

# Lobbying for a La-Based Approach to the Minor Tonic in Popular Music

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**MIDDLE  
TENNESSEE**

STATE UNIVERSITY

SCSMT Conference

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Vanderbilt University



*Slides available at: [www.midside.com/presentations/](http://www.midside.com/presentations/)*

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## **Sing Tonic!**

**“Down Under” (Men at Work), Verse**

Slides available at: [www.midside.com/presentations/](http://www.midside.com/presentations/)

## “Down Under” (Men at Work), Verse

0:11

Bm                    A                    Bm   G   A   Bm                    A                    Bm   G   A

Tra vel lin' in a fried out com bie, \_                    On a hip pie trail, head full of zom - bie.

Slides available at: [www.midside.com/presentations/](http://www.midside.com/presentations/)

## “Down Under” (Men at Work), Verse

0:11

Bm                    A                    Bm G A Bm                    A                    Bm G A

Tra vel lin' in a fried out com bie, \_                    On a hip pie trail, head full of zom - bie.

i                    bVII                    i bVI bVII i                    bVII                    i bVI bVII

# “Down Under” (Men at Work), Verse

0:11

Bm A Bm G A Bm A Bm G A

Tra vel lin' in a fried out com bie, On a hip pie trail, head full of zom - bie.

i bVII i bVI bVII i bVII i bVI bVII

**Sing Tonic!**

# “Down Under” (Men at Work), Chorus

# “Down Under” (Men at Work), Verse

0:11

Bm A Bm G A Bm A Bm G A

Tra vel lin' in a fried out com bie, — On a hip pie trail, head full of zom - bie.

i bVII i bVI bVII i bVII i bVI bVII

# “Down Under” (Men at Work), Chorus

0:29

D A Bm G A D A Bm G A

Do you come from a land down un der? — Where wo men glow and men plun der?

I V vi IV V I V vi IV V

# “Down Under” (Men at Work), Verse

0:11

Bm A Bm G A Bm A Bm G A



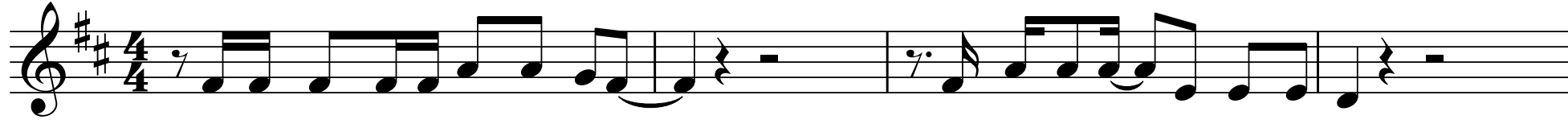
Tra vel lin' in a fried out com bie, — On a hip pie trail, head full of zom - bie.

i bVII i bVI bVII i bVII i bVI bVII

# “Down Under” (Men at Work), Chorus

0:29

D A Bm G A D A Bm G A



Do you come from a land down un der? — Where wo men glow and men plun der?

I V vi IV V I V vi IV V

**Analysis from Doll (2011)**

# “Down Under” (Men at Work), Verse

0:11

**Bm** A Bm G A **Bm** A Bm G A



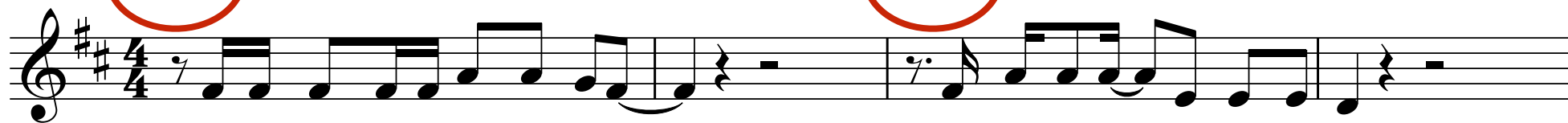
Tra vel lin' in a fried out com bie, — On a hip pie trail, head full of zom - bie.

i  $\flat$ VII i  $\flat$ VI  $\flat$ VII i  $\flat$ VII i  $\flat$ VI  $\flat$ VII

# “Down Under” (Men at Work), Chorus

0:29

**D** A Bm G A **D** A Bm G A



Do you come from a land down un der? — Where wo men glow and men plun der?

