

Introduction

Music is written down so that it can be shared and saved: it enables others to perform your music and is a useful design tool in song-writing, transcribing and arranging. The ability to read music and understand music theory is an enormous asset that opens up many new possibilities for you as a musician.

This music theory book is the first of its kind to cater for the specific needs of rock and pop musicians. Assuming no prior knowledge of music notation, it takes you step by step through rhythm, pitch, scales and modes, chords and forms, and explains terms and signs in simple language. You will learn how to use conventional staff notation in the context of rock and pop music; how to read and write a musical score using TAB and drum notation; and how to use music theory in practical ways to enhance your musical life.

Rock & Pop Theory: The Essential Guide will help you acquire an appropriate rock music vocabulary and an essential overview of the principal rock and pop styles, from the beginning of the twentieth century right through to the present day.

Julia Winterson, September 2014

Introducing transposition

Transposition is the process of writing or performing music at a higher or lower pitch than the original. When a song is transposed, all the notes are raised or lowered by the same interval. Rock and pop musicians are often called upon to play a song in a key other than the original. A key change may be needed because:

- the singer finds the melody in the original key too high or too low for their vocal range
- a song is more suitable for a particular instrument in a different key
- a song or part is written or played on a transposing instrument.

Transposition shortcuts

The easiest way to change key on a guitar is by using a **capo**. The capo is a device placed on the neck of the instrument that works by shortening the strings to raise the pitch of the notes. This means that the same chord fingerings in one key can be used to play in a different key. Guitarists can also **de-tune** their instrument down by a semitone or tone. Most music-notation software programmes have a transposition tool that can be a useful time-saver. Although these shortcuts may be used, it is useful to understand how the process of transposition works.

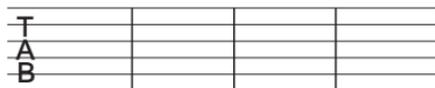
Transposing at the octave

The most straightforward transposition is at the octave; this means transposing notes either up or down by the interval of an octave. With octave transposition, the note names, key signature and any accidentals remain the same as the original score:

Appendix 2: Reading TAB notation

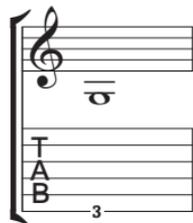
Guitar

Tablature (or TAB) notation is a graphic depiction of the six strings of the guitar, where each line represents a different string:



- The top line represents the top E string. This is the thinnest string (first string).
- The bottom line represents the bottom E string. This is the thickest string (sixth string).
- Numbers are placed on each string to indicate at which fret it should be pressed down. '0' means that you should play the open string; '1' means press down at the first fret, etc.
- If there is no number on a string, then that string should not be played.

In the example below, the bottom E string should be played on the 3rd fret:



A **chord** is indicated when the numbers are placed in a vertical line. In the following example, a C chord is shown:

