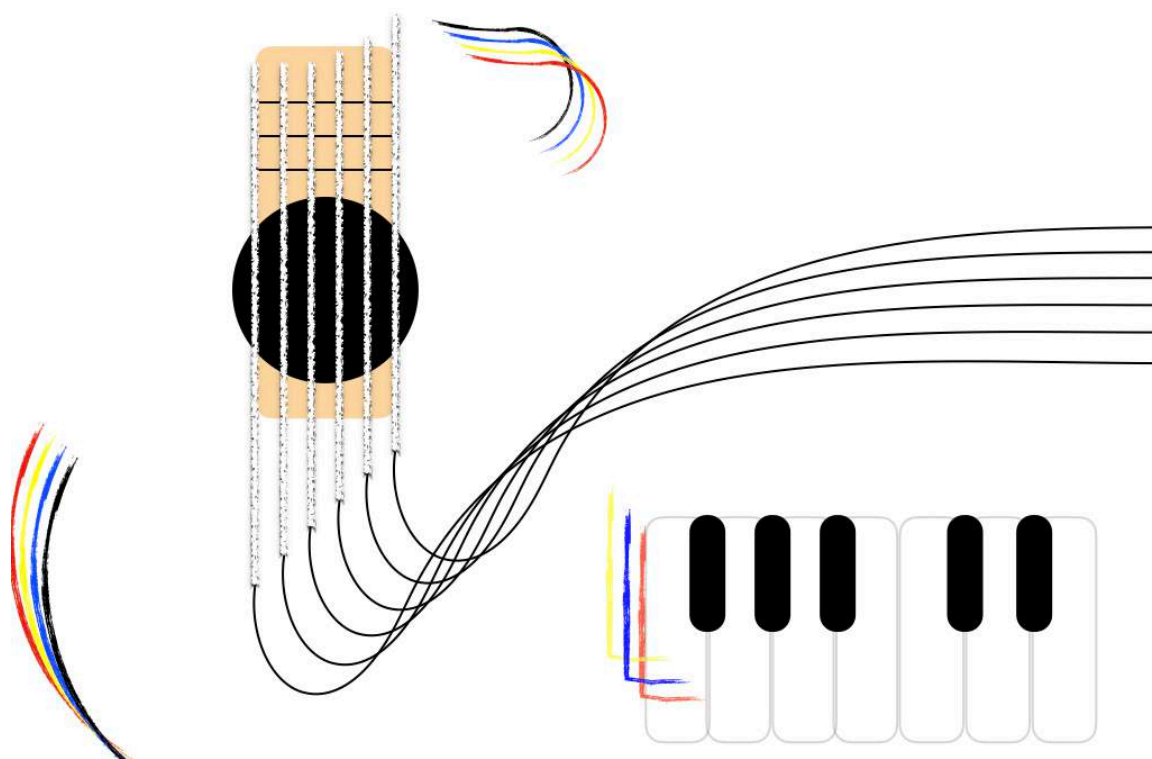


# Chord Progression Handbook

For Guitar, Piano, and Other  
Accompaniment Instruments



Bill Matney & Brenna Niemuth

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University of Kansas Libraries  
Lawrence, KS 66045

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Free copies of this work and its two companion volumes are available for download in PDF format:

***Guitar Chord Handbook*** (<http://hdl.handle.net/1808/29433>)

***Chord Progression Handbook*** (<https://hdl.handle.net/1808/29434>)

***Strumming, Fingerpicking, and Hybrid Accompaniment Patterns for Guitar***  
(<https://hdl.handle.net/1808/29435>)

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## Preface

This work is one part of a three-part Open Educational Resource (OER) that teaches students how to play the guitar as an accompaniment instrument, facilitating technical, theoretical, and ear skill development that can translate into a range of song styles. Materials may be used either as primary or supplemental guides for: (a) non-primary guitar classes, (b) musicianship classes for music therapy and music education students, and (c) other musicianship classes.

This resource includes three handbooks and a set of supplementary videos.

- The ***Guitar Chord Handbook*** (<http://hdl.handle.net/1808/29433>) provides visuals for common open chords, as well as some barre and color chords.
- The ***Chord Progression Handbook*** (<https://hdl.handle.net/1808/29434>) maps out more than 20 common chord progressions found in folk and popular music, providing song examples.
- The third handbook, ***Strumming, Fingerpicking, and Hybrid Accompaniment Patterns for Guitar*** (<https://hdl.handle.net/1808/29435>), facilitates detailed development of strumming, muting, plucking, and combined skills with more than 150 exercises. Videos provide visual reinforcement for each strumming/fingerpicking exercise.
- **Videos for Strumming Patterns:** Each strumming pattern has been video recorded as a resource for you. These videos can be located at: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCZYlvXCKgIMZHkCvJ9wqgd8cpC0eZHYd>

## About Open Educational Resources

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## Introduction

This handbook provides twenty chord progressions commonly found in folk and popular music, both using standard cadences and some modal progressions as well.

Because songs can use chord progressions in many rhythmic arrangements and in many keys, this book provides you with roman numerals in sequence without specific rhythmic notation, as if it is a “loop.” The book then provides one or more examples of how this progression may be notated rhythmically, and then one or more examples of how this progression looks in a particular key. Lastly, each page includes song examples that use the progression. These songs are far from the only examples, so feel free to write in more for your own use!

In this handbook, chord progressions begin as simply as possible (single chord) and move in a developmental fashion towards more complex progressions. As you learn new chords, you can work on these progressions in multiple keys. The progressions found here are far from comprehensive, but they provide common tools, as well as practical and valuable building blocks.

You can also approach these chord progressions using simple chords, and then move to more complex chord types. You can begin with triads (major and minor chords), and later replace these triads with dominant seventh chords and minor seventh chords for added color and tension. Some progressions will explicitly use seventh chords, while others will not. However, you can be creative and substitute these chords, even including major seventh chords or other types of extensions as you learn them.

While using this handbook, I also encourage you to engage your ears. Listen for how each chord progression sounds so that you can work towards hearing a song and knowing the progression being used. This type of ear training will open you up to quick re-creation of songs, as well as easier transposition, composition, and improvisation.

I would like to recognize and offer gratitude to the following mentors and colleagues who have either played a role in my own development along these lines, or who have engaged in discussions and collaborations on chord progression repertoire: Russel Scanlon (Jazz Guitar, Austin Community College), Dan Haerle (Jazz Piano: University of North Texas), Joe Pinson (Music Therapy: Texas Woman’s University), and Josh Massicot (Piano, Nazareth College).

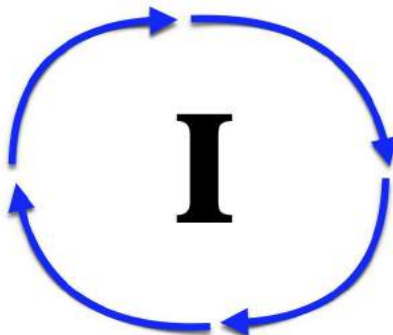
## Playing Chord Progressions:

Your ability to both hear and play chord progressions promotes your capacity to re-create, compose, accompany, improvise, arrange, and teach music. This handbook lays out a progressive set of some of the common progressions within Western folk and popular music traditions. The following bullets provide some suggestions as you work through these progressions.

