

Theory I—Worksheet

Learning To Play By Ear

Figure A

I ii iii IV V vi vii I

Figure B I ii iii IV V vi vii^o
C Dm Em F G Am Bdim or Bm7b5

Instructions: Using Figure A & B fill in the blanks for the following keys. Hint: think of your scales.

I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii^o
D						

I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii^o
E_b						

I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii^o
E						

I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii^o
F						

I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii^o
G						

I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii^o
A						

Notice that an F#m might be the “ii” in one key and the “iii” in another key. This is because the roman numerals represent a scale degree as Figure A shows.

You might be asking yourself why it is important to learn these roman numerals. The answer is because it is one way (and I think the easiest and best way) to transpose and play by ear. Once you learn the roman numerals, your ear will begin to associate sounds with the roman numerals. Then, when you are listening to a song your ear will know what is being played. It is also the musical language spoken by all musician as they learn more about music. Instead of saying, “Play Em then A” you will hear, “Play the ii then the V.”

Progressions

Here are a list of common progressions that you will find over and over in church music. I will use the roman numerals and the key of C for these examples.

ii	V	I
Dm	G	C

IV	V	I
F	G	C

iii	vi	ii	V	I
Em	Am	Dm	G	C

IV	V	vi
F	G	Am

Note: these two progression are extremely similar. The only difference between a Dm & an F chord is one note.

Note: also called a deceptive cadence because it sounds so similar to IV-V-I

Going Deeper

Now go to your instruments and practice the “exercise” and “progression” sections of this worksheet. Remember, I told you would have to know your scales. If any of these exercises gave you trouble, practice your scales until you know them backwards and forwards, literally.