

# From Melody To Chord Melody



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Video Tutorial:

Before you start arranging: What key will you play in? There are three important factors to consider when determining what key you will use.

Step 1: Analyzing the range

- Transposition is very common with chord melody and fingerstyle ukulele. I transpose in this specific style more than any other style of music
- Is the range too high or low? When considering the key you should find the lowest note and the highest note before you start arranging the piece.
- Ideally the lowest note would be an E note or higher, so you can play all the melody on the highest two strings, but all the way down to the C is okay, even G if you have a low G.
- With those low notes it is okay to go all the way down to the lower end of the register if it happens sparingly. If the melody is constantly in the lower register, you should consider transposition or moving the song up an octave
- Ideally the highest note would be an A note or lower. I try to arrange every fingerstyle, or chord melody style piece, so it can be played on the soprano. Some songs have a massive range and it isn't possible, but if you can get everything below the 12<sup>th</sup> fret it becomes a much more inclusive arrangement.

Step 2: Looking at the chord shapes.

- Hate the E chord? Don't we all... so why choose the key of E?
- Choosing the key determines two things, the scale we are going to use and the chords we are going to use
- The scale doesn't matter that much because the melody has already been composed, so that isn't so much of a factor.
- The chords on the other hand, are a huge factor, so choose a key that you are comfortable with.
- When changing the key I find it best to try and get it within a whole step of the original key, meaning two frets below or two frets above, but that still ends up being a wide range.
- Let's say the key is E, but you don't want to play in E, according to this 'whole step either way' practice you can go down to Eb or D

and you can go up to F or F#. That means limiting your key transposition choice to a whole step up or down still gives you access to 5 of the 12 keys in western music.

### Step 3: The difficulty of the sheet music

- There are two ways to figure the melody out, by ear or with sheet music. I use sheet music. I find it to be faster and more reliable than my ear.
- #s and bs make it harder to read sheet music, especially if you are new to reading sheet music. Over time it gets easier, having said that the more sharps and flats you have, the longer it will take to transpose the melody from the sheet music to a melody you can play on the ukulele.
- The key of C has no sharps and flats, so reading the sheet music is very straight forward, F has one flat, G has one sharp, also extremely easy. D has two sharps, Bb has two flats, easy still, but at the same also getting harder.
- C# has seven sharps. Transposing a key like that will take you a lot of work. Moving the song up a half step to D means you go from seven sharps to two. That is a lot easier.
- When a song is in the key of F# for example, which has 6 sharps, it is because it is good for the singers voice, but as we don't have to limit ourselves because of our physical vocal range we are free to transpose songs to easier keys which is highly recommended.

Song Study - This is a lot of information and honestly, we don't need to know all of it to compose the chord melody. With that said information is power and having a long look at this will improve your understanding of harmony. Harmony isn't just "what chords do you use" it is "how does the melody interact with the chords used" and understanding where a note appears throughout the key is valuable information when trying to develop a deeper sense of harmony.

- Leaving on a Jet Plane by John Denver
- Original key A
- Lowest note: E
  - o The E note is the 5<sup>th</sup> interval of the key of A
  - o You can find it 4 chords of the key of A
  - o The 5<sup>th</sup> interval of A major A-C#-E (root chord)
  - o The b3<sup>rd</sup> of C# minor C#-E-G# (the iii chord)
  - o The root of the E major E-G#-B (the V chord)
  - o The b7<sup>th</sup> of the F#m7 F#-A-C#-E (the vi7 chord)
- Highest Note: F# (this note appears once in the song)
  - o The F# note is the 6<sup>th</sup> interval of the key of A
  - o The 6<sup>th</sup> interval is what is known as the relative minor
  - o You can find it 4 chords of the key of A
  - o The 5<sup>th</sup> interval of B minor B-D#-F# (ii chord)
  - o The 3<sup>rd</sup> of D major D-F#-A (the IV chord)
  - o The root of the F# minor F#-A-C# (the vi chord)
  - o The b7<sup>th</sup> of the G#m7b5 G#-B-D-F# (the vii7b5 chord)

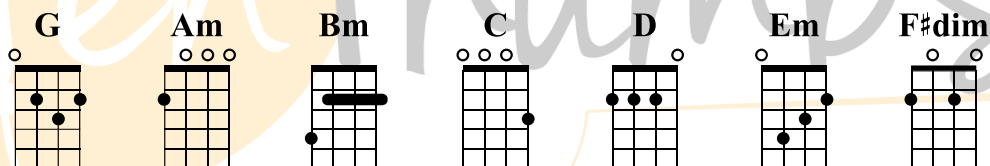
## Is A the right key for us?

