

Playing the Bones & Flesh of a Song

By Suzannah Doyle - www.SuzDoyle.com

1. Make chord map (7 chords in key built on notes of scale)
2. Identify the "bones" of the song (the 1, 4 5 chords, all of which are major)
3. Identify the "flesh" (the 2, 3 6 chords, all minor)

The essence of the song is built on the "bones" the flesh softens and deepens it.

E.g. OVER THE RAINBOW

1. Full chords (verse) = 1 6 3 4 1 | 4 1 2 5 1 |
2. Just the bones = 1 4 1 | 4 1 5 1 |

"Playing the Bones" (as shown above) is a handy way to fake playing a song when taking requests (uh, oh, I'm revealing all my secrets!!) -- but, as a composer, it's also handy for understanding the major underlying structure of a song -- both traditional structures, and ones that use new twists.

How Songs Modulate to Choruses or Bridges

By Suzannah Doyle - www.SuzDoyle.com AUG 17, 2008

SONGS THAT:

STAY ON 1 CHORD IN CHORUS

1. Love Song (Sarah Bareilles) - Gm verse, Gm chorus
2. Kryptonite (Bm verse & chorus)
3. Joy To the World (3 Dog Night/ Hoyt Axton) -
4. I Will Survive - Am verse, chorus
5. Jambalaya (On the Bayou)
6. American Pie - key of G
7. Home on the Range
8. I'll Fly Away
9. 100 Years
10. Viva La Vida - C
11. Beat It - (Am)
12. Hey, there Delilah - C
13. Short People - A on verse & chorus, D on Bridge
14. Soul Man -- E
15. Stand By me - C
16. YMCA - G
17. Don't Worry, Be Happy - G
18. Heard it Through the Grapevine - Dm
19. All Star (Smash Mouth) - G
20. Black Horse and a Cherry Tree - Em
21. Dog Days Are Over - G
22. Dynamite - C#m

GO TO 4 CHORD IN CHORUS

1. Mission Impossible (Gm verse, Cm chorus)
2. Love Potion No. 9 (Am verse, Dm chorus)
3. Imagine - G verse, C chorus
4. Hey, Good Lookin (C verse, F chorus)
5. Crazy - (C verse, F chorus)
6. Pretty Woman - (A verse, Dm chorus)
7. Star Wars - G verse, C chorus
8. Wallace & Gromit - F verse, Bb chorus
9. Scooby Dooby Doo - C verse, F chorus
10. Hallelujah (Shrek) - C verse, F chorus
11. Venus - Em verse, Am chorus
12. Mad World - Fm verse, Bb chorus
13. The Current (Blue Man Group) - F#m verse, A chorus
14. American idiot - Ab verse, Db chorus
15. She's Not There (Zombies) - Am verse, D chorus
16. Midnight Special -- C verse, F chorus
17. Fire and Rain - C verse, F chorus

GO TO 5 CHORD IN CHORUS

1. Ring of Fire - G verse, D chorus
2. Sitting, Waiting Wishing - Am verse, E chorus

GO TO or FROM THE 6 CHORD IN THE BRIDGE OR CHORUS:

(Relative major & minor)

1. My Immortal (A in verse F#m chorus)
2. New York State of Mind (C verse Am chorus)
3. Let it Be (F verse, Dm chorus)
4. Colors of the Wind (D verse, Bm chorus)
5. So What (by Pink) - Em riff in verse, G in chorus
6. Sweet Escape (Stefani) - Bbm in verse, Db in chorus
7. Time of Your Life (Green Day) -- G verse, Em chorus
8. Travellin Soldier (Dixie Chix) - G verse, Em chorus
9. Good Vibrations - Dm verse, F chorus
10. Bus Stop (the Hollies) - Gm verse, Bb chorus
11. Crazy Train - A verse, F#m Chorus & Intro riff
12. The Boxer - C Verse, Am chorus
13. SOS (Abba) - Dm verse, F chorus
14. So Far Away - D verse, Bm chorus

GO TO MAJOR CHORD A 6TH UP FROM MINOR

1. Billie Jean (Em verse, C chorus)
2. I Want it That Way (F#m verse, D chorus)
3. Fields of Gold - (Bm verse, G chorus)
4. Aerials (System of a Down) - Cm verse, Ab chorus
5. Aquarius - Cm verse, Ab chorus
6. Sweet Dreams - Dm verse, Bb chorus
7. See You Again (Miley cyrus) - Am verse, F chorus
8. Pokemon theme Song - Gm verse, Eb chorus

STAY ON 1 CHORD, BUT MAKE IT MAJOR (OR MINOR)

1. Only Hope - Dm to D
2. Happy Together - Em to E
3. While My Guitar Gently Weeps - Am verse, A on chorus
4. Ghostbusters - C verse, Cm bridge
5. Sunny Afternoon - Dm verse, D on bridge

OTHER TIPS/ TRICKS FOR FEELS/ STYLES

1950s - 1 6 4 5 (Monster Mash, Teenager in Love, Heart & Soul)

1960s - b3 4 1 or b7 (Born to Be Wild, For What It's Worth)

1970s - Blues scale 1 b3 4 #4 5 b7 (Funky Town, Indagada da vida, Smoke on the water)

Broadway/ Singer Songwriter - Alternate Bass lines

Singer Songwriter - 1 chord verse, 2 chord on chorus (Breathe 2 a.m.)

Same chord or progression entire song (Lucky by Fergie, No One, Halo, Dynamite, I'm Yours, Poker Face, Numa Numa Song, Gummy Bear song, Pocketful of Sunshine) - Beat Driven or variations on melody (Bella's Lullaby, Pachelbel's Canon)

Same chord entire song - Coconut, Lucky (Fergie)

Tricky modulations (e.g. down and up multiple times (Good Vibrations, Summer Days, Penny Lane.

Here are some examples of songs that DON'T go to the 4 on the chorus or bridge:

Sk8er Boi

- verse D major, modulates to F (b3 up p Ta DAH) in chorus, then to Dm bridge --

Verse: D5 A5 B5 \ D5 A5 B5 C5

(chord #) 1 5 6 1 5 6 b7 <-- which is the 5 of the next chord (great way to modulate)

Chorus: F5 C5 Bb5 A5 F5 || F 5 C5 Bb5 Ab Bb5 <--- key of F

(chorus begins on the 1 of F, modulated to from D -- or you could think of it as the b3 of D <---

BRIDGE Dm F5 C A5 || Dm F5 C5 Bb5 Ab D5 <--- key of Dm and F

(bridge is on the 6 chord relative to the 1 chord of F)

Boulevard of Broken Dreams

- Starts in Em, modulates to C

Verse Em G D A

6 1 5 2

Chorus: C G D A

4 1 5 2 <--- 4 of G, but 6 of Em

I GOT A NAME (Jim Croce)

Verse: 1 5 6 4 5 1 || 1 5 6 2 5

Chorus: 3 4 , 3 6(major) , 4 5 1

SATURDAY IN THE PARK

Verse: (2x) Am7 D9 Dm7 C 6 2(major) 2(minor) 1 <--- key of C

Bm7 Em7 DMaj9 C D Mod to key of G: 3 6 , 5 4 5 <---- key of G

G C G Am7 D7 G 1 4 1 2 5 1

Bridge: 4x Gm7 C <---- I'd call this 2 and 5 in key of F

4x Bbm7 Eb <-- modulate to 2 and 5 of Ab

4x Dm7 G (back to intro) <---- mod to 2 and 5 of C

-- woo hoo! Those guys modulate up the wazoo, eh?!!

WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS

VERSE Dm C, mod to F, ends with D <--- key of Dm/ F,

Chorus : G Bm7 Em C D <---- key of G

GHOSTBUSTERS

Verse C Bb F 1 b7 4

Bridge Cm G7 <--- just make the 1 chord minor. Clever, eh? 1m 5

CRAZY TRAIN

Intro: F#m A E <--- keys of F#m/ A 6 1 5

Verse: A E D <--- 1 chord in A 1 5 4

Bridge: F#m D F#m D <---- 6 chord then 4 in A 6 4 6 4

A E F#m 4 5 6

(an example of going somewhere else first, THEN to the 4 chord)

THE IMMIGRANT (Led Zeppelin):

Key of F#m 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

F#m G#dim A Bm C#m D E

Intro F#5 A <-- key of F#m

Verse E A F#5

Bridge A5 B5 C5 <-- modulated to relative major

-- this is very Riff driven

STAR WARS

Verse: 1 4 1 4 1 b7 5

Bridge: 4/5 5 5/5 b3 5 4/5 5 4m/2 5 <--- to 4 but w/ 5 bass

BORN TO BE WILD

Verse 1 (forever) then (4x) b3 4 1

Chorus 1 b3 5 1 , 1 b7 , 1 b7 <--- 1 then b3 -- Groovy!

PRETTY WOMAN - key of A

Verse: 1 6 , 1 6 , 4 5 <--- key of A

Bridge: Dm G7 C 2 5 1 6 <--- in key of C -- or a b3 up from A - tricky ,eh?

OPUS ONE

Verse C F9 D9 G9 C F#dim Dm7 G9 C

1 4 2 5 1 #4 2 5 (2nd time = 1)

Bridge; Eb Cm7 Fm7 Ddim Eb F9 Bb9+ <--- Mod to b3 of C

1 6 2 7 1 2 5 etc <-- in key of Eb

WALLACE AND GROMIT THEME SONG

Verse 1 5 4 5 1 | 1 5 4 5 1 5 1

Bridge 4 1 5 1 3(major) 6 2(major) 5

- uses 4 for the bridge but does temporary modulations by making the 2 and 3 chords major rather than their usual minor.

TEQUILA

Verse (8x) 1 5m7

Bridge: (3x) 1dim 1 | 2(major) 5 | <-- 1 diminished! Tricky, eh!!

SPIDERMAN THEME SONG

Verse Cm Fm Cm G7 Cm <---- key of Cm

Bridge Bb Eb G7 Cm , Bb Eb Fm G7<----b7 as first chord

SOUL MAN

Verse E F#m/E E (forever)

Bridge (3x) E D E (single notes A C# E) B <--- 1 chord

- this bridge starts on the one chord, then ends with a bit of a riff segueing to the 5 chord, which then leads you back to the 1 chord at the verse

"If Everyone Cared" by Nickelback

Verse (2x) F#m A E F#m <--- 6 chord in key of A

Prechorus (2x) A E F# <---- 1 chord

Chorus D A E F#m | D A E <--- 4 chord

Post chorus (2x) F#m A E F# <---- 6 chord

So even though they go to a 4 chord on the main chorus, they mix it up by starting the verse on the 6 chord (minor), and by going to the 1 chord (relative major) on the pre-chorus, then back to the 6 chord on the post-chorus.

Pretty nifty, eh?

Anyhoo, I'd suggest getting a fake book (ukulele, guitar, piano) that has words and chords. Write out the chord progressions by number, especially for songs you find interesting, and you'll probably discover some cool ways some songs are put together.