

WRITING A MELODY TO A CHORD PROGRESSION

Learning how to write a melody can be a challenge. By using a small note range, establishing repetition, implying direction, and adding flair.

Pretty awesome, right? So right away, you know you want to start and end your song with the I chord. This is where you have to think! Use notes from your chords Each chord in your progression matches up with one measure in your song. Following the contour line created earlier. Repeat things sometimes To help make your song sound organized, repeat things sometimes, maybe with a little variation. Once you can play the chord progression you are ready to improvise a melody over the top. An argument could be made that the notes of a chord also have varying degrees of consonance with the chord. Listen out for melodies in: Conversation. All's well that ends A good song needs a good ending. Here a procedure you can follow for creating a melody that works with your chord progression: Play the progression many times so that it becomes very predictable to you. Or that chords four and twelve are the same, and eight and sixteen are the same. Consistency is key, keep it simple. It's probably easiest for a new composer to write a song that Doesn't Suck by starting with the chords, so we'll do it that way. If you are writing in A minor the primary chords are A minor, D minor and E. As for the MIDI. In other words, you want the higher points of this melody to occur near the end of the verse, preparing the chorus. Take some notes out of your chords, or add in notes in other octaves. Improvise a melody " Play the 3 notes of each chord one after another in the right hand this is called a broken chord at the same time as you are playing the chord in the left hand. So be sure that your melody has shape " an enticing contour that propels the song forward. Look at it! Bigger jumps are like spice: you want some, but not too much. Inversions make a chord sound less solid, though, so don't use one for the last chord in your song. IV and V are good, satisfying chords too especially V , so they also work well to end a phrase, and help keep it from sounding like it's the end of the whole song. For example: a melody that ascends may sound more uplifting than one that descends. When we get to writing our melody, we'll be working in measures. It is incredibly frustrating to come up with a great melodic idea, make yourself a cup of tea to celebrate and then sit back down at the piano only to find you have forgotten it!! Normally I'd do something a little fancier, but in a piece this short I don't want to wander around too much with lots of variations, because I'm not going to have much time to get back home. If a partially dissonant note is played, it would usually be weakened by: Short duration Attack occurs on a weak beat such as an upbeat Soft, non-accented attack Resolves to a completely consonant note Completely dissonant notes are those neither in the key, nor in the chord, nor viable as any tension of the chord under any circumstance. Writing a melody over a chord progression Most contemporary popular music is written in this way. They may also be supported by being played as a part of the chord. Or eight chords. Consonance In Melody Roughly speaking, there are four basic levels of consonance that a potential melody note may have with a chord. They may also sometimes be notes that are not in the key, and not in the chord, but a viable tension on the chord. These progressions were chosen because they are relatively common, and because they tend to lend support to a strong melody. Scale Melodies are formed from scales. But if they are used, they would often be weakened by the same methods used to weaken partially dissonant chords. Think call and response, up and down, etc. A badly taken photo of my hand-drawn contour. In other words, once a melody starts to unfold, there will seem to be a logical way for it to continue. For example, you could simply pick a sequence of four chords from the map, and repeat them over and over during your song. External Noise Human voice has pitch, birds chirp with a certain pitch. Rhythm is extremely important in melody. Once you're away from I, choose arrows to follow until you get back there. So, here are a few ideas for how to write a good melody.