I V vi IV V I V vi IV V

**Analysis from Doll (2011)**

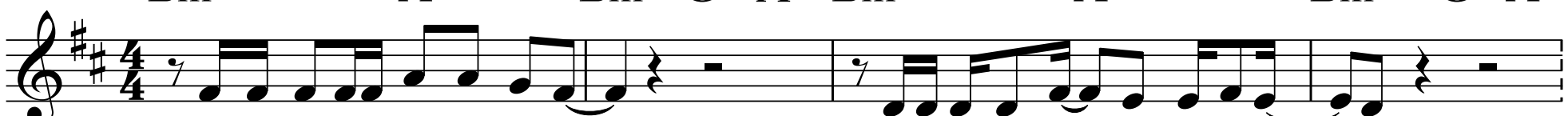


# A “La-Based” Approach

## “Down Under” (Men at Work), Verse

0:11

Bm A Bm G A Bm A Bm G A



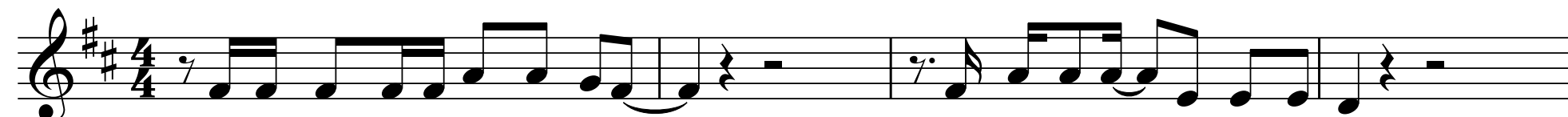
Tra vel lin' in a fried out com bie, — On a hip pie trail, head full of zom - bie.

vi V vi IV V vi V vi IV V

## “Down Under” (Men at Work), Chorus

0:29

D A Bm G A D A Bm G A



Do you come from a land down un der? — Where wo men glow and men plun der?

I V vi IV V I V vi IV V

# “Hotel California” (Eagles)

**Verse**

Bm	F#	A	E
G	D	Em	F#

**Chorus**

G	D	F#	Bm
G	D	Em	F#

# “Hotel California” (Eagles)

## Verse

Bm	F#	A	E
i	V	♭VII	IV
G	D	Em	F#
♭VI	♭III	iv	V

## Chorus

G	D	F#	Bm
♭VI	♭III	V	i
G	D	Em	F#
♭VI	♭III	iv	V

Temperley (2013)

# “Hotel California” (Eagles)

## Verse

Bm	F#	A	E
i	V	♭VII	IV
G	D	Em	F#
♭VI	♭III	iv	V

## Chorus

G	D	F#	Bm
D: IV	D: I	V	i
G	D	Em	F#
D: IV	D: I	iv	V

de Clercq (2013)

# “Hotel California” (Eagles)

**Verse** →

Bm	F#	A	E
i	V	♭VII	IV
G	D	Em	F#
♭VI	♭III	iv	V

**Chorus** →

G	D	F#	Bm
D: IV	D: I	V	i
G	D	Em	F#
D: IV	D: I	iv	V

de Clercq (2013)

