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## **The Songwriter's Workshop: Melody**

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Lesson 34

Major Pentatonic on One Chord

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# LESSON 34

## Major Pentatonic on One Chord

The major pentatonic scale is one of the most common scales in music, and it is an easy source of melodic material. It's used in *all* styles of songwriting. The major pentatonic scale has five notes. You can create melodies in this scale without being bound to the chord changes.

Hit songs that use the major pentatonic scale include "My Girl," "Ain't Too Proud to Beg," "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Lookin' For," "The Way You Do The Things You Do," "Chattahoochee," "That's the Thing About Love," "I Saw the Light," and many others.

### Listen



Listen to the first part of "Major Pentatonic: Shakes Me From my Head" (CD 60) Notice that this scale is like a C arpeggio with an added D and A.

C

Chord      Arpeggio      Scale Ascending      Scale Descending

C   E   G   C      C   D   E   G   A   C      C   A   G   E   D   C

Listen again, and sing along with the recording to get the sound of the scale in your ears. Then try to sing the scale *without* the recording. You're already training your ear and voice to "feel" the major pentatonic scale.

Now, listen to the whole track. The second part has a lyric set to typical major pentatonic phrases over a one-chord groove.

C6



Chord  
Tones

Shakes me from my head way down to my toes

Shakes me from my head way down to my toes

Shakes me from my head way down to my toes

Shakes me from my head way down to my toes

Listen again, and sing along with the recording. Try to sing these phrases *without* the track. You're training your ear to hear even more. Notice that this scale has an almost "folksy" or "down-home" feel to it. It's frequently used over extended one-chord grooves in a major key.

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## Writing Exercises



Sing the following exercises along with “Rhythm Track 25: Shakes Me...” (CD 61) or to your original track that uses one chord.

### ■ Practice



Reset the lyrics “Shakes me from my head way down to my toes” in three different ways. Use notes only of the pentatonic scale. Refer back to “Major Pentatonic: Shakes Me...” (CD 60) to review the notes.

### ■ Set Your Own Lyrics

Create an original lyric and set it using only notes of the major pentatonic scale.

### ■ Rewrite the Hits

1. From the songs you know, find an example of a melody that uses the major pentatonic scale over one note.
2. Create your own major pentatonic setting of that lyric.

### ■ Write a Song

Create a song where the verse uses the major pentatonic scale over one chord and the chorus uses a different approach.