

WILLIE MYETTE's

**JAZZ  
EDGE**

# LESSONS



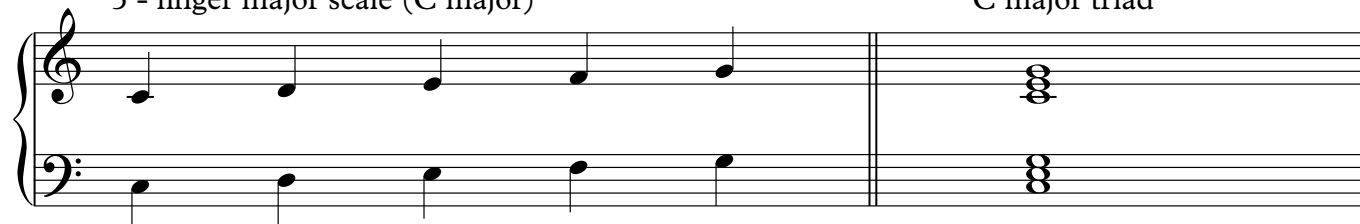
## LESSONS

## 11 Rock Piano Technique Tips

Tip #1 - KNOW YOUR SOUNDS, and be able to access them quickly. For most rock gigs, this includes acoustic piano, rhodes, wurli, clav, a few organ sounds, and maybe some strings or synth sounds.

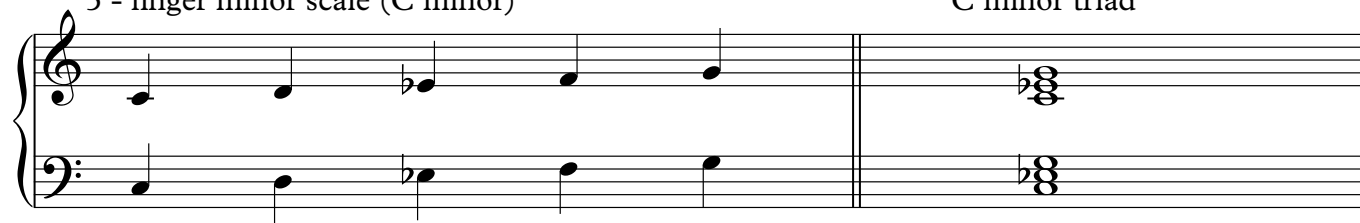
Tip #2 - KNOW SOME THEORY, Part 1

5 - finger major scale (C major)

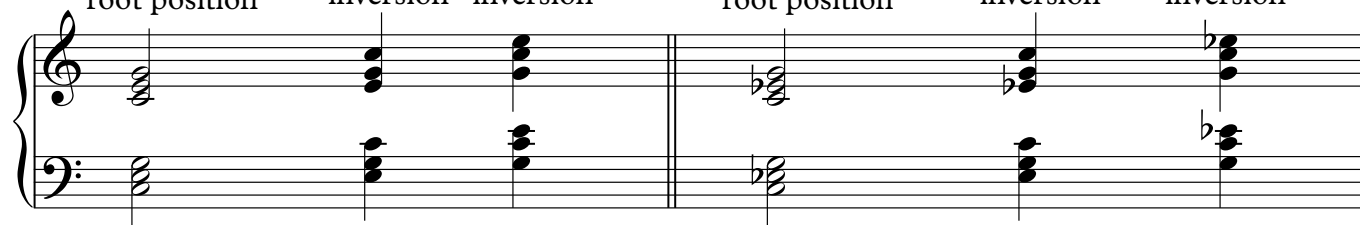


C major triad

5 - finger minor scale (C minor)



C minor triad

C major,  
root position1st  
inversion2nd  
inversionC minor,  
root position1st  
inversion2nd  
inversion

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C<sup>7</sup> root position      1st inversion      2nd inversion      3rd inversion

The image shows four C7 triads on a grand staff. The first triad is in root position (C4, E4, G4 in the treble and C3, E3, G3 in the bass). The second is the first inversion (E4, G4, C5 in the treble and C3, E3, G3 in the bass). The third is the second inversion (G4, C5, E5 in the treble and C3, E3, G3 in the bass). The fourth is the third inversion (C5, E5, G5 in the treble and C3, E3, G3 in the bass). All notes are marked with a flat (F major/C minor).