# “Hotel California” (Eagles)

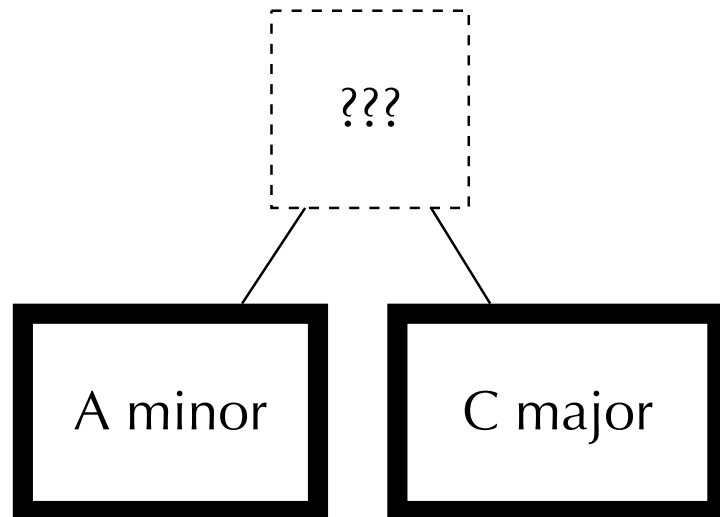
## Verse

Bm	F#	A	E
vi	III	V	II
G	D	Em	F#
IV	I	ii	III

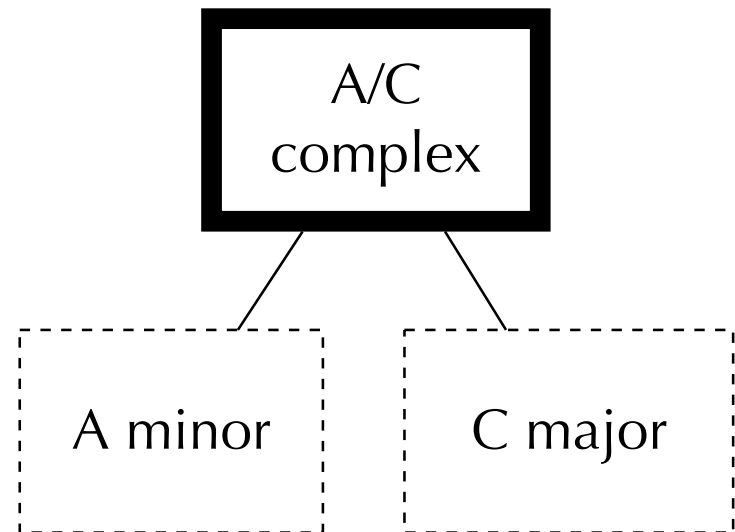
## Chorus

G	D	F#	Bm
IV	I	III	vi
G	D	Em	F#
IV	I	ii	III

# Tonal Ambiguity



# Double-Tonic Complex



**Nobile (2020)**

# “Treasure” (Bruno Mars)

Vocal

Oh whoa\_\_\_\_\_ oh. I know that you don't know it but you're fine, so fine. (Fine, so fine. ) Oh

Bb Abmaj7 Gm7 Fm7 Gm7 Bb Cm Bb

Guitar (R)

Bass

Vocal

whoa\_\_\_\_\_ oh. Oh girl I'm gon-na show you when you're mine, all mine. (Mine, all mine.)

Abmaj7 Gm7 Fm7 Ab/Bb

Guitar (R)

Bass



# “Treasure” (Bruno Mars)

Vocal

Oh whoa\_\_\_\_\_ oh. I know that you don't know it but you're fine, so fine. (Fine, so fine. ) Oh

Guitar (R)

Bass

**IVmaj7 iii<sup>7</sup> ii<sup>7</sup> iii<sup>7</sup> V vi V**

Vocal

whoa\_\_\_\_\_ oh. Oh girl I'm gon-na show you when you're mine, all mine. (Mine, all mine.)

Guitar (R)

Bass

**IVmaj7 iii<sup>7</sup> ii<sup>7</sup> V<sup>9</sup>sus4**

# “Absent” Tonic?

## “Treasure” (Bruno Mars)

Vocal

Oh whoa\_\_\_\_\_ oh. I know that you don't know it but you're fine, so fine. (Fine, so fine. ) Oh

Guitar (R)

Bass

**IVmaj7 iii7 ii7 iii7 V vi V**

Vocal

whoa\_\_\_\_\_ oh. Oh girl I'm gon-na show you when you're mine, all mine. (Mine, all mine.)

Guitar (R)

Bass

**IVmaj7 iii7 ii7 V9sus4**

# “Treasure” (Bruno Mars)

Vocal

Oh whoa\_\_\_\_\_ oh. I know that you don't know it but you're fine, so fine. (Fine, so fine.) Oh

Guitar (R)

Bass

$Bb$   $A\flat$   $maj7$   $Gm^7$   $Fm^7$   $Gm^7$   $Bb$   $Cm$   $Bb$

$IV^{maj7}$   $iii^7$   $ii^7$   $iii^7$   $V$   $vi$   $V$

Detailed description: This system shows the first line of music for 'Treasure'. It includes vocal, guitar, and bass staves. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line starts with 'Oh whoa\_\_\_\_\_ oh.' and is circled in red. The guitar and bass parts provide accompaniment. Chord symbols are written below the guitar staff, and Roman numerals are written below the bass staff.

Vocal

whoa\_\_\_\_\_ oh. Oh girl I'm gon-na show you when you're mine, all mine. (Mine, all mine.)

Guitar (R)

Bass

$A\flat$   $maj7$   $Gm^7$   $Fm^7$   $A\flat/B\flat$

$IV^{maj7}$   $iii^7$   $ii^7$   $V^9sus4$

Detailed description: This system shows the second line of music for 'Treasure'. It includes vocal, guitar, and bass staves. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line starts with 'whoa\_\_\_\_\_ oh.' and is circled in red. The guitar and bass parts provide accompaniment. Chord symbols are written below the guitar staff, and Roman numerals are written below the bass staff.