- Begin slow: Practicing slow helps your brain take in the information. It's better to begin slow and comfortable with good execution.
- Make mistakes: You are going to whether you want to or not. Just try to reduce their occurrence on the same task over time. Ask for support if you run into a challenge; everyone has those moments.
- Use a metronome: Work on playing "in time." If we can play in time, we are better able to play with (and play *with the*) time in our music.
- Speeds: Your time will become stronger on all speeds if you are playing progressions in a range of tempos. Find your comfort range and then push it, both on the slow and fast ends.
- Frequency of Practice/Play: Playing for short periods of time multiple times a day can help with retention.
- If you can sing it, you can play it: Sing along with the root of chords in a progression, whether you have the instrument or not. Thirty seconds walking from one classroom to the next can be an opportunity to engage with a chord progression by singing it.
- Listen to music: Listen for the chord progressions being used in all styles of music. Ear training has a purpose, and that purpose is not specific to classical music music theory classes. There are also chord progression loop apps you can use, as well as software that will work similarly (ranging from Band in a Box to Garageband or Fruity Loops). You will find examples of songs for each chord progression in this book. Listen to those songs.
- Play with other people. Create jams. Play things that are easy for you and be purposefully expressive with them. Play things that are too hard for you and struggle with them. Play to enjoy playing and play with others to enjoy community.

## Chord Progression 1: Single Major Chord

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### Notation Example:



### Key Example:

Key	I
G	G

### Song Examples<sup>1</sup>

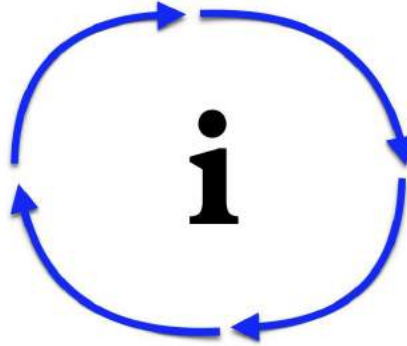
- One Chord Song by Stoney Larue
- Electric Avenue by Eddie Grant
- Lime in the Coconut by Harry Nilsson (advanced- single dominant 7th)
- Ohm by Yo La Tengo
- \*Everyday People by Sly and the Family Stone
- \*Frere Jacques: Folk Song
- \*Row Row Row Your Boat: Folk Song
- \*Bad to the Bone by George Thorogood and the Destroyers

---

<sup>1</sup> contains multiple chords in original song but can also be played with one major chord throughout

## Chord Progression 1B: Single Minor Chord

---



### Notation Example:



### Key Example:

Key	i
Em	Em

### Song Examples<sup>2</sup>:

- Get Up, Stand Up by Bob Marley
- Papa Was a Rolling Stone by The Temptations
- \*Into the Jungle by X Ambassador and Jamie N Commons
- \*We Will Rock you by Queen
- \*Bang Bang by Jesse J

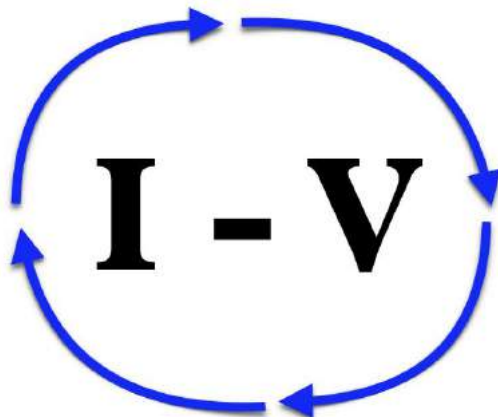
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<sup>2</sup> \*contains multiple chords in original song but can also be played with one major chord throughout



## Chord Progression 2: Tonic-Dominant in Major Key

---



Notation Example:



Key Examples:

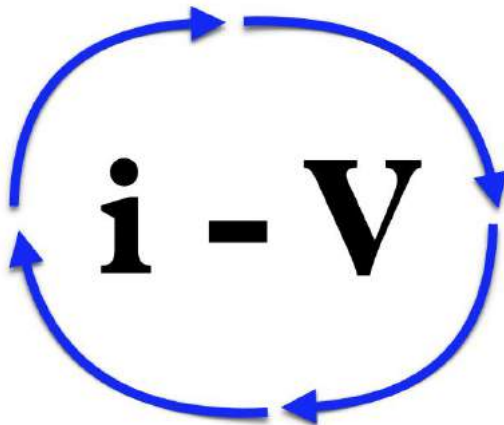
Key	I	V
G	G	D
C	C	G

Song Examples:

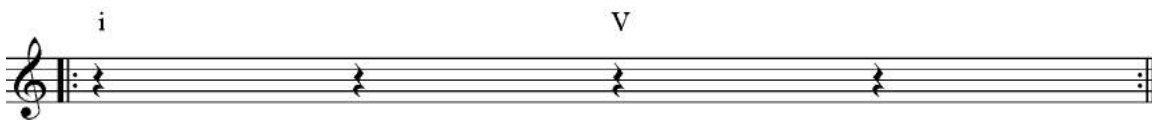
- Jockamo (later known as Iko Iko) by Sugar Boy and His Cane Cutters
- Farmer in the Dell – Folk Song
- Achey Breaky Heart by Billy Ray Cyrus
- Jambalaya by Hank Williams
- Row, Row, Row, Your Boat - Folk Song
- Wheels on the Bus by Children’s Song
- Skip to My Lou - Folk Song
- Clementine - Folk Song
- London Bridge by Folk Song
- Banana Boat Song (Day-O) by Harry Belafonte

## Chord Progression 2B: Tonic-Dominant in Minor Key

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### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

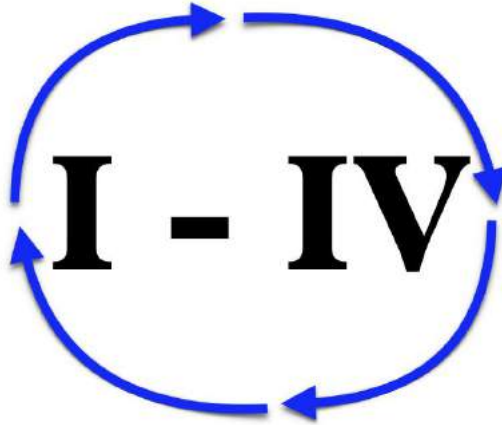
Key	i	V
Gm	Gm	D
Am	Am	E

### Song Example:

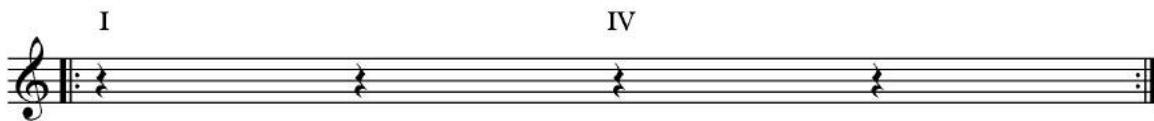
- Black Horse in a Cherry Tree (verses) by KT Tungsten

## Chord Progression 3: Tonic-Subdominant in Major Key

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### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

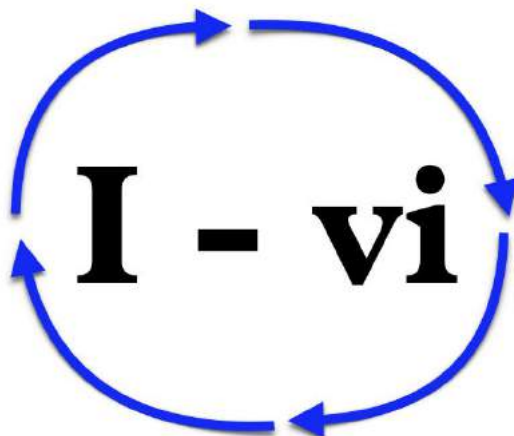
Key	I	IV
G	G	C
C	C	F
D	D	G

### Song Examples:

- I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For by U2
- Love me Do (verses) by the Beatles
- I Just Want to Fly by Sugar Ray
- Born in the USA by Bruce Springstein
- Lively Up Yourself by Bob Marley
- Paperback Writer by The Beatles
- Everyday People by Sly and the Family Stone
- What I Got by Sublime
- When Love Comes to Town by U2 and B.B. King
- You Need to Calm Down by Taylor Swift