- Lowest note E - good
- Highest note F# - good
- Key of A has 4 sharps - medium to difficult
- 3 barre chords - medium to difficult
- Contains E chord - difficult
- Overall level of difficulty - medium
- The range is okay, but the sheet music is a little tricky to read and some of the chord shapes are hard to play in this style.

## Transposing to G

- Within a whole step - yes
- Lowest note D - pretty good (ideally the lowest note is on the E string)
- Key of G has 1 sharp - easy
- 1 barre chord - easy to medium
- No E chord - Hallelujah! That chord isn't fun
- Overall level of difficulty - easy/pre-intermediate
- Range is still great, it isn't perfect, but we can make the low D note work. The sheet music is much easier and so are the chord shapes in their standard form. This key will be much more beginner friendly. Note when I say beginner, I mean beginner to this style, no beginner to the ukulele.

## Key of G review



G - I chord - G-B-D

Am - ii chord - A-C-E

Bm - iii chord - B-D-F#

C - IV chord - C-E-G

D - V chord - D-F#-A

Em - vi chord - E-G-B

F#dim - vii° chord - F#-A-C

## G Major scale

The G Major scale is shown on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G. The G note is marked with a 3 and the D note with a 4. Below the staff is a ukulele fretboard diagram with strings labeled T (Tenor), A (A), and B (Bass). The fret numbers for each string are: T (0, 2, 4), A (0, 2, 4), B (0, 2, 4). The G note is on the 3rd fret of the B string, A on the 2nd fret of the A string, B on the 4th fret of the T string, C on the 0th fret of the B string, D on the 2nd fret of the A string, E on the 0th fret of the T string, F# on the 2nd fret of the A string, and G on the 3rd fret of the B string.

G - Root

A - 2<sup>nd</sup>

B - 3<sup>rd</sup>

- C - 4<sup>th</sup>
- D - 5<sup>th</sup>
- E - 6<sup>th</sup>
- F# - 7<sup>th</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> verse - melody only

Verse

General harmony analysis.

- It is an 8 measures verse
- The chord progression is G-C-G-C-G-C-D-D
- The roman numeral for the progression would be a I-IV-I-IV-I-IV-V-V in the key of G
- The lowest note is D
- The highest note is C
- There are no accidentals.
  - An accidental is a note that isn't the key.
  - We are in the key of G, the only # is F#, so if the melody had a Bb note, which isn't in the key, it would be called an accidental.
  - Accidentals are easy to recognize because they will have a sharp sign # or flat sign b next to them.
  - If we look at our example the only sharp symbol is in the key signature, meaning no accidentals.

The first technique - Harmonizing the 1

**G** **C**

stand- ing here out- side your door, I

T 3 2 3 0 3 0 3

A 3 2 0 0 0 0 0

B 2 0 2 0 0 0 0

**C**

hate to wake you up to say good-

T 3 2 0 3 3 2 3 2

A 3 2 0 0 0 0 0 0

B 2 0 2 0 0 0 0 0

**D7**

bye. But the

T 0 0 0 0

A 2 2 0 0

B 2 2 3 0

- This first technique is simply placing the chord on the first beat
- If we look at the measures using G (2, 4 and 6) we see the melody is C and C is not in the G chord. That is okay, you still place the chord down in the same position with the melody getting priority. Meaning that the G, C and E strings were blank, so we filled them with the G chord, but the A string was already playing the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret, so that note gets priority over the chord.
- Looking at measure number 3 and 5 we also see over the chord only 3 strings are being strummed. Your ear hears the highest pitched note, so if you strum all four strings the ear will interpret the C note as the melody, not the E note.