## Triads with octave shells

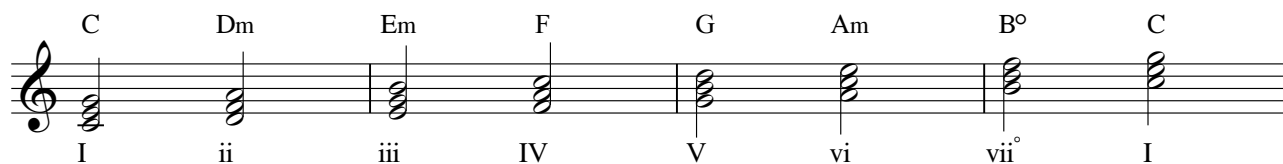
C major      C minor

The image shows two sets of triads with octave shells. The first set is for C major, showing the triad in root position (C4, E4, G4) and two inversions (E4, G4, C5 and G4, C5, E5) in the treble, and the triad in root position (C3, E3, G3) and two inversions (E3, G3, C4 and G3, C4, E4) in the bass. The second set is for C minor, showing the triad in root position (C4, E4b, G4) and two inversions (E4b, G4, C5 and G4, C5, E5b) in the treble, and the triad in root position (C3, E3b, G3) and two inversions (E3b, G3, C4 and G3, C4, E4b) in the bass. All notes are marked with a flat (F major/C minor).

## LESSONS

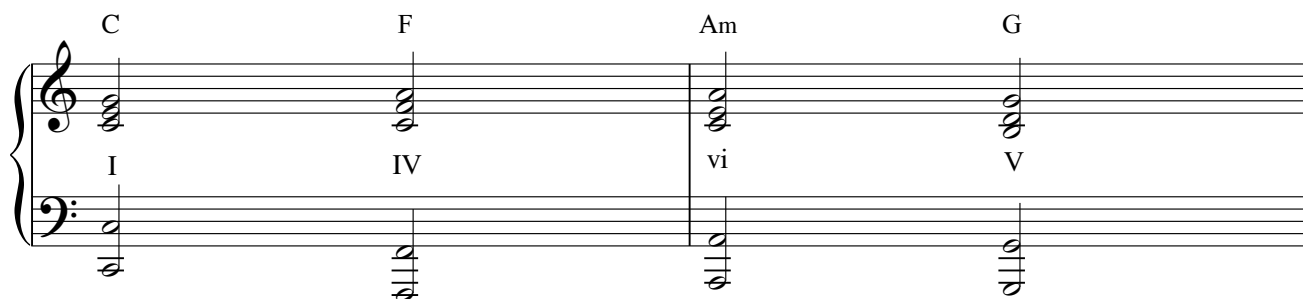
## 11 Rock Piano Technique Tips

Tip #3 - KNOW SOME THEORY, Part 2

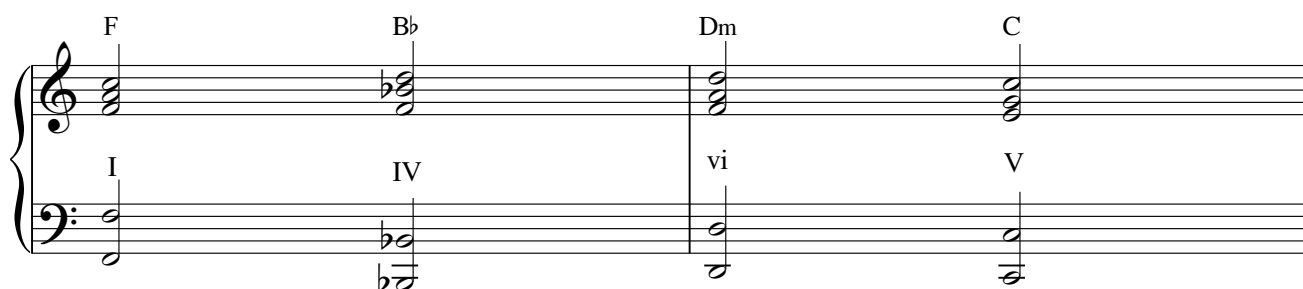


Very common progression in rock music = I, IV, vi, V chord progression

in C major:



in F major:



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## 11 Rock Piano Technique Tips

Tip #4 - GET TO KNOW YOUR METRONOME, and also practice with jam tracks.

Counting, subdividing, clapping rhythms... all helps lead to a stronger sense of time, groove, and rhythmic precision.

Tip #5 - PRACTICE THE SKILL OF TRANSPOSITION. Especially if you're working/playing with singers!

Intro, "Just the Way You Are" by Billy Joel

Original key: D major. The notation shows a piano introduction in 4/4 time. The first measure has a D major chord (D, F#, A) and a Gm6/D chord (G, Bb, D, F, A, C). The second measure has a D major chord (D, F#, A), a G/D chord (G, B, D, F#), and a D major chord (D, F#, A). The bass line consists of a single D note in the first measure and a single D note in the second measure.