## Chord Progression 4: Major to Relative Minor

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### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

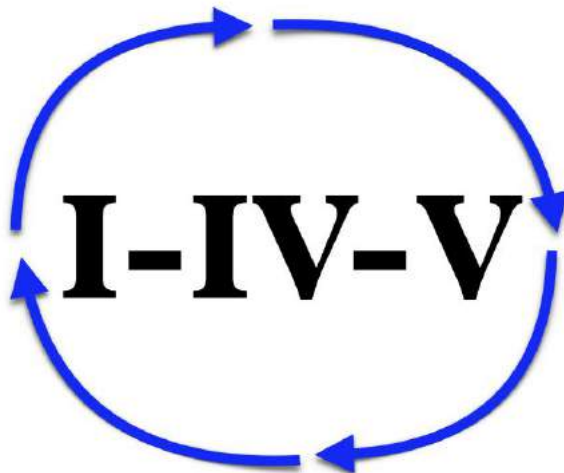
Key	I	vi
G	G	Em
C	C	Am

### Song Examples:

- Want to Want Me (verse) by Jason Derulo
- Buffalo Soldier (verses) by Bob Marley
- Roar by Katy Perry

## Chord Progression 5: I, IV, and V chords

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### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

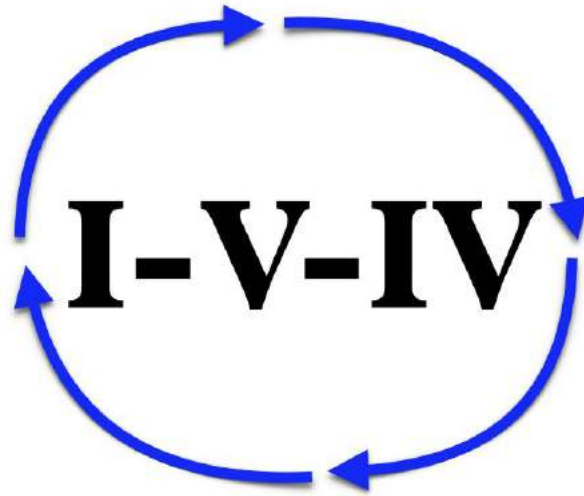
Key	I	IV	V
G	G	C	D
C	C	F	G

### Song Examples:

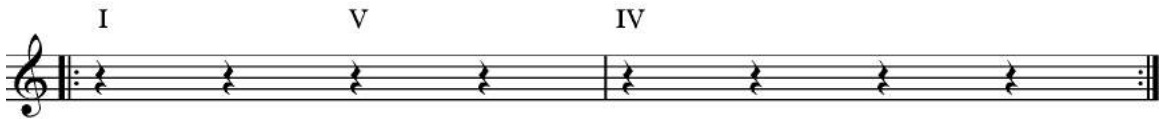
- La Bamba: Folk song from Mexico made popular by Richie Valens
- Twist and Shout by The Beatles
- Mr. Jones by Counting Crows
- That's Not My Name by The Ting Tings (chorus with added V at end)

## Chord Progression 6: I, IV, and V chords: Plagal Cadence

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### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

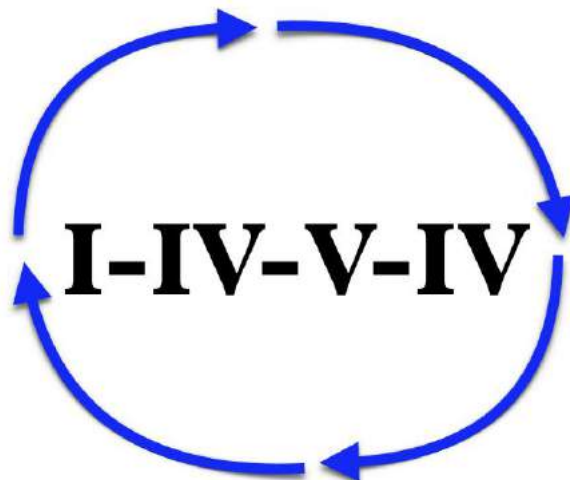
Key	I	V	IV
G	G	D	C
C	C	G	F

### Song Examples:

- Learn to Fly by the Foo Fighters (verses)
- Drift Away (chorus) by Mentor Williams
- Semi Charmed Kind of Life by Third Eye Blind

## Chord Progression 7: I, IV, and V chords: Plagal Cadence 2

---



Notation Example:



Key Examples:

Key	I	IV	V	IV
G	G	C	D	C
C	C	F	G	F

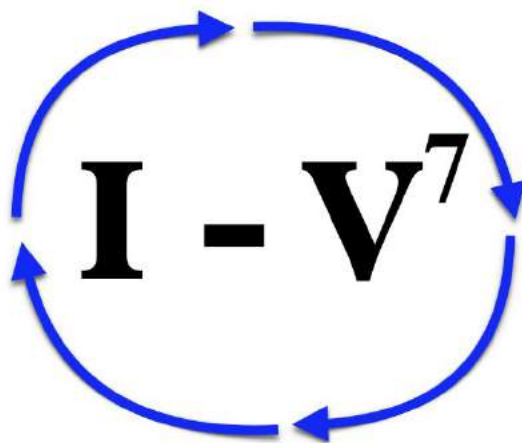
Song Examples:

- Louie Louie by Richard Berry/The Kingsmen
- Wild Thing by The Troggs
- I Love Rock and Roll by Joan Jett and the Blackhearts
- Here I Go Again (added V at end) by Whitesnake

## Chord Progression 8: Introducing Dominant 7<sup>th</sup> Chords

---

We often use Dominant 7th chords instead of Major triads to add color and create harmonic tension in a song. Some songs will directly call for one or the other, while other songs will be more open to harmonic interpretation. This progression gives you an opportunity to practice dominant 7th chords. From here on out, you will see some chord progressions that add different types of 7th chords, either as a part of the progression or as an option (by placing the 7 in parentheses). You can also substitute V7 chords for V chords in any progression presented.



### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

Key	I	V7
G	G	G7
C	C	C7

### Song Examples:

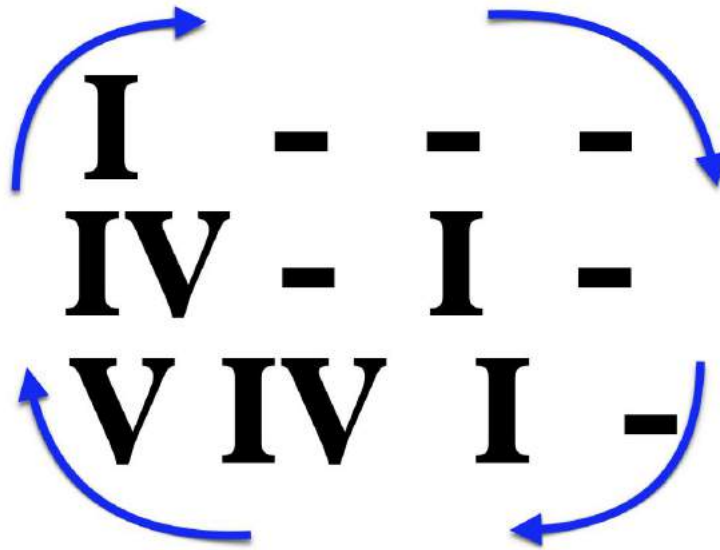
See examples given in Chord Progression 2



## Chord Progression 9: Standard Blues Progression with Major chords (optional: replace with Dominant 7th chords throughout)

---

The 12 bar blues is a popular chord progression that, at its root, consists of I, IV, and V chords. There are many variations of this fundamental form, but we are going to focus on the basics.



