

# **A Corpus Analysis of Harmony in Country Music**

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TENNESSEE**

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Music Cognition and Music Informatics  
Joint Interest Group Meeting

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Society for Music Theory Conference

# CHAPTER ONE

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## THE BACKGROUND

# Music Theory/Analysis Research on Harmony in “Rock”

- “A Corpus Analysis of **Rock** Harmony” (de Clercq & Temperley 2011)
- “Statistical Analysis of Harmony and Melody in **Rock** Music” (Temperley & de Clercq 2013)

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- “The So-Called ‘Flattened-Seventh’ in **Rock**” (Moore 1995)
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- “A Corpus Analysis of **Rock** Harmony” (de Clercq & Temperley 2011)
- “The Cadential IV in **Rock**” (Temperley 2012)
- “Statistical Analysis of Harmony and Melody in **Rock** Music” (Temperley & de Clercq 2013)
- “Modal Tonicization in **Rock**” (Clement 2013)
- “Counterpoint in **Rock** Music” (Nobile 2015)
- “Harmonic Functions in **Rock** Music” (Nobile 2016)
- *Hearing Harmony: Toward a Tonal Theory for the **Rock** Era* (Doll 2017)
- “**Rock** Harmony Reconsidered” (Osborn 2017)
- *The Musical Language of **Rock*** (Temperley 2018)

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- *The Musical Language of **Rock*** (Temperley 2018)
- “British **Pop-Rock** Music in the Post-Beatles Era” (Spicer 2001)
- “Neo-Riemannian Theory and the Analysis of **Pop-Rock** Music” (Capuzzo 2004)
- “Retrogressive Harmonic Motion... (in) **Pop-Rock** Music” (Carter 2005)
- *Expression in **Pop-Rock** Music* (Everett 2008)
- “Guitar Voicing in **Pop-Rock** Music” (Koozin 2011)
- “Anti-Circles as... Model for Harmonic Motion in **Pop-Rock** Music” (Traut 2015)
- “Fragile, Emergent, and Absent Tonics in **Pop and Rock** Songs” (Spicer 2017)

## BACKGROUND

# Genre Share of Listenership in the U.S., 2016 Year-End Report (Nielsen 2017)

<b>Rock</b>	29%
R&B/Hip-Hop	22%
<b>Pop</b>	13%
Country	10%
Dance/Electronic	4%
Christian/Gospel	3%
Latin	3%
Holiday/Seasonal	2%
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# **Harmony in Country Music**

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# **Harmony in Country Music**

Harlan Howard: Country music is “three chords and the truth” (in Dansby 2002).

Jocelyn Neal: “Musically, there is a pervading misconception that {country music} relies on three-chord harmonic progressions” (1998, 322).

# Harmony in Country Music

**A** | I KNOW YOU WON'T |  $\text{♩} = 74$

(I) (PNO, CELLO, A. GTR.) (VI)

$\begin{array}{c} 4 \\ 4 \end{array}$  | 1 4- | 1 4- |  $\begin{array}{c} \text{VI} \\ 1 \end{array}$  | 4- 6- | 1<sup>9</sup>

---

4 4- |  $\begin{array}{c} \text{C1} \\ 6- \end{array}$  3<sup>7</sup> | 2<sup>#4</sup> 4 1/3

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2-<sup>7</sup> 1/3 4 5 ||  $\begin{array}{c} \text{T} \\ 1 \end{array}$  4- | V2  
(1X ONLY)

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C2  $\begin{array}{c} \text{C3} \\ 6- \end{array}$  3<sup>#5</sup> | 2<sup>#4</sup> 4 1/3

---

2-<sup>7</sup> 1/3 4 5 4 4-  $\begin{array}{c} \text{V} \end{array}$

**BACKGROUND**

# Harmony in Country Music

**[A] I KNOW YOU WON'T**  $\text{♩} = 74$

(I) (PNO, CELLO, A. GTR.) (V1)