### Technique Number 2 - Taking advantage of the High G tuning

Taking advantage of the open G **G** **C**

All my bags are packed, I'm read- y to go, I'm

T 3 0 3 2 0 0 0 3 0 3

A 3 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

B 2 0 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

**G** **C**

stand- ing here out- side your door, I

T 3 2 3 0 3 0 3

A 3 2 0 0 0 0 0

B 2 0 2 0 0 0 0

**G** **C**

hate to wake you up to say good-

T 3 2 3 0 | 3 2 3 0

A 3 2 3 0 | 3 2 3 0

B 0 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0

**D7**

bye. But the

T 0 0 0 0 | 3 0

A 2 2 2 2 | 3 0

B 2 2 2 2 | 0 0

- The low g does have its advantages with chord melody, making bass licks for example, but the high has its charm and power as well.
- Anywhere you play the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret of the E string, a G note, can replace it with the G string played open.
- This adds both flash and fluency, making it easier to get around the fretboard quickly.

### Technique 3 - Adding strumming and filling empty spaces with rhythm

Adding Rhythm and Strums **G** **C**

All my bags are packed, I'm ready to go, I'm

T 3 0 3 2 3 2 | 0 0 3 0 3

A 3 0 3 2 3 2 | 0 0 3 0 3

B 0 0 0 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0 0

**G** **C**

stand- ing here out- side your door, I

T 3 2 2 3 2 | 0 0 0 0

A 3 2 2 3 2 | 0 0 0 0

B 0 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0

**G** **C**

hate to wake you up to say good-

T 3 2 3 0 | 3 2 0 2

A 3 2 3 0 | 3 2 0 2

B 0 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0

**D7**

bye. But the

T 0 0 0 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0

A 2 2 2 2 2 2 | 2 2 2 2

B 2 2 2 2 2 2 | 2 2 2 2

- Some melodies cram a lot of notes into the measures and some melodies really use empty space to let the melody breathe.
- This one is somewhere in between. We don't need to go crazy, there is only one time we actually just more than just a ¼ strum, but there is a little space in just about every measure with the last two being a lot of room for strumming.
- You don't want your strumming to sound like it has melody, so you should strum with your index finger and use the nail, you should also do so considerably softer. Think of a stage, the rhythm piece of the band is literally on the back of the stage, that's how you want your strums to feel, like they are coming from the back of the stage.

#### Technique 4 - Adding some flash and detail

19 Last Details

20 G

21 C

All my bags are packed, I'm ready to go. I'm

22 G C

stand- ing here out- side your door. I

24 G C

hate to wake you up to say good-

26 D7

27

bye. But the

- There are couple of easy little tricks we can do to give our final piece a little extra flair.
- Measure 21 for example you will see the C chord is just to the middle strings being plucked. The low C serving as the harmony and the E note as the melody

- Measure number 24 the B to the A on the 2<sup>nd</sup> beat, it isn't notated but that is a nice place to do a little pull off. Ornamentations like the pull off and hammer on give these pieces a nice bit of movement.
- On the 26<sup>th</sup> measure you will again see the less is more approach with the D note implying the chord and the A

Full melody for your experimentation

Play with it, print it out a couple times and use a pen, see what you can come up with!

Verse

1 All my bags are packed, I'm ready to go, I'm standing here outside your door, I

2 hate to wake you up to say good-bye. But the

3 dawn is break-in', it's early morn the tax-'s wait-in', he's blow-in' his horn. Al-

4 read-y I'm so lone-some I could die. So

Chorus

5 kiss me and smile for me, tell me that you'll wait for me,



**G** **C** **D7**

hold me like you'll nev- er let me go I'm a

5 3 2 5 3 2 0 3 0 0 5 7

**G** **C** **G** **C**

leav- in' on a jet plane, I don't know when I'll be back a- gain.

5 7 7 5 3 5 2 5 2 5 3 5 3 2 3

**G** **C** **D7** **G**

Oh babe, I hate to go

5 3 2 2 0 3 2

3 0 3 2 3 0 0 3 0 3 3 2 3 0 3 0 3

I'd love to hear what you come up with, let me know when you finish your arrangement!