Notation Example:

The notation example shows the 12-bar blues progression on a grand staff (treble clef). The chords are indicated by Roman numerals above the staff:

- Bar 1: I
- Bar 2: -
- Bar 3: -
- Bar 4: -
- Bar 5: IV
- Bar 6: -
- Bar 7: I
- Bar 8: -
- Bar 9: V
- Bar 10: IV
- Bar 11: I
- Bar 12: -

## Standard Blues Progression: Continued

---

### Key Examples:

Key Example of 12 bar blues in Key of D:

<b>D (I)</b>			
<b>G (IV)</b>		<b>D (I)</b>	
<b>A (V)</b>	<b>G (IV)</b>	<b>D (I)</b>	

Key Example of 12 bar blues in Key of G:

<b>G (I)</b>			
<b>C (IV)</b>		<b>G (I)</b>	
<b>D (V)</b>	<b>C (IV)</b>	<b>G (I)</b>	

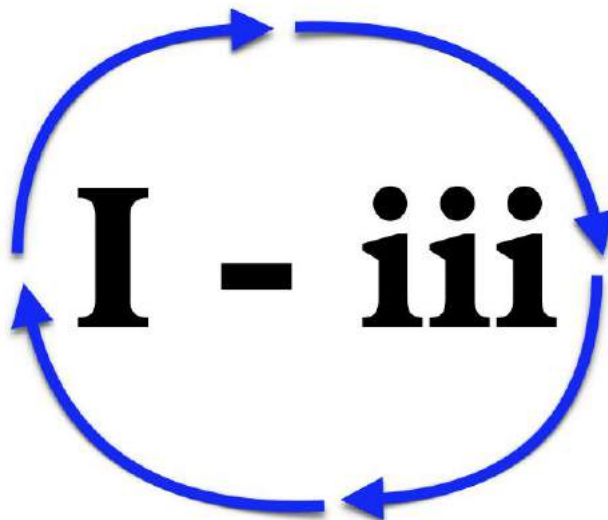
### Song Examples:

- Kansas City by Leiber and Stoller/ Fats Domino
- Give Me One Reason by Tracy Chapman
- Jump Jive and Wail by Louis Prima
- I Got You (I Feel Good) by James Brown
- Rock and Roll by Led Zeppelin
- Pride and Joy by Stevie Ray Vaughan
- Tutti Fruity by Little Richard
- Should I Stay or Should I Go by the Clash (extra chords for motion)

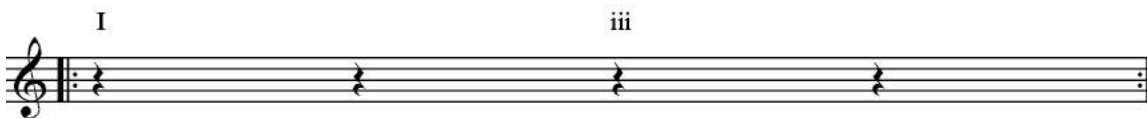
## Chord Progression 10: Modal: Tonic to Minor Three Chord

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This progression is occasionally used by itself in a, or can be used as the beginning to a longer progression.



### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

Key	I	iii
G	G	Bm
C	C	Em

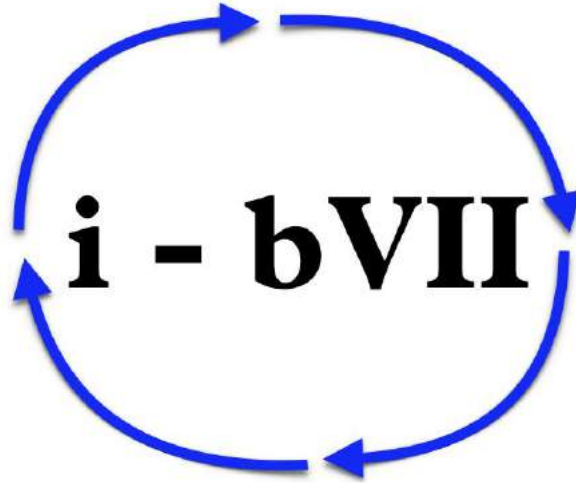
### Song Examples:

- Eleanor Rigby by the Beatles
- Need You Now by Lady Antebellum
- Something in the Way by Nirvana
- Hey There Delilah (beginning/verses) by The White Stripes
- Say Something (verses) by A Great Big World

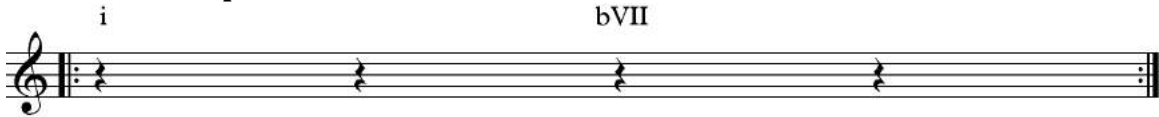
## Chord Progression 11: Modal: Minor Tonic to Flat VII Chord

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The following two chord progressions provide an introduction to a non-diatonic chord commonly found in popular music. Most songs that use this bVII chord add other chords into the progression; we will review those progressions later. For now, just getting used to this two-chord relationship will be helpful.



Notation Example:



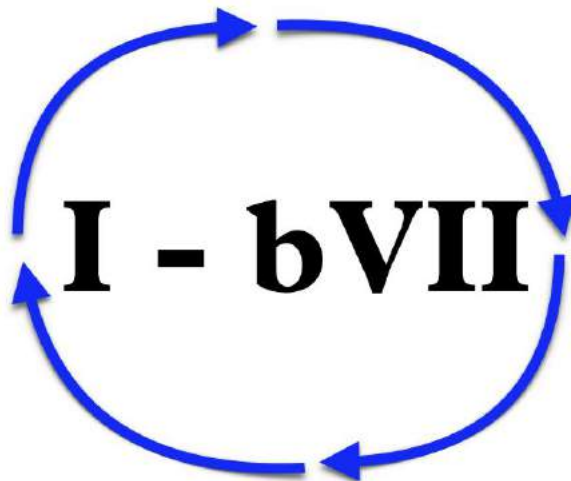
Key Examples:

Key	i	bVII
Dm	Dm	C
Am	Am	G

## Chord Progression 11B: Modal: Major Tonic to Flat VII Chord

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While you won't see this progression by itself in a song, it lays the groundwork for simple progressions in songs:



### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

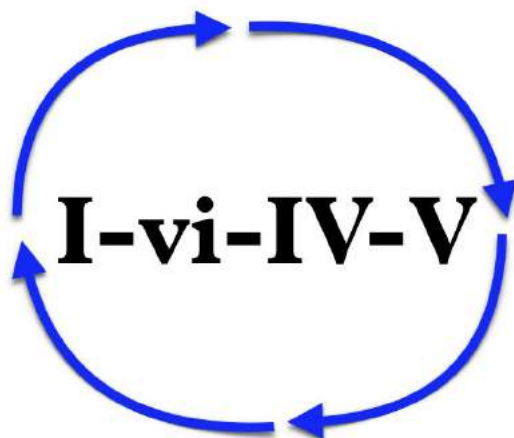
Key	I	bVII
D	D	C
A	A	G

### Song Example - Used in:

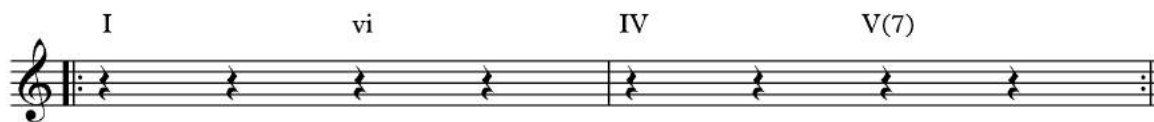
- Ramblin' Man by the Allman Brothers

## Chord Progression 12: “Doo Wop” and “Ice Cream” Changes

Popular music, from the 1920’s through today, have used variations that include the major chord, its relative minor, the dominant chord, and either the subdominant or the ii chord as a substitution. This progression has been referred to as “Doo Wop” and “Ice Cream Changes” interchangeably, but it also used in contemporary music.



### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

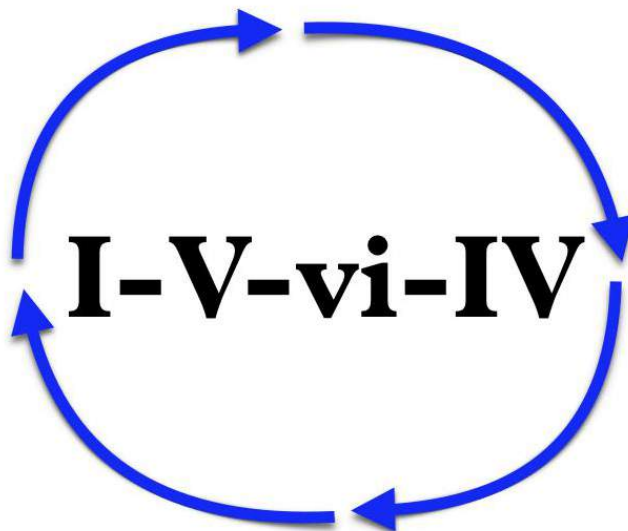
Key	I	vi	IV	V
G	G	Em	C	D
C	C	Am	F	G

### Song Examples:

- Stand by Me by Ben E. King
- Earth Angel by The Penguins
- Heart and Soul by Hoagy Carmichael
- Duke of Earl by Gene Chandler
- Baby by Justin Bieber
- Perfect by Ed Sheeran

## Chord Progression 12B: Variation

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### Notation Example



### Key Examples:

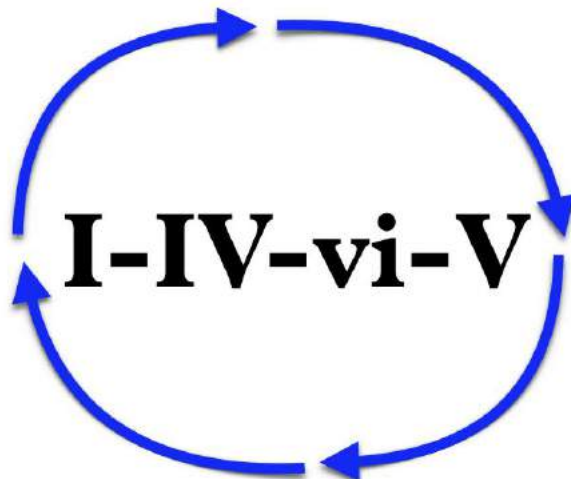
Key	I	V	vi	IV
G	G	D	Em	C
C	C	G	Am	F

### Song examples:

- I'm Yours by Jason Mraz
- Fight Song by Rachel Platten
- No Woman No Cry by Bob Marley
- Beast of Burden by The Rolling Stones
- Cruise by Florida Georgia Line
- Demons by Imagine Dragons
- Dirty Little Secret by All American Rejects
- Torn by Natalie Imbruglia

## Chord Progression 12C: Another Variation

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### Notation Example



### Key Examples:

Key	I	IV	vi	V
G	G	C	Em	D
C	C	F	Am	G

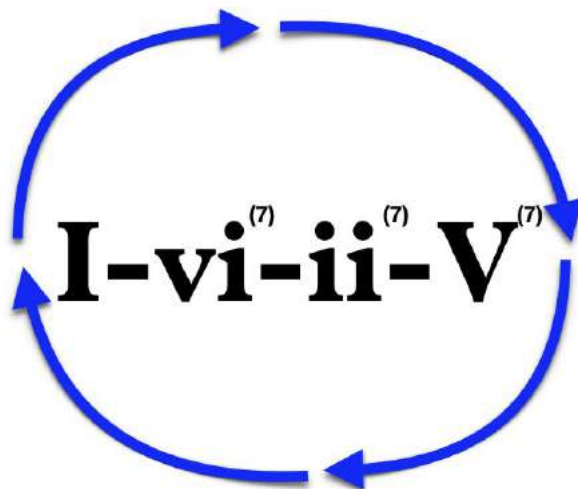
### Song Examples

- I've Got the Magic In Me by B.O.B.
- More than a Feeling by Boston
- She Drives Me Crazy by Fine Young Cannibals



## Chord Progression 13: “Rhythm Changes”

---



### Notation Example:

I                      vi(7)                      ii(7)                      V(7)

### Key Examples:

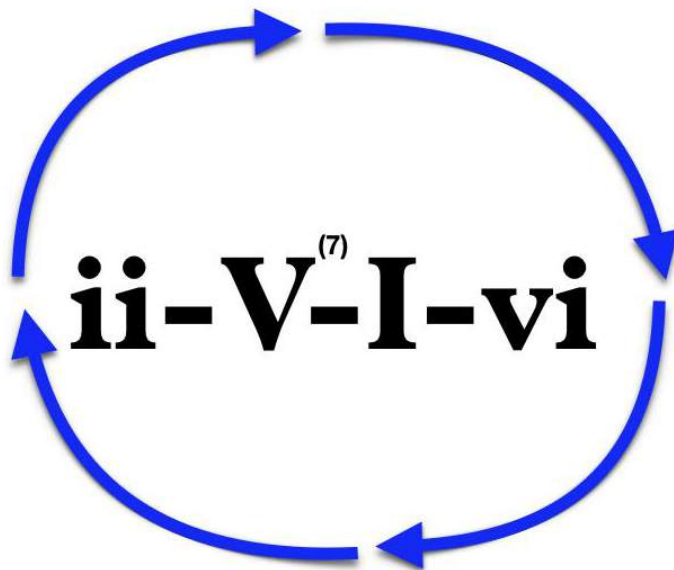
Key	I	vi	ii	V
G	G	Em	Am	D
C	C	Am	Dm	G

### Song Examples:

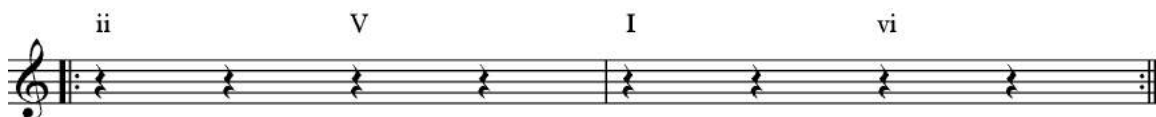
- I Got Rhythm by George Gershwin
- Blue Moon by Rodgers and Hart
- Beyond the Sea by Bobby Derrin (beginning)
- Back to You by John Mayer
- Dancing in the Moonlight by King Harvest
- Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas by Hugh Martin/Ralph Blane
- Always Look on the Bright Side of Life by Eric Idle (Monty Python)

## Chord Progression 13B:

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### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