$\frac{4}{4}$  1  **$\frac{4-}{1}$**  1  $\frac{4-}{1}$   $\frac{4-}{1}$   $\frac{6-}{1}$  1<sup>9</sup>

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4 4-  $\frac{4-}{1}$  (C1) 6- 3<sup>7</sup> 1  $\frac{2}{\#4}$  4  $\frac{1}{3}$

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2<sup>-7</sup>  $\frac{1}{3}$  4 5 || (T) 1  $\frac{4-}{1}$  **V2 (1X ONLY)**

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**(C2)** (C3) 6-  $\frac{3}{\#5}$  1  $\frac{2}{\#4}$  4  $\frac{1}{3}$

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2<sup>-7</sup>  $\frac{1}{3}$  4  $\hat{5}$  4  $\hat{4}$ -  $\square$

**BACKGROUND**

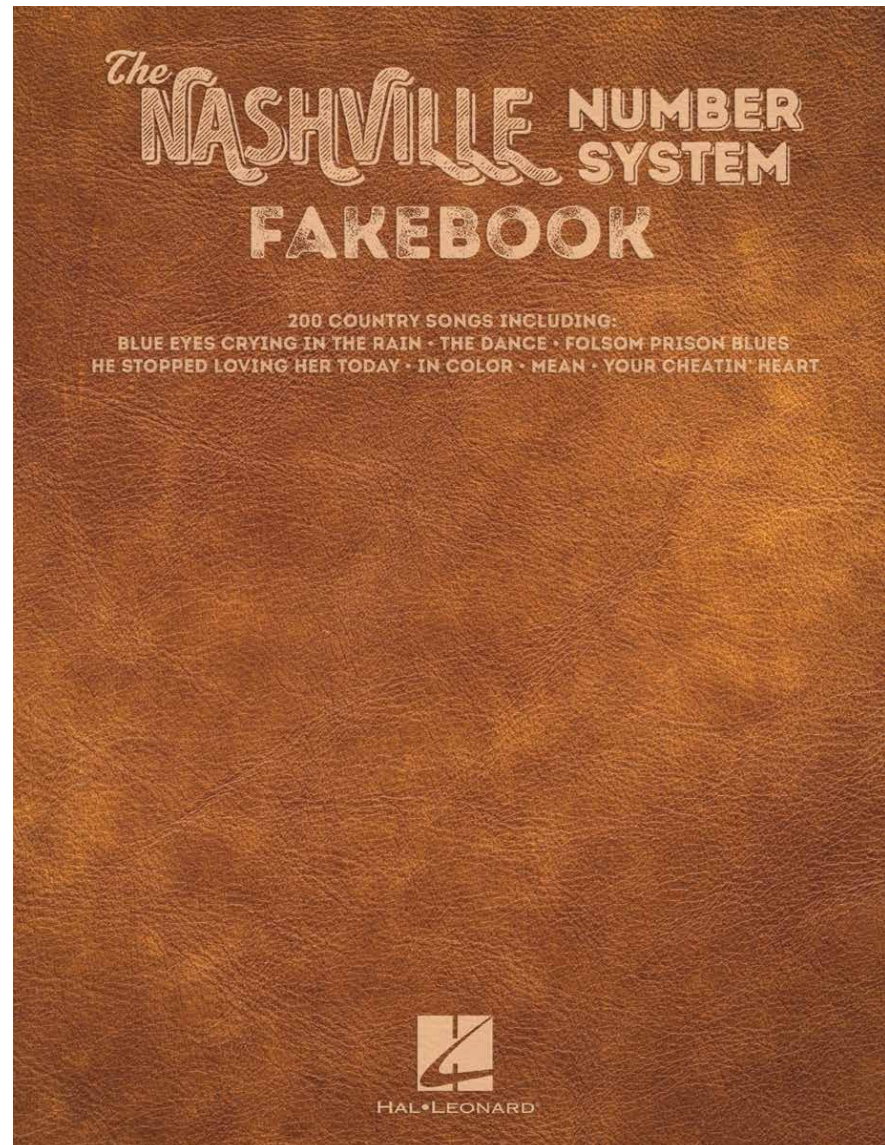
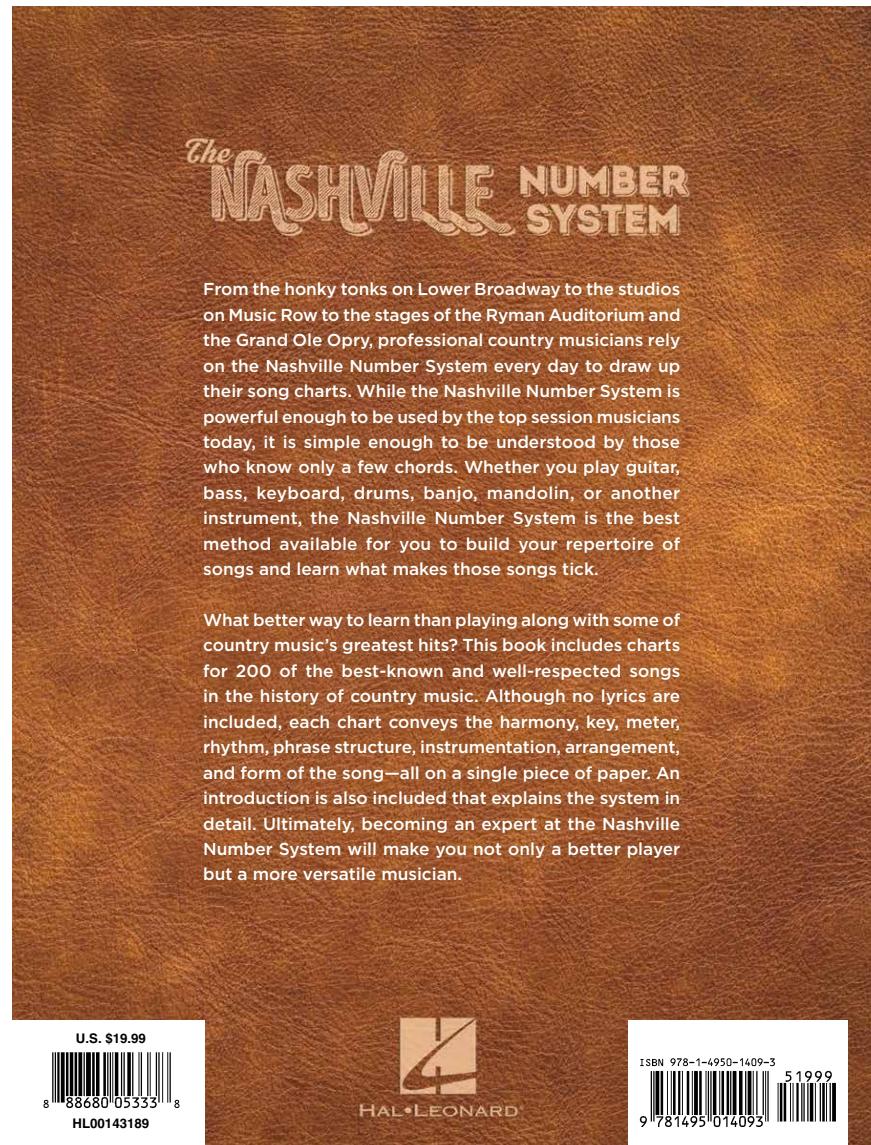
# CHAPTER TWO

