

LISTENING TO CLASSIC ROCK MUSIC

CHARACTERISTIC SCALES AND CHORDS & CHORD PROGRESSIONS

Like other styles that pre- or co-existed with pop music (classical, jazz, folk) it relied mainly on major and minor scales for its melodies and chords. What set it *apart* from classical and jazz (and aligned it moreover with folk) is its significant dependence on alternative versions of these major and minor scales, often referred to as *modes*.

A different scale...

A standard major scale starting on C would follow the white notes on a piano, for example:

C D E F G A B C

A modal version of the scale (known as the *Mixolydian* mode) lowers the 7th note of the major scale by a half-step:

C D E F G A **Bb** C

This one small change instantly lends a very different quality to the scale. While it still maintains its major-sounding essence, the Bb (instead of B) gives the scale a darker, more relaxed feeling.

Different chords...

In turn, this different-sounding scale gives way to some (not all) different-sounding chords. In the standard major scale, the 7th note (B) would be the root of a B-diminished chord—a dissonant, unsettled sounding chord (often labeled "**vii^o**"). The Mixolydian scale 7th note (Bb), however, would be the root of a Bb-major chord—very different sounding when played right after (or before) a C-major chord (often labeled "**bVII**").

A particular chord progression...

Probably the most standard short chord progression across all styles is the **I-IV-V-I** (key of C: **C-F-G-C**). But the alternative (Mixolydian) scale/chord applications result in the possibility of *different* chord progressions (or chord combinations) from those of classical or jazz. One of the most common (if not *the* most common) pop chord progressions uses chords built off of the 1st, b7th and 4th scale degrees (known as **I-bVII-IV** and back to **I**). **I-bVII-I** and **I-IV-bVII-I** are common alternatives.

In the key of C, these would be the chords: C-major, Bb-major, F-major, and back to C-major (**C-Bb-F-C**). There is no special name for this progression, but it is ubiquitous in the pop canon. There is probably not a group out there that has not used this progression (or a portion of the progression) to a high degree of success.

While the above examples are for the key of C, it is possible to have the same sounding progression in any key. What follows is a table that shows the **I-bVII-IV-I** progression for each key.

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Key of ↓	I	bVII	IV	I
C	C	Bb	F	C
F	F	Eb	Bb	F
Bb	Bb	Ab	Eb	Bb
Eb	Eb	Db	Ab	Eb
Ab	Ab	Gb	Db	Ab
Db (C#)	Db (C#)	Cb (B)	Gb (F#)	Db (C#)
Gb (F#)	Gb (F#)	Fb (E)	Cb (B)	Gb (F#)
B	B	A	E	B
E	E	D	A	E
A	A	G	D	A
D	D	C	G	D
G	G	F	C	G

Here is a list of just a fraction of songs that use this progression:

- The Beach Boys: *In my Room*
- The Beatles: *You never Give Me Your Money ("One sweet dream..."), Polythene Pam, We Can Work It Out, Hey Jude (coda), She Said She Said, With A Little Help From My Friends, Lovely Rita*
- Led Zeppelin: *Thank You, Communication Breakdown, Good Times Bad Times*
- Fifth Dimension: *Carpet Man*
- Pink Floyd: *Remember A Day*
- Rolling Stones: *Sympathy For The Devil*
- Small Faces: *If I Were A Carpenter*
- Traffic: *Dear Mr. Fantasy*
- The Who: *I can't Explain, My Generation, Won't Get Fooled Again, Love Ain't For Keeping*
- Cat Stevens: *Tea For The Tillerman*