

The Essential Secrets of Songwriting Study Guide Version 1.0

2014

Written by Gary Ewer

At the time of this writing (September 2014), the eBook bundle known as “The Essential Secrets of Songwriting” is comprised of seven publications:

“The Essential Secrets of Songwriting”
“Essential Chord Progressions”
“More Essential Chord Progressions”
“How to Harmonize a Melody”
“The Essential Secrets of Songwriting: Chord Progression Formulas”
“The Essential Secrets of Songwriting- LESSONS”
“From Amateur to Ace: Writing Songs Like a Pro”

Purchasers of the bundle often contact me to ask which of the eBooks they should start with, and how to study them. The answer is complicated, because it depends on many factors, each dependent on an individual’s musical history. In that sense, it’s not much different from the problem that music teachers face in most classroom situations: all students enter their first day of class with widely differing musical backgrounds, and the teacher is expected to teach them all.

This guide is an attempt to help songwriters who are encountering “The Essential Secrets of Songwriting” eBook bundle for the first time. And because there is no way for me to be familiar with your own musical background, it goes on the only premise that makes sense: you know a bit about some things, a bit more about other things, and a bit less about the rest. Assuming that to be more-or-less true, the following guide can help you tackle the eBooks in a sensible order, allowing the information from one text to help you understand the material in another.

There’s absolutely nothing wrong with reading the eBooks in any order you wish, skipping the chapters that contain information you’re already familiar with, and digging into the information that’s new to you. But if you want to systemize how you learn, and ensure that you’re getting the most out of what you’ve just downloaded onto your computer, try the following guide. You’ll notice that it jumps around a little bit from topic to topic. That’s intentional; it attempts to keep you from getting bogged down in any one area for too long.

And by all means, please contact me by email if you have any questions. I am a teacher at heart, and enjoy helping those who consider themselves to be students. My email address is: gary@pantomimemusic.com.

The Essential Secrets of Songwriting – STUDY GUIDE

Begin at the top of the chart and work your way downward

<i>The Essential Secrets of Songwriting</i> , Preface, Chapters 1-4	Complete any suggested activities. Description: This gives you a quick overview of what we're trying to achieve when we write songs; how songs captivate listeners, why form and song energy are such crucial components, and some basics on how chords work.
<i>Essential Chord Progressions</i> , pp. 1-36	Description: This gives a few more details on the workings of chord progressions, some standard terminology, and a number of examples of good major-key chord progressions.
<i>How To Harmonize a Melody</i> , pp. 1-10	Description: This describes what we mean by harmonizing, offer some thoughts on the differences between melody-first and chords-first songwriting, and discuss the contour of good melodies.
<i>The Essential Secrets of Songwriting</i> , Chapters 5-6	Description: A good look at how melody and lyric operate as important partners in the songwriting process. Also, a description of what we call "the hook," and how to write an effective one.
<i>From Amateur to Ace</i> , Chapters 6, 8 and 10	Description: A different take on how to compose a good song melody.
<i>Essential Chord Progressions</i> , pp. 37-48	Description: This turns its attention to minor chord progressions, and then some ideas for how to change key within a progression.
<i>How To Harmonize a Melody</i> , pp. 11-20	Description: You'll learn more about the nuts and bolts of adding chords to a melody. You'll learn about harmonic rhythm, root movement, and the specifics of adding chords.
<i>From Amateur to Ace</i> , Preface, Chapters 1, 2, 4	Description: You'll learn about the "killer chord progression", how to choose keys for your songs, and how to create and use chord inversions.
<i>Essential Chord Progressions</i> , pp. 48-51	Description: This shows you a few interesting miscellaneous progressions, including jazz, blues, and other types of useful progressions.
<i>How to Harmonize a Melody</i> , pp. 21-24	Description: You'll learn more complex progressions, and learn a bit about pedal point, modal mixtures, etc.
<i>Chord Progression Formulas</i>	Description: Read the whole document – it shouldn't take long. It offers a concise view of how good progressions work, with formulas that allow you to create your own within seconds.
<i>From Amateur to Ace</i> , Chapters 5, 7, and 9	Description: A look at dealing with a lack of inspiration, writing backing vocals, and how to create a good intro for your songs.
<i>From Amateur to Ace</i> , Chapter 3	Description: A look at the reasons we often get stuck after writing the first few bars of music, and how to overcome those difficulties.

<i>The Essential Secrets of Songwriting</i> , Chapters 7, 8	Description: More about inspiration, and the role it plays in the creative process. Also the legalities of songwriting, including information about copyright, royalties, publishing, etc.
<i>From Amateur to Ace</i> , Chapters 11-12	Description: How to protect your music, and how to market it effectively.
<i>More Essential Chord Progressions</i>	This is a reference manual that will expand your chord vocabulary and offer you new and interesting ways to harmonize melodies.
<i>The Essential Secrets of Songwriting - LESSONS</i>	You should feel confident now to begin working on the simple lessons outlined in this manual. Be sure to complete all activities.

Remember that this is only a suggestion, designed to keep you moving from topic to topic so that you don't get stuck in any one area for too long. Some people don't like working this way. They'd rather get started in one text and read it through to its completion. There is certainly nothing wrong with that, and in fact it is my preferred way of working. But hopefully, for those of you who like the security that a bit of guidance can offer, this guide will allow you to absorb the information in a systematic way. How you'll know that it's working for you is that you will approach your own songwriting with a greater sense of confidence and excitement.

The Essential Secrets of Songwriting bundle is meant to improve your songwriting skills. It's being used now by literally thousands of songwriters, and, when coupled with daily and disciplined practice, can ensure that you're always at the top of your songwriting game. When you know what you're doing, songwriting is fun, even profitable. Take your time, read carefully, and most importantly, take the advice within the bundle as *guidance*, not *rules*. Creativity is a strange beast, and very hard to define. That's what makes musical composition so exciting. Just when you think you've got it all figured out, you'll find your approach changing, and a new way of creating music emerges from within your artistic brain.

All the best with your songwriting projects!

Gary Ewer