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## THE METHODS



# ***The Nashville Number System Fakebook*** **(de Clercq 2015)**



# Chart of "80's Ladies" (K. T. Oslin, 1987)

KEY OF C

$\frac{4}{4}$  ♩ = 100

## 80's LADIES (K. T. OSLIN)

SPARSE TEXTURE

IN)  $1^2$   $\frac{1^2}{3}$   $4^2$   $5^9_4$

$1^2$   $\frac{1^2}{3}$   $4^2$   $5^9_4$

---

VR) 1  $2^{-7}$   $\frac{1}{3}$   $4^2$

1  $\underline{1^6_4 < 1}$  1 5

1  $2^{-7}$   $\frac{1}{3}$   $4^2$

1  $\underline{1^6_4 < 1}$  5 5

1  $\underline{5^7}$

---

FULL TEXTURE

CH) 1  $\underline{\overset{...}{1}} 5$  4 4

1  $1^{\Delta 9}$  6- 6- 6-

5 5 5 5

---

SPARSE

LN)  $1^2$   $\frac{1^2}{3}$   $4^2$   $5^9_4$

VR) 1  $2^{-7}$   $\frac{1}{3}$   $4^2$

1  $\underline{1^6_4 < 1}$  1 5

1  $2^{-7}$   $\frac{1}{3}$   $4^2$

1  $\underline{1^6_4 < 1}$  5 1

---

FULL TEXTURE

BR) 6- 5 4  $\underline{\overset{...}{4}} 5$

6- 5 4  $5^9_4$   $\diamond 5$

---

CH) 1  $\underline{\overset{...}{1}} 5$  4 4

1  $1^{\Delta 9}$  6- 6- 6-

5 5 5 5

---

SPARSE

OUT)  $1^2$   $\frac{1^2}{3}$   $4^2$   $5^9_4$

$1^2$   $\frac{1^2}{3}$   $4^2$   $5^9_4$

(REPEAT OUTRO & FADE)

# Encoded Excerpt of “80’s Ladies”

% Title: 80's Ladies  
% Artist: K. T. Oslin  
% Copyright: 1987  
[Key: C]  
[Meter: 4/4]  
[Tempo: QN = 100]  
[Feel: Normal]

In:	12	12/3	42	594
	12	12/3	42	594

Vr:	1	2-7	1/3	42
	1	(164 <1)	1	5
	1	2-7	1/3	42
	1	(164 <1)	5	5
	1	57		

Ch:	1	(1.. 5)	4	4	
	1	1M9	6-	6-	6-
	5	5	5	5	

## METHODS

# **Songs in the *Rolling Stone* magazine “500 greatest songs of all time”**

Rank	Title	Artist	Year
1	Like a Rolling Stone	Bob Dylan	1965
2	Satisfaction	The Rolling Stones	1965
3	Imagine	John Lennon	1971
4	What's Going On	Marvin Gaye	1971
5	Respect	Aretha Franklin	1967
6	Good Vibrations	The Beach Boys	1966
7	Johnny B. Goode	Chuck Berry	1958
8	Hey Jude	The Beatles	1968
9	Smells Like Teen Spirit	Nirvana	1991
10	What'd I Say	Ray Charles	1959
11	My Generation	The Who	1965
12	A Change Is Gonna Come	Sam Cooke	1964
13	Yesterday	The Beatles	1965
14	Blowin' in the Wind	Bob Dylan	1963
15	London Calling	The Clash	1980
16	I Want to Hold Your Hand	The Beatles	1963
17	Purple Haze	The Jimi Hendrix Experience	1967
18	Maybellene	Chuck Berry	1955
19	Hound Dog	Elvis Presley	1956
20	Let It Be	The Beatles	1970