# Nashville Chart

## “Rolling in the Deep” (Adele)

Handwritten Nashville chart for “Rolling in the Deep” (Adele). The chart is organized into several sections:

- Top Section:** Contains rhythmic patterns and notes.
  - Left side: A box containing a 'V' symbol, followed by a vertical line with a colon and '6-' below it.
  - Middle: A sequence of notes:  $6^-$ ,  $\frac{\overset{\sim}{|}|}{3^-}$ ,  $6^-$ ,  $\frac{\overset{\sim}{|}|}{3^-}$ .
  - Right side: A sequence of notes:  $3^-$ ,  $\frac{\overset{\sim}{|}|}{5}$ ,  $3^-$ ,  $\frac{\overset{\sim}{|}|}{5}$ .
  - Far right: A boxed-in section with two rows of notes:
 

5	3-	3-	5
└	└	└	└
- Second Section:** Labeled 'Band IN' and 'Chnl' in a box.
 

4	5	3-	4
---	---	----	---
- Third Section:** Labeled '□' s'.
 

4	5	3-	<u>3</u>
---	---	----	----------
- Fourth Section:** Labeled 'C' in a box.
 

6-	5	4	<u>45</u>
6-	5	4	<u>45</u>

Williams (2017)

# Nashville Chart

## “Rolling in the Deep” (Adele)

Handwritten Nashville chart for “Rolling in the Deep” (Adele). The chart is organized into four columns representing measures and includes several rows of notation.

**Row 1: Add Kick**  
 A box containing a 'V' symbol is followed by a vertical line with a colon and a '6' below it. This is followed by two measures of notation:  $6^- \begin{array}{c} \text{|||} \\ 3^- \end{array}$  and  $3^- \begin{array}{c} \text{|||} \\ 5 \end{array}$ . The notes **Cm** and **Bb** are written in red below the first and second measures respectively.

**Row 2: Band IN**  
 A box containing the word 'Chml' is followed by four measures of notation:  $Ab$  4,  $Bb$  5,  $Gm$  3-, and  $Ab$  4. The notes are written in red.

**Row 3: □'s**  
 A box containing a square symbol is followed by four measures of notation: 4, 5, 3-, and 3.

**Row 4: [C]**  
 A box containing a 'C' symbol is followed by four measures of notation:  $Cm$  6-,  $Bb$  5,  $Ab$  4, and 45. The notes are written in red.

**Row 5:**  
 A box containing a 'C' symbol is followed by four measures of notation: 6-, 5, 4, and 45. A double bar line is at the end of this row.

**Row 6:**  
 A box containing a 'C' symbol is followed by four measures of notation: 6-, 5, 4, and 45. A double bar line is at the end of this row.

**Row 7:**  
 A box containing a 'C' symbol is followed by four measures of notation: 5, 3-, 3-, and 5. Below each measure is a vertical line with a colon and a '3' below it. A double bar line is at the end of this row.

Williams (2017)

# Nashville Chart

## “Rolling in the Deep” (Adele)

Handwritten Nashville chart for “Rolling in the Deep” (Adele). The chart is organized into three main sections: a top section for “Add Kick” and “V”, a middle section for “Band IN” and “Drums”, and a bottom section for “C” (Cymbals).

**Top Section (Add Kick / V):**

- Measure 1: **Cm** (6-)
- Measure 2: **Gm** (6- 3-)
- Measure 3: **Bb** (3- 5)
- Measure 4: **Bb** (5 3- 3- 5)

**Middle Section (Band IN / Drums):**

- Measure 1: **Ab** 4
- Measure 2: **Bb** 5
- Measure 3: **Gm** 3-
- Measure 4: **Ab** 4

**Bottom Section (C):**

- Measure 1: **Cm** (6-)
- Measure 2: **Bb** 5
- Measure 3: **Ab** 4
- Measure 4: **G7!** (4 5)

Additional notes and markings include “Add Kick” and “V” in the top left, “Band IN” and “Drums” on the left side, and various rhythmic notations like “6-”, “3-”, and “5” throughout the chart.

Williams (2017)

# Some Stats

<b>All, Do Minor (n = 200)</b>		
<b>Root</b>	<b>Instances</b>	<b>% total</b>
I	6,077	33.2
IV	4,143	22.7
V	3,121	17.1
bVII	1,347	7.4
VI	1,116	6.1
II	864	4.7
bVI	662	3.6
bIII	410	2.2
III	398	2.2
bII	56	0.3
VII	52	0.3
#IV	43	0.2

**(from the RS 200)**

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$\sharp$ IV	43	0.2

<b>Major Tonic (n = 154)</b>		
<b>Root</b>	<b>Instances</b>	<b>% total</b>
I	4,507	34.0
IV	3,442	26.0
V	2,502	18.9
VI	1,007	7.6
$\flat$ VII	596	4.5
II	587	4.4
III	359	2.7
$\flat$ III	82	0.6
$\flat$ VI	66	0.5
VII	43	0.3
$\sharp$ IV	31	0.2
$\flat$ II	22	0.2