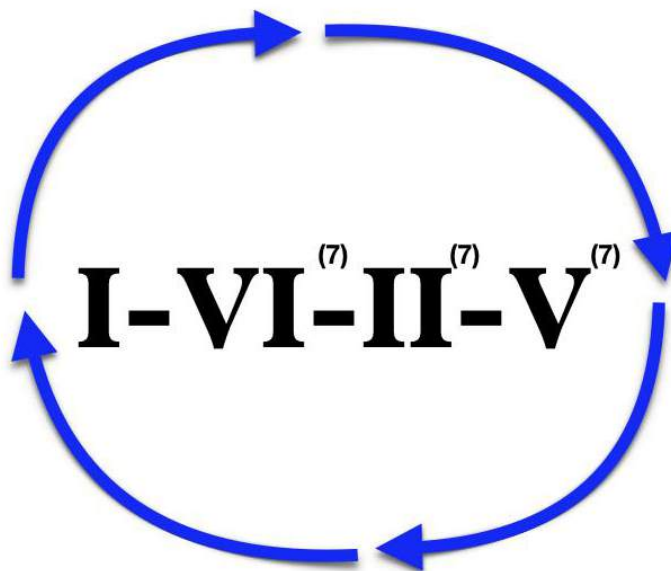
Key	ii	V	I	vi
G	Am	D	G	Em
C	Dm	G	C	Am

### Song Examples:

- Come and Get Your Love by Redbone

## Chord Progression 13C: Variation with Secondary Dominant Chords

---



### Notation Example:

I                      VI7                      II7                      V7                      I

### Key Examples:

Key	I	VI(7)	II(7)	V(7)
G	G	E(7)	A(7)	D(7)
C	C	A(7)	D(7)	G(7)

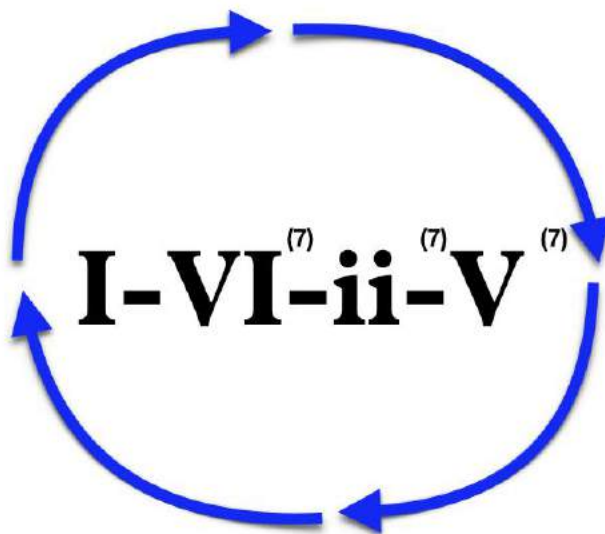
### Song Examples:

- Come and Get Your Love by Redbone
- Walk Right In by Gus Cannon and his Jug Stompers
- Alice's Restaurant by Arlo Guthrie

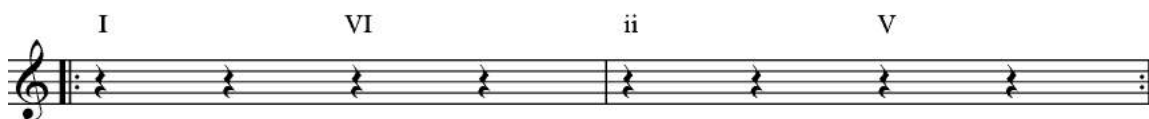
## Chord Progression 13D

### Another Variation using the Major VI Chord

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#### Notation Example:



#### Key Examples

Key	I	VI(7)	ii(7)	V(7)
G	G	E(7)	Am(7)	D(7)
C	C	A(7)	Dm(7)	G(7)

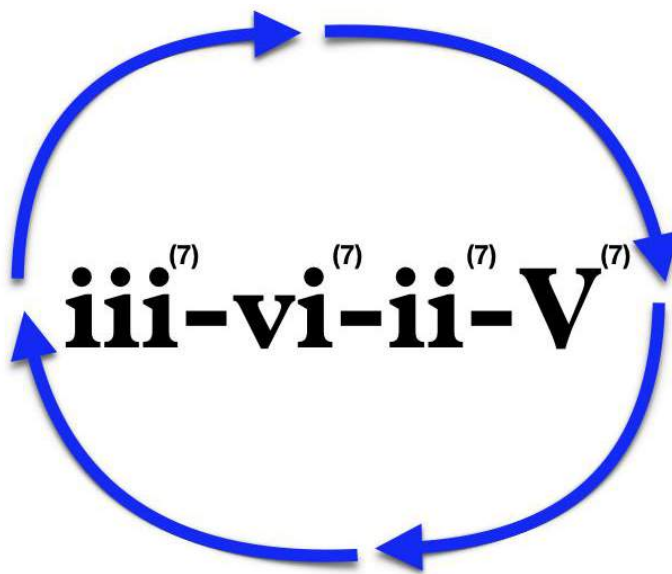
#### Song Examples:

- Crazy by Willie Nelson
- Big Girls Don't Cry by Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons

## Chord Progression 13 E: The Turnaround

---

This progression is most often used at the end of a song to extend the ending, often repeating a final lyrical/melodic phrase, especially in show tunes and jazz tunes.



### Notation Example:

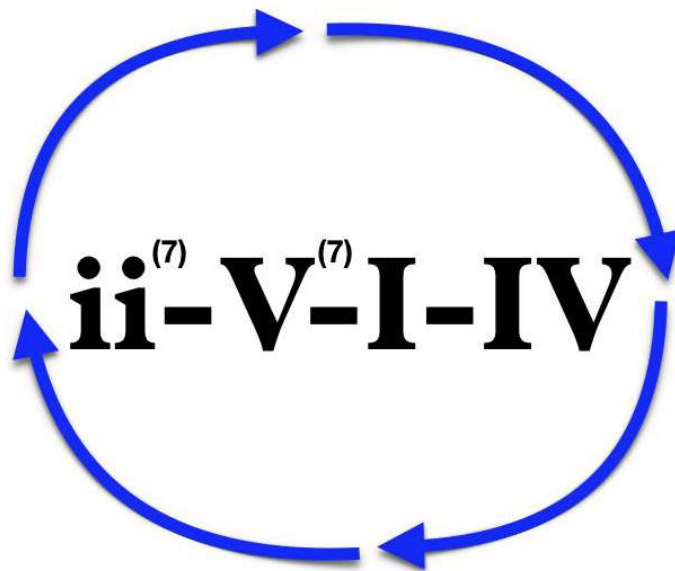
iii7                      vi7                      ii7                      V7

### Key Examples:

Key	iii(7)	vi(7)	ii(7)	V(7)
G	Bm(7)	Em(7)	Am(7)	D(7)
C	Em(7)	Am(7)	Dm(7)	G(7)

## Chord Progression 14:

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### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

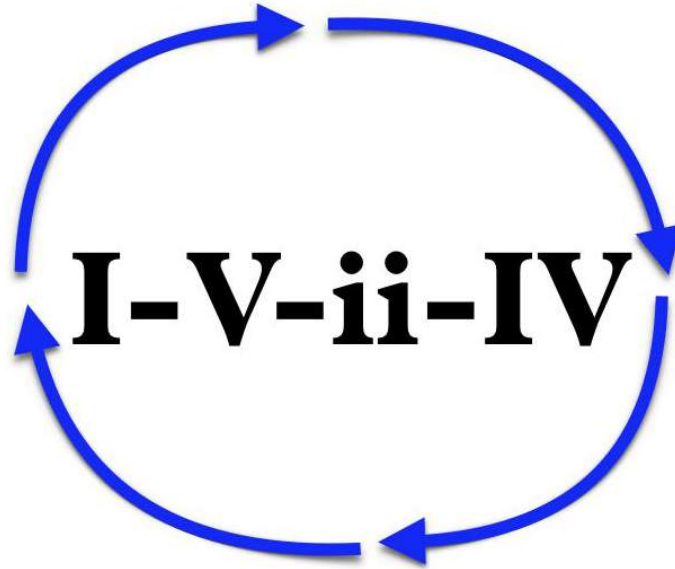
Key	ii(7)	V(7)	I	IV
G	Am(7)	D(7)	G	C
C	Dm(7)	G(7)	C	F