# Sources for the Songs (de Clercq 2015)

- *Academy of Country Music*. 1967-2014. "Single of the Year."
- *Academy of Country Music*. 1967-2014. "Song of the Year."
- *Allmusic*. 2015. "Country Song Highlights."
- *American Music Award*. 1974-1995. "Favorite Country Single."
- *Billboard*. 1946-2014. "Year-End #1 Country Singles."
- *Billboard*. 2014. "Top 70 Country Songs 1989-2014."
- *Billboard*. 2008. "Billboard 50th Anniversary Charts: All-Time Top Country Songs."
- *Country Music Television*. 2003. "CMT 100 Greatest Songs of Country Music."
- *Country Music Association*. 1967-2014. "Single of the Year."
- *Country Music Association*. 1967-2014. "Song of the Year."
- *Nashville Songwriters Association International*. 1967-2014. "NSAI Song of the Year."
- *The Recording Academy*. 1965-2014. "Grammy Award for Best Country Song."
- *Rolling Stone*. 2014. "100 Greatest Country Songs of All Time."
- *Taste of Country*. 2012. "Top 100 Country Songs."

## METHODS

# A Meta-List of Country Songs

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	Score	Song Title	Artist	Year	BB70	BB50	BBYE	GCS	CMAI	CMA2	ACM
2	10	He Stopped Loving Her Today	George Jones	1980				N	W	W	
3	9	I Hope You Dance	Lee Ann Womack	2000				W	W	W	
4	9	Amazed	Lonestar	1999	4	27	I	N			
5	9	Rhinestone Cowboy	Glen Campbell	1975		6	I		W		
6	9	Behind Closed Doors	Charlie Rich	1973				W	W	W	
7	8	Live Like Your Were Dying	Tim McGraw	2004	13		I	W	W	W	
8	8	Chattahoochee	Alan Jackson	1995	42		I	N	W	W	
9	8	I Swear	John Michael Montgomery	1995	50		I	W		W	
10	8	Forever and Ever, Amen	Randy Travis	1987				W	W	W	
11	8	Always on My Mind	Willie Nelson	1982			I	W	W	W	
12	7	Need You Now	Lady Antebellum	2009	11			W		W	
13	7	Where Were You (When the World...)	Alan Jackson	2001				W	W	W	
14	7	Friends in Low Places	Garth Brooks	1990	26			N		W	
15	7	Lucille	Kenny Rogers	1977				N	W	W	
16	6	The House That Built Me	Miranda Lambert	2010				N	W		
17	6	Holes in the Floor of Heaven	Steve Wariner	1998				N	W	W	
18	6	It's Your Love	Tim McGraw and Faith Hill	1997	7		I	N			
19	6	Strawberry Wine	Deana Carter	1997				N	W	W	
20	6	Achy Breaky Heart	Billy Ray Cyrus	1992	41			N		W	
21	6	Before the Next Teardrop Falls	Freddy Fender	1974		21		N		W	

## METHODS

# CHAPTER THREE

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## THE RESULTS

# Songs with X or Fewer Chords

	NN 200	
1 chord	0	0.0%
$\leq 2$ chords	3	1.5%
$\leq 3$ chords	53	26.5%

**RESULTS**

# Songs with X or Fewer Chords

	NN 200		RS 200 *
1 chord	0	0.0%	2.5%
≤ 2 chords	3	1.5%	5.0%
≤ 3 chords	53	26.5%	28.5%

**RESULTS**

\* Temperley and de Clercq (2013)

# Songs with X or Fewer Chords

	NN 200		RS 200 *
1 chord	0	0.0%	2.5%
≤ 2 chords	3	1.5%	5.0%
≤ 3 chords	53	26.5%	28.5%
≤ 4 chords	100	50.0%	48.0%

**RESULTS**

\* Temperley and de Clercq (2013)