Transposed up a whole-step

Transposed up a whole-step: E major. The notation shows the same piano introduction in 4/4 time, transposed up a whole step. The first measure has an E major chord (E, G#, B) and an Am6/E chord (A, C, E, G, B, D). The second measure has an E major chord (E, G#, B), an A/E chord (A, C#, E, G#), and an E major chord (E, G#, B). The bass line consists of a single E note in the first measure and a single E note in the second measure.

Transposed up another half-step

Transposed up another half-step: F major. The notation shows the same piano introduction in 4/4 time, transposed up another half step. The first measure has an F major chord (F, A, C) and a Bbm6/F chord (Bb, D, F, Ab, C, Eb). The second measure has an F major chord (F, A, C), a Bb/F chord (Bb, D, F, Ab), and an F major chord (F, A, C). The bass line consists of a single F note in the first measure and a single F note in the second measure.

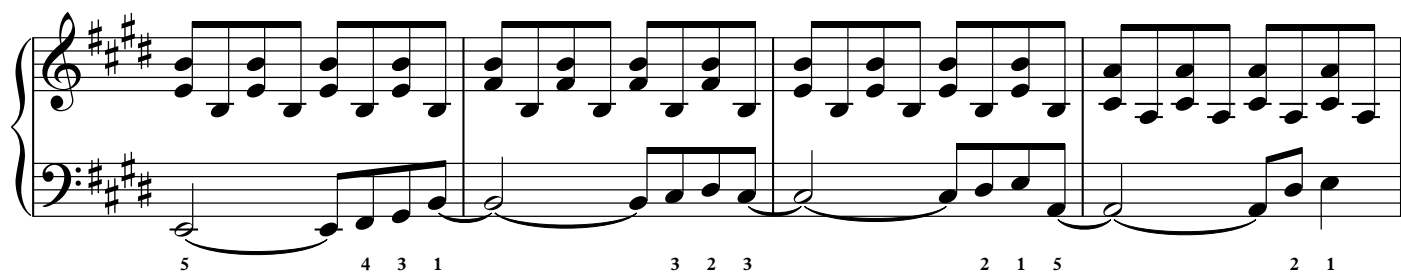
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Tip #6 KNOW THE TERMINOLOGY. Make sure you understand, and practice using, the language of musicians. This includes terms such as "intro," "verse," "chorus," "bridge," "outro," "coda," "V chord," "tag the ending," etc.

Tip #7 - PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR FINGERING. Don't just invent the fingering anew each time you play a piece. Work out some specific, deliberate fingerings that allow you to play fluently, fluidly, and in control of the music.

The bass line from Journey's "Don't Stop Believing" which I kept messing up until I worked out some specific left-hand fingering.



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## 11 Rock Piano Technique Tips

Tip #8 - PRACTICE TO MEMORIZE, and train your ears in the process! Sheet music, songbooks, fakebooks, transcriptions - they're all great. But they should be used as aids. There is no substitute for listening to the original recordings of whatever you're learning and letting your ears find the answers. You'll be amazed at how ear-training can improve your musicianship.

Tip #9 - UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF YOUR LEFT-HAND. In jazz bands, the left-hand often plays rootless chord voicings, comps rhythmically, and as a general rule tries to stay out of the bass player's register. This is less so in rock, where the left hand oftentimes plays the roots of the chords (in octaves) and thickens out the texture of the bass (often in tandem with the bass player). The left hand can still be quite rhythmic, even when only playing the roots of the chords.

Piano Outro, "Layla" by Derek and the Dominos (Eric Clapton)

Here's what you'll see in the sheet music, songbooks, etc:

This musical notation shows a piano accompaniment for the outro of "Layla". The right hand features a complex melodic line with many beamed sixteenth notes. The left hand, in contrast, is simplified, playing only the root notes of the chords (C, C/E, and F) in octaves. A triplet of eighth notes is marked in the right hand over the C/E chord. The bass line is sparse, with long rests between the root notes.

Here's something closer to what the left hand should actually be playing:

This musical notation shows the same piano accompaniment as the previous block, but with a more active and rhythmic left-hand part. Instead of just playing root notes in octaves, the left hand now plays a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, providing a more driving bass line. The right hand part remains identical to the previous block.

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## 11 Rock Piano Technique Tips

Tip #10 - PRACTICE SOLOING. Here are two scales you should learn to help get you started. Make sure to learn them in all 12 keys!

C minor pentatonic scale

Eb major pentatonic  
(same as C minor pentatonic)

C blues scale

Tip #11 - BUILD YOUR REPERTOIRE. Learn a lot of tunes. Learn the classics because these will be the songs that are known by other musicians and enjoyed by listeners! And we have covered! Check out all of the lessons in our rock lessons library to see some great videos covering: the Beatles, Journey, Billy Joel, James Taylor, Chicago, Toto, Van Morrison, Eric Clapton, the Allman Brothers, and many more!