### Song Example:

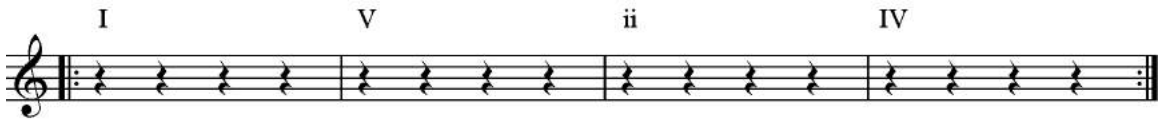
- Ice Cream by Sarah McLachlan

## Chord Progression 14B:

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### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

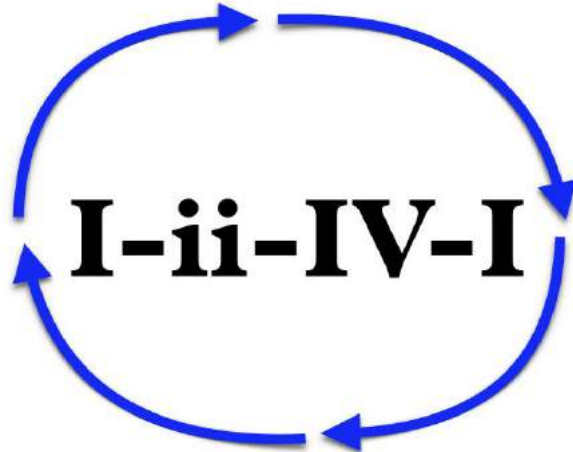
Key	I	V	ii	IV
G	G	D	Am	C
D	D	A	Em	G

### Song Example:

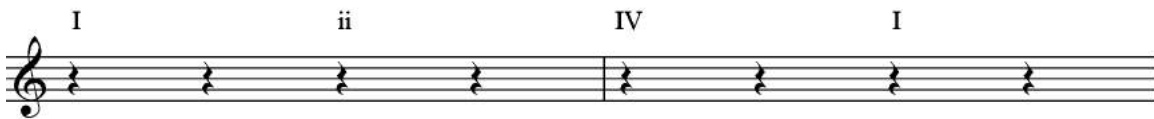
- Wildest Dreams by Taylor Swift

## Chord Progression 15: Modal Progression using ii and IV Chords

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### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

Key	I	ii	IV	V
G	G	Am	C	G
D	D	Em	G	D

### Song Examples:

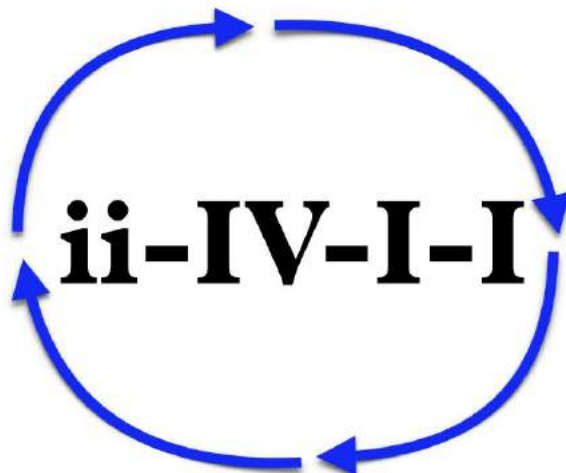
- I Think I Wanna Marry You by Bruno Mars
- Lips are Moving by Meghan Trainor
- What's Up by Four Non-Blondes



## Chord Progression 15B:

### Variation: Modal Progression using ii and IV Chords

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#### Notation Example:



#### Key Examples:

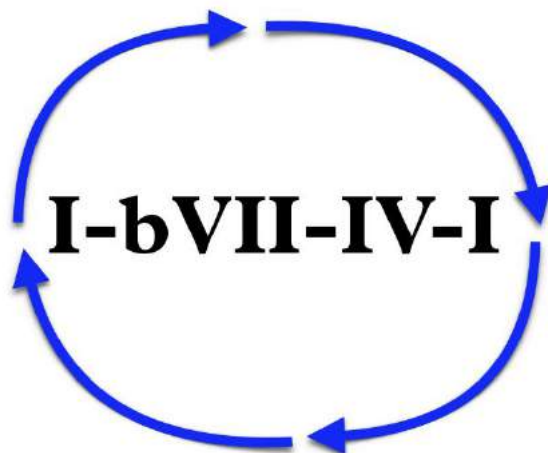
Key	ii	IV	I	I
G	Am	C	G	G
D	Em	G	D	D

#### Song example:

- Shake it Off by Taylor Swift

## Chord Progression 16: Modal Progression with the bVII Chord

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### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

Key	I	bVII	IV	I
A	A	G	D	A
D	D	C	G	D

### Song Examples:

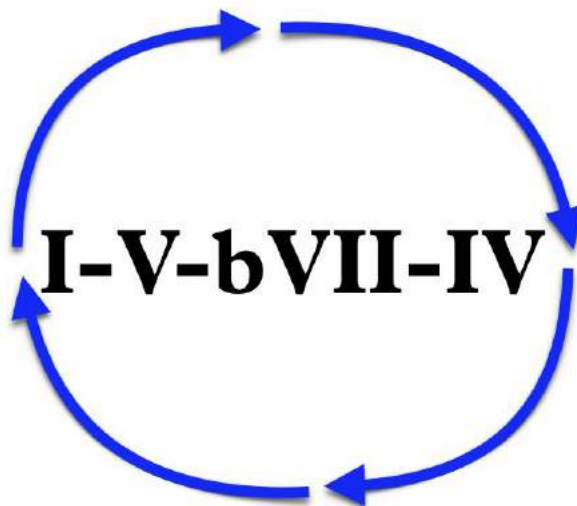
- Born This Way by Lady Gaga
- Who Are You (chorus) by the Who
- Royals by Lorde

### Variations:

- Gloria by Them (I - IV - bVII)
- What I Like About You by the Romantics (I - IV - bVII - IV)

## Chord Progression 17: Another Modal Progression with the bVII Chord

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### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

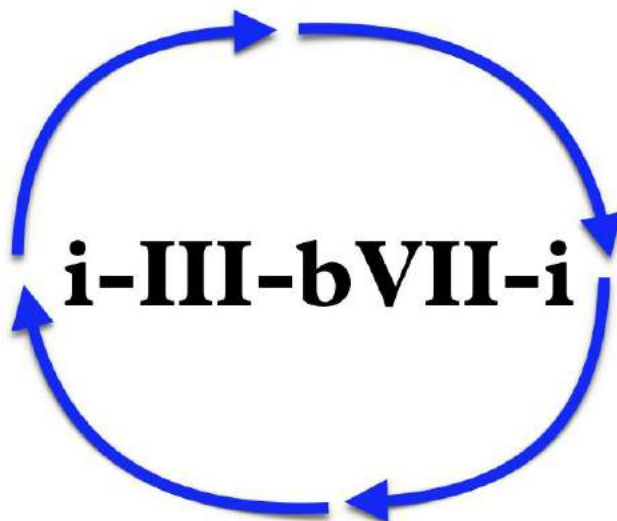
Key	I	V	bVII	IV
A	A	E	G	D
E	E	B	D	A

### Song Examples:

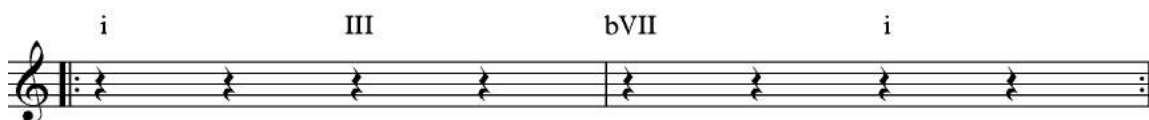
- Natural Woman by Aretha Franklin (verses)
- Make You Feel My Love by Adele (part of larger phrase)

