

Lesson 10: By the Numbers

Now, just when you've become accustomed to chord names that are letters, it's time to learn a new chord naming system. Now, this may seem a little confusing at first, but BELIEVE ME, YOU'LL BE HAPPY YOU LEARNED THIS!!! Do not skip this lesson!

In the "Nashville" chord numbering system, chords are named by the number (in Roman Numerals) of the note of the scale that corresponds to the key you're playing in. Minor keys are in lower case Roman Numerals. For example in the key of C, the chords are named as follows:

C = I	C7 = I7	Am = vi
D = II	G7 = V7	Dm = ii
E = III	D7 = II7	Em = iii
F = IV	etc.	etc.
G = V		
A = VI		
B = VII		

Likewise in the key of F, F = I, G = II, etc. NOW, HERE's something REALLY NEAT if you have a 21-bar autoharp. If you put your long finger on the I chord, your index finger will be right over the IV chord and your ring finger will be right over the V chord. How about that? And if you move your fingers over, most of the time, the relationship will stay the same.

As an exercise, figure out and fill in the chords for these numbers in the following keys:

Key of:	I	IV	V	II7	III7	ii	vi	iii
E _b								
B _b								
F								
C								
G								
D								
A								

NOW, "Oh, Susannah" is a tune you're bound to know. The music is written in the keys of C, F, and G, but I've also included the words with chord numbers above them, so that you can play it in ANY KEY.

Sing the tune and play it in as many keys as will fit into your vocal range and your autoharp. Practice changing the chords of any tune you play into the number system. This will allow you to instantly transpose the tune to the key that is going to best suit your singing range and your autoharp. You'll be VERY happy you learned how to do this!

Oh, Susannah !

Stephen Foster

C C

Oh I come from Al - a - ba ma with my
It rained all night the day I left, the
ban - jo on my knee, and I'm goin to Lou si -
wea - ther it was dry. The sun so hot I
an - na my true love for to see.
froze to death, Su - san - na don't you cry.

Oh, Su - san - na, oh don't you cry for me, for I
come from Al - a - ba - ma with my ban - jo on my knee.

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Oh, Susannah!

Stephen Foster

G G

Oh I come from Ala - a - ba - ma with my
It _____ rained all night the day I left, the

ban - jo on my knee, and I'm goin to Lou si -
wea - ther it was dry. The sun so hot I

an - na my true love for to see.
froze to death, Su - san - na don't you cry.

Oh, Su - san - na, oh don't you cry for me, for I

come from Ala - a - ba - ma with my ban - jo on my knee.

T A B
T A B
T A B
T A B
T A B

G D C G D G D C G D G C G D D G C C C G G G G D G D G

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Oh Susannah!

I / / / / / V /
Oh I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee

I / / / / / V I /
And I'm going to Lousiana my true love for to see

I / / / / / V /
It rained all day the night I left, the weather it was dry

I / / / / / V I /
The sun so hot I froze to death, Susannah don't you cry.

IV / / I / V /
Oh, Susannah, oh don't you cry for me,

I / / / / / V I /
For I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee.

Lesson 11: Time for Making Changes in Chords

Here's a lovely old song, very simple and pretty and easy to sing. Because it's simple and repetitive, it depends on the "chord cadence" (the way the chords march along) for movement and form. You'll notice that in Measure 2 there's that old pattern going from C to C7 to F. That repeats over again. This is a common way chords "move" from C to F. That's also called a "I7 transition". And there's a new chord in Measure 7...a D7. Note how the chords move from Measure 5 to measure 8. First you're on C, then move to Am, then on to D7, then back to G7. This is commonly called a "II7 turnaround". Listen as you play how these particular chords "pull" the song along. They have you peeking around the corner for the next note or phrase. Practice this song just strumming on each beat until you have the chord pattern down so that you can play it easily. Then you might want to do a "boom-chukka-chukka" pattern. Try just doing one long strum when you get to the unusual or transitional chords.

When you play the melody, note that you'll need to play those "special" chords in order to make the song move along in this particularly nice way. Fill in with a simple strum when you want. Don't forget a lead-in. Sing the song with an instrumental break in the middle if you can.

Here's another song that is very good for learning to play chord changes by ear. Remember that the Am leads to the D7 and the C7 leads to the F in this tune when played in the Key of C. This is a common chord progression for many folk songs.