

Chords 1, 4, 5D, 6- (acoustic guitar ballad)

This jam track is an acoustic guitar ballad using the same four chords in a different order:



Notice how similar this chord progression is to the one you studied in a very early jam track in this collection:

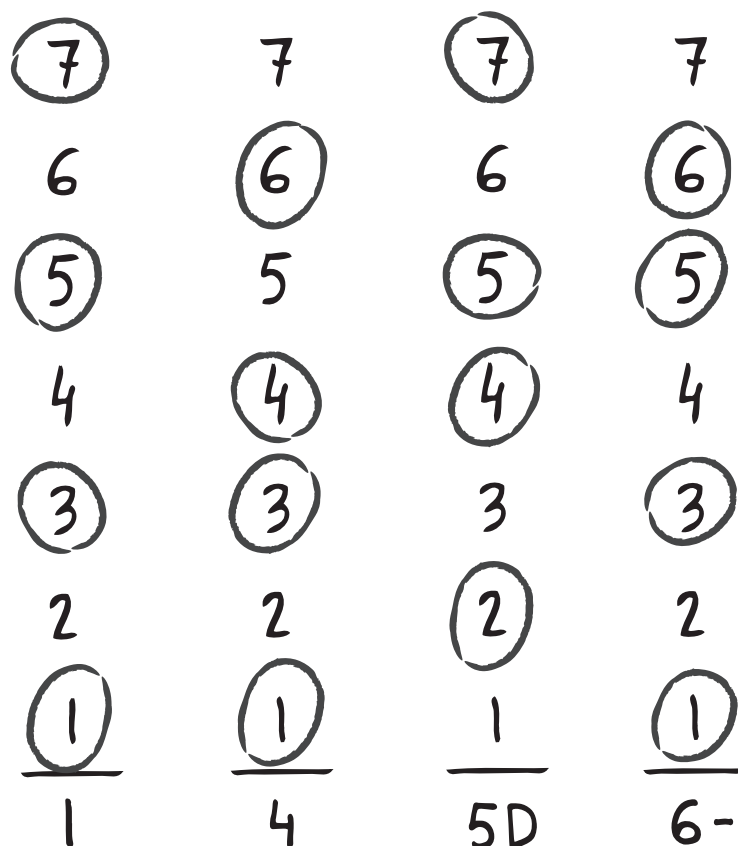


Notice specifically that the first three chords are the same, and the only difference is the fourth and final chord. We could even say that the 5D chord is fooling our ear into expecting the 1 chord, and that the 6- chord in the present jam track comes as a surprise.

It turns out that this is a very common movement in popular music. While it's true that the 5D chord leads the ear to expect a resolution in the 1 chord, it's also true that the stepwise movement from 5D up to 6- is also very comfortable. It's almost as if the 5D chord promised to arrive to the 1 chord but then it sneaked out the side door to the 6- chord.

The first time you listen to this jam track, you may not consciously realize that you are expecting to hear the 1 chord after the 5D chord. Maybe you're not consciously expecting anything. But I'll bet that when you first hear that 6- chord after 5D, you feel a sudden twinge of sadness, that the music just took a turn into more melancholy territory. This is yet another way that you are experiencing the difference between the 1 chord and the 6- chord.

Below are drawings of the chord notes:



Practice tips

All of the remaining tracks in this collection use all four chords that you have been studying, with rhythms and tempos that are very similar to the kinds of songs you might hear on the radio. In other words, these are no longer merely teaching examples designed to let you get to know the individual chords. You're now improvising over chord progressions that could very easily appear in the songs that surround you in your daily life.

Along with this evolution comes a change in the way that these jam tracks can serve you. Whenever you want to strengthen your clarity of thought and your mastery of harmony, I encourage you to go back to the earlier tracks in this collection. Those very simple tracks contrasting just two chords at a time are the ideal place to build your harmony mastery. It may seem counterintuitive, but we actually don't get better at playing complex music through practicing complex music. The way we learn to play complex music is to break those structures down into smaller parts and then master the individual parts.

You don't master complexity by studying complexity. You master complexity by studying simplicity.

Here's how I suggest you use the tracks in this collection. Whenever you want to grow in your knowledge and mastery of harmony, try to use the simplest jam track that includes the harmonic material you want to study. And when you want to grow in your expressiveness and creativity, that's when you can use the more song-like jam tracks that challenge you to look past the chords and listen to your own creative voice.

Note about transposing for wind instruments

Remember that not all instruments use the same names for the notes. In the tracks, the key listed for each jam track always refers to the concert key. If you play an instrument that is not in concert key, remember to transpose this key name to the corresponding key on your instrument. (If you're not sure how to do this for your instrument, a quick Google search will lead you to many clear explanations.)