## Chord Progression 18: Modal Progression with the bVII and III Chord

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### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

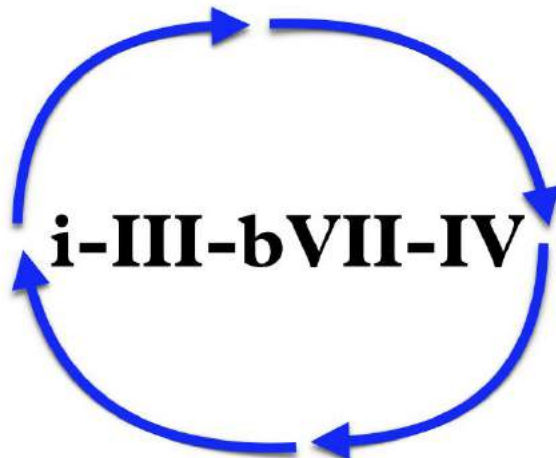
Key	i	III	bVII	i
Am	Am	C	G	Am
Em	Em	G	D	Em

### Song Examples:

- Right Round by Kesha
- Jolene by Dolly Parton
- Hey, Hey, Hey Goodbye by Steam

## Chord Progression 18B: Variation on Modal Progression with bVII and III Chords

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### Notation Example:



### Key Examples:

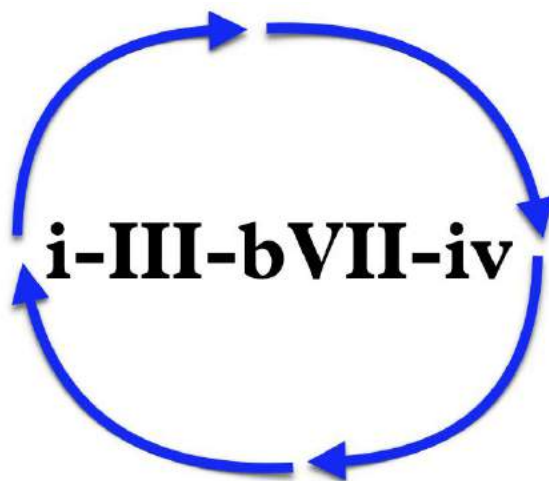
Key	i	III	bVII	IV
Am	Am	C	G	D
Em	Em	G	D	A

### Song Example:

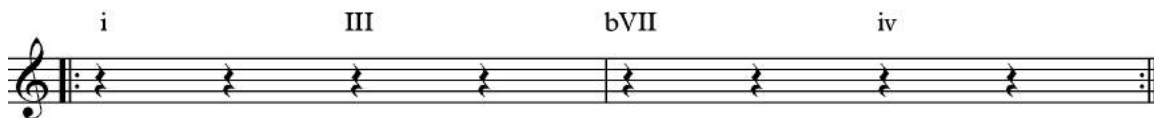
- Run to You (chorus) by Bryan Adams

## Chord Progression 18C: Variation on Modal Progression with bVII and III Chords

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Notation Example:



Key Examples:

Key	i	III	bVII	vi
Am	Am	C	G	Dm
Em	Em	G	D	Am

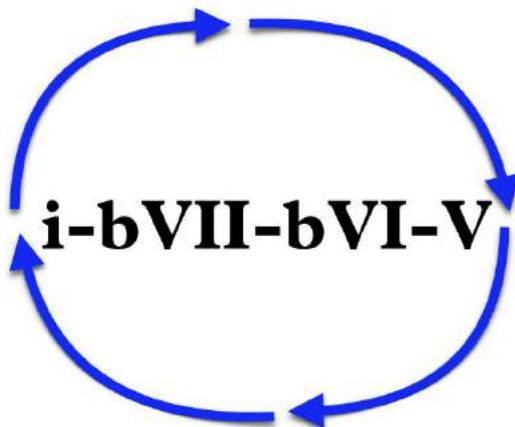
Song Example:

- Just Dance by Lady Gaga

## Chord Progression 19: “Andalusian Cadence”

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This progression, derived from Flamenco music, uses stepwise descending motion. We occasionally see this progression used in popular music.



### Notation Example:

### Key Examples:

Key	i	bVII	bVI	V(7)
Am	Am	G	F	E
Em	Em	D	C	B7

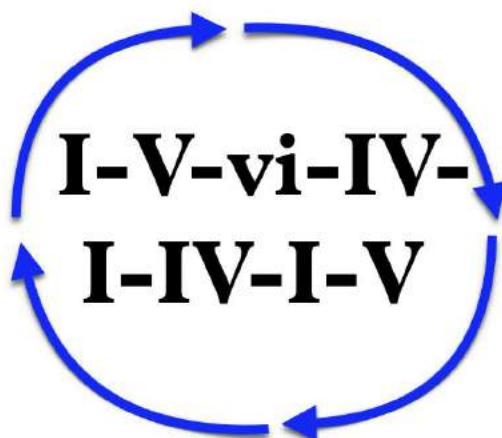
### Song Examples:

- Greensleeves (folk song of unknown specific origin)
- What Child is This (Greensleeves melody) by William Chatterton Dix
- Hit the Road, Jack by Ray Charles
- Stray Cat Strut: Stray Cats
- Wild World (verses): Cat Stevens
- All Along the Watchtower by Jimmy Hendrix

## Chord Progression 20: Pachelbel's Canon

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Pachelbel used a particular chord progression in his work *Canon and Gigue for 3 Violins and Basso Continuo*. This work has been used. This progression has also been used in popular songs.



### Notation Example:

### Key Examples:

Key	I	V	vi	IV	I	IV	I	V
C	C	G	Am	F	C	F	C	G
G	G	D	Em	C	G	C	G	D

### Song Examples using or basing progression partially on Pachelbel's Canon:

- Basket Case by Green Day
- Changes by David Bowie
- Hometown by Joe Jackson
- Hook by Blues Traveler



This work is one part of a three-part Open Educational Resource (OER) that teaches students how to play the guitar as an accompaniment instrument, facilitating technical, theoretical, and ear skill development that can translate into a range of song styles. Materials may be used either as primary or supplemental guides for: (a) non-primary guitar classes, (b) musicianship classes for music therapy and music education students, and (c) other musicianship classes.

This resource includes three handbooks and a set of supplementary videos.

- The ***Guitar Chord Handbook*** (<http://hdl.handle.net/1808/29433>) provides visuals for common open chords, as well as some barre and color chords.
- The ***Chord Progression Handbook*** (<https://hdl.handle.net/1808/29434>) maps out more than 20 common chord progressions found in folk and popular music, providing song examples.
- The third handbook, ***Strumming, Fingerpicking, and Hybrid Accompaniment Patterns for Guitar*** (<https://hdl.handle.net/1808/29435>), facilitates detailed development of strumming, muting, plucking, and combined skills with more than 150 exercises. Videos provide visual reinforcement for each strumming/fingerpicking exercise.
- **Videos for Strumming Patterns:** Each strumming pattern has been video recorded as a resource for you. These videos can be located at: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCZYlvXCKgIMZHkCvJ9wqqd8cpC0eZHYd>

Bill Matney, Ph.D., MT-BC is a professor in the music therapy program at the University of Kansas. He has taught classes focusing on musicianship – primarily percussion and guitar for music therapy and music education students – since 2006. He has authored books, book chapters, and journal articles on the use of percussion in music therapy, and brings a unique perspective on building skills on percussion, guitar, and piano. In this set of visual and audio resources, Bill brings a perspective on teaching guitar that focuses on practical skill building, seeking to develop each student's capacity for playing in different styles and responding to different chord progressions.

Brenna Niemuth is an undergraduate music therapy major and guitar primary at the University of Kansas. She demonstrates strong interest in developing guitar resources for music therapy students and professionals.