# **Triad Types in the NN 200, Ranked by Frequency**

<b>Triad</b>	<b>Instances</b>	
I	4,602	32.7%
V	3,586	25.5%
IV	3,360	23.8%

**Instances of I, IV, V in NN 200: 82%**

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(major-key songs only)**

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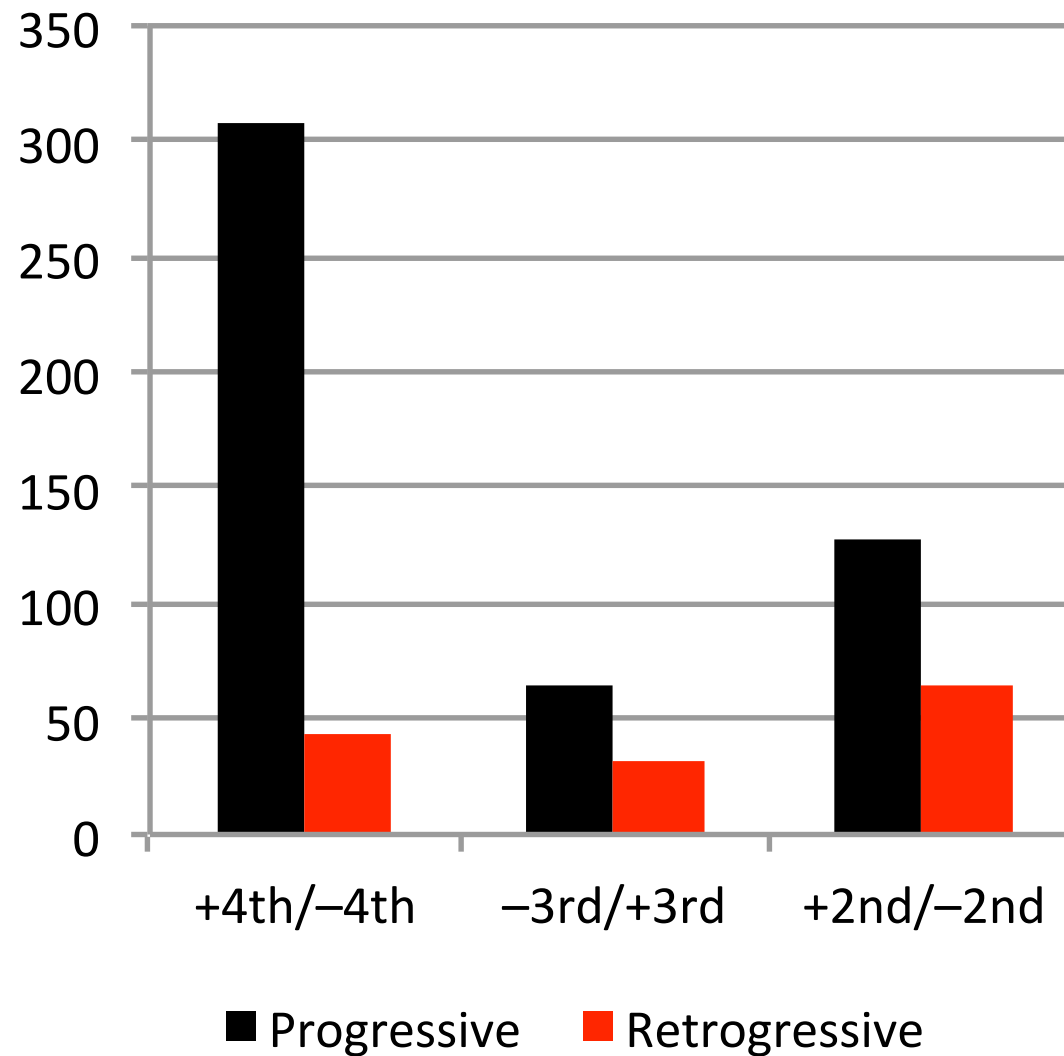
**Instances of I, IV, V in NN 200: 82%**

**Instances of I, IV, V in RS 200: 79%  
(major-key songs only)**

**Instances of I, IV, V in early CP: 75%  
(c. 1700 – 1830, Budge 1943)**

**RESULTS**

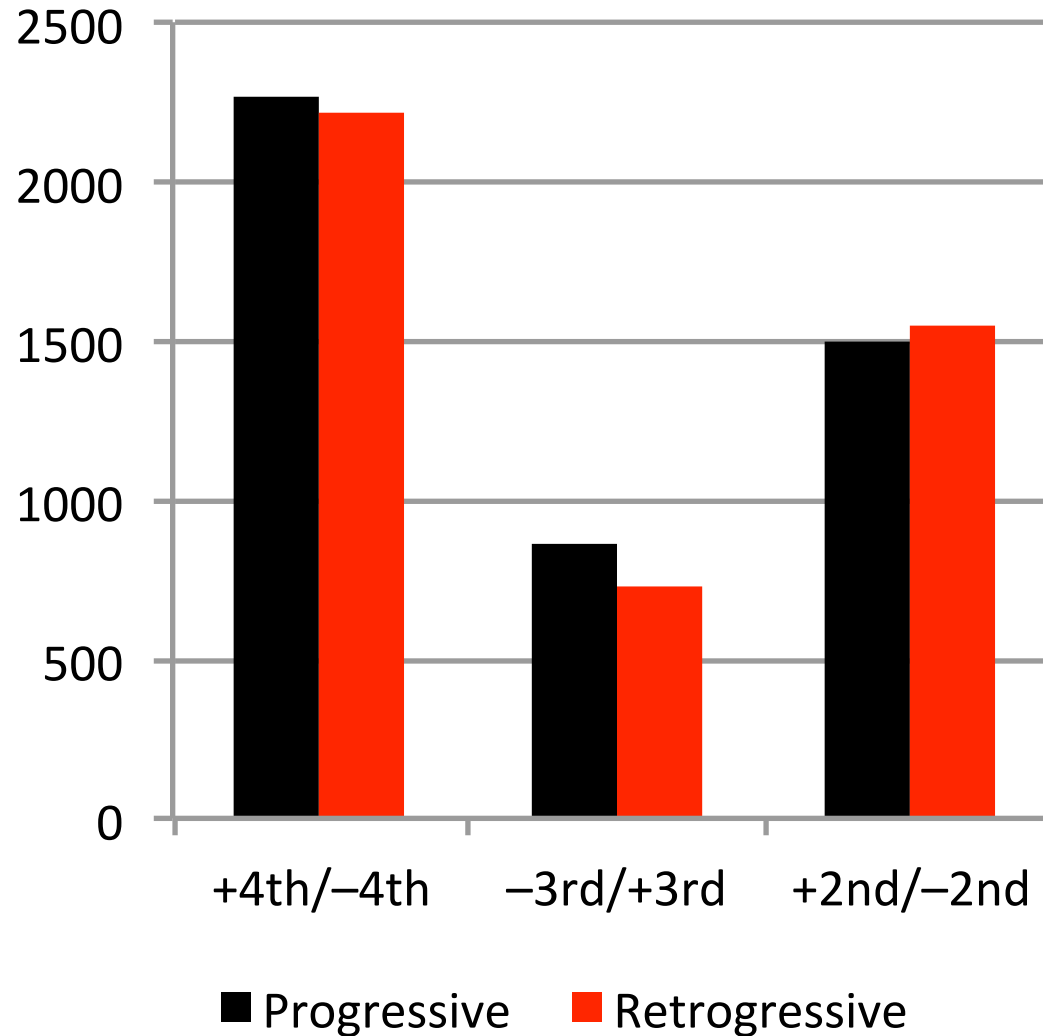
# Root Motion in Common-Practice Music (Temperley 2009)



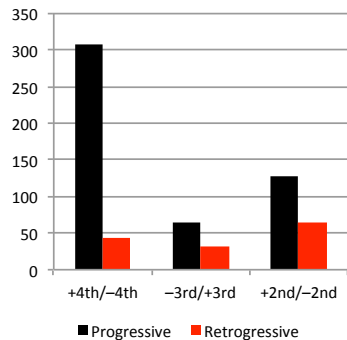
**RESULTS**

# Root Motion in Rock Music

## (de Clercq & Temperley 2011)