**(from the RS 200)**



# Some Stats

<b>Do Minor Tonic (n = 32)</b>		
<b>Root</b>	<b>Instances</b>	<b>% total</b>
I	1,128	33.1
bVII	535	15.7
V	450	13.2
bVI	448	13.2
IV	441	13.0
bIII	274	8.0
II	83	2.4
bII	24	0.7
#IV	12	0.4
VI	8	0.2
III	2	0.1
VII	0	0.0

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III	2	0.1	#IV	31	0.2
VII	0	0.0	bII	22	0.2

**Chi-Squared  $\approx$  28,000**

# Some Stats

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<b>Root</b>	<b>Instances</b>	<b>% total</b>
VI	1,128	33.1
V	535	15.7
III	450	13.2
IV	448	13.2
II	441	13.0
I	274	8.0
VII	83	2.4
$\flat$ VII	24	0.7
$\flat$ III	12	0.4
$\sharp$ IV	8	0.2
$\flat$ II	2	0.1
$\flat$ VI	0	0.0

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$\flat$ VI	66	0.5
VII	43	0.3
$\sharp$ IV	31	0.2
$\flat$ II	22	0.2

**Chi-Squared  $\approx$  2,800**

# Patterns of Harmony

## Major Key

I

ii

iii

IV

V

vi

vii<sup>o</sup>

# Patterns of Harmony

## Major Key

I      ii      iii      IV      V      vi      ~~vii~~

All, La Minor (n = 200)		
Root	Instances	% total
I	4,781	28.7
IV	3,890	23.4
V	3,037	18.2
VI	2,135	12.8
II	1,028	6.2
III	809	4.9
$\flat$ VII	620	3.7
VII	126	0.8
$\flat$ III	94	0.6
$\flat$ VI	66	0.4
$\sharp$ IV	39	0.2
$\flat$ II	24	0.1

# Patterns of Harmony

## Major Key

I      ii      iii      IV      V      vi       $\flat$ VII

All, La Minor (n = 200)		
Root	Instances	% total
I	4,781	28.7
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$\flat$ II	24	0.1



# Patterns of Harmony

## Major Key

I      ii      iii      IV      V      vi      bVII

## Minor Key

i      ii<sup>o</sup>      bIII      iv      v or V      bVI      bVII

All, La Minor (n = 200)		
Root	Instances	% total
I	4,781	28.7
IV	3,890	23.4
V	3,037	18.2
VI	2,135	12.8
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III	809	4.9
bVII	620	3.7
VII	126	0.8
bIII	94	0.6
bVI	66	0.4
#IV	39	0.2
bII	24	0.1

# Patterns of Harmony

## Major Key

I      ii      iii      IV      V      vi       $\flat$ VII

## Minor Key

vi       $\flat$ VII      I      ii      iii or III      IV      V

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# “Axis” Progression (and rotations)

C

G

Am

F

G

Am

F

C

Am

F

C

G

F

C

G

Am

# “Axis” Progression (and rotations)

C	G	Am	F
I	V	vi	IV
G	Am	F	C
Am	F	C	G
<i>i</i>	<i>bVI</i>	<i>bIII</i>	<i>bVII</i>
F	C	G	Am

# “Umbrella” (Rihanna)

## Chorus

G $\flat$	D $\flat$	A $\flat$	B $\flat$ m
G $\flat$	D $\flat$	A $\flat$	B $\flat$ m

## Post-Chorus

G $\flat$	A $\flat$	F	B $\flat$ m
G $\flat$	A $\flat$	F	B $\flat$ m

## Bridge

C $\flat$	G $\flat$	D $\flat$	D $\flat$
C $\flat$	G $\flat$	F	F

# “Umbrella” (Rihanna)

## Chorus

G $\flat$	D $\flat$	A $\flat$	B $\flat$ m
IV	I	V	vi
G $\flat$	D $\flat$	A $\flat$	B $\flat$ m
IV	I	V	vi

## Post-Chorus

G $\flat$	A $\flat$	F	B $\flat$ m
IV	V	III	vi
G $\flat$	A $\flat$	F	B $\flat$ m
IV	V	III	vi

## Bridge

C $\flat$	G $\flat$	D $\flat$	D $\flat$
$\flat$ VII	IV	I	I
C $\flat$	G $\flat$	F	F
$\flat$ VII	IV	III	III

# THANK YOU!

## Works Cited:

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