

TRANSPOSITION (cont'd)

The chords of a song can be transposed exactly the same way as the notes of the melody or harmony. Think of each chord symbol in relation to its numerical position in the scale.

1 6 2 2 5
B \flat G7 C7 Cm7 F7+5

In the new key, these chords of course will remain the same type of chord. For example, the G7 chord in the key of Bb will become a C#7 chord in the key of E.

1 6 2 2 5
E C#7 F#7 F#m7 B7+5

Notice that in the original key (Bb) the C7 and Cm7 chords were both numerically no:2 chords but of different types. That will also be the case when the chord progression is transposed to the key of E.

A F#7 B7 Bm7 E7+5

The same progression in the key of A would read in this fashion.

C Dm7 G7

Here is an example of where transposing to a higher pitch level might make good sense. If you were to turn this melody into a chord solo, the chords would be either two note chords or no chords at all because the melody is so low in pitch.

A Bm7 E7

In the key of A Major, chord harmony would become quite feasible.

Probably the most critical reason for transposition comes when you are singing or perhaps providing an accompaniment for a singer. Most instruments have a long enough pitch range that can accommodate just about any melody. On the other hand, most people and especially amateur singers have a useable vocal range of about an octave and a half. You may run into the situation where you have to carefully calculate the key to allow the singer to perform in a comfortable range.

I know that my own vocal range is about two octaves and it happens to coincide with the open strings of the guitar. My absolute low note is the low E and my very highest scream is the high E string. The low E is so low that I could not really project that note to any volume level without strong amplification. The high E is so high that having to get to that note would begin to cause pain in both me and the audience. So, my real vocal range is from a low G to a high D. It is about an octave and a half. Using this information, I can transpose any song to fit that range. If the original song has notes above the staff, I know that I'll be in trouble when I start to vocallize. By the way, I do not consider myself to be any kind of singer although I have made some money doing that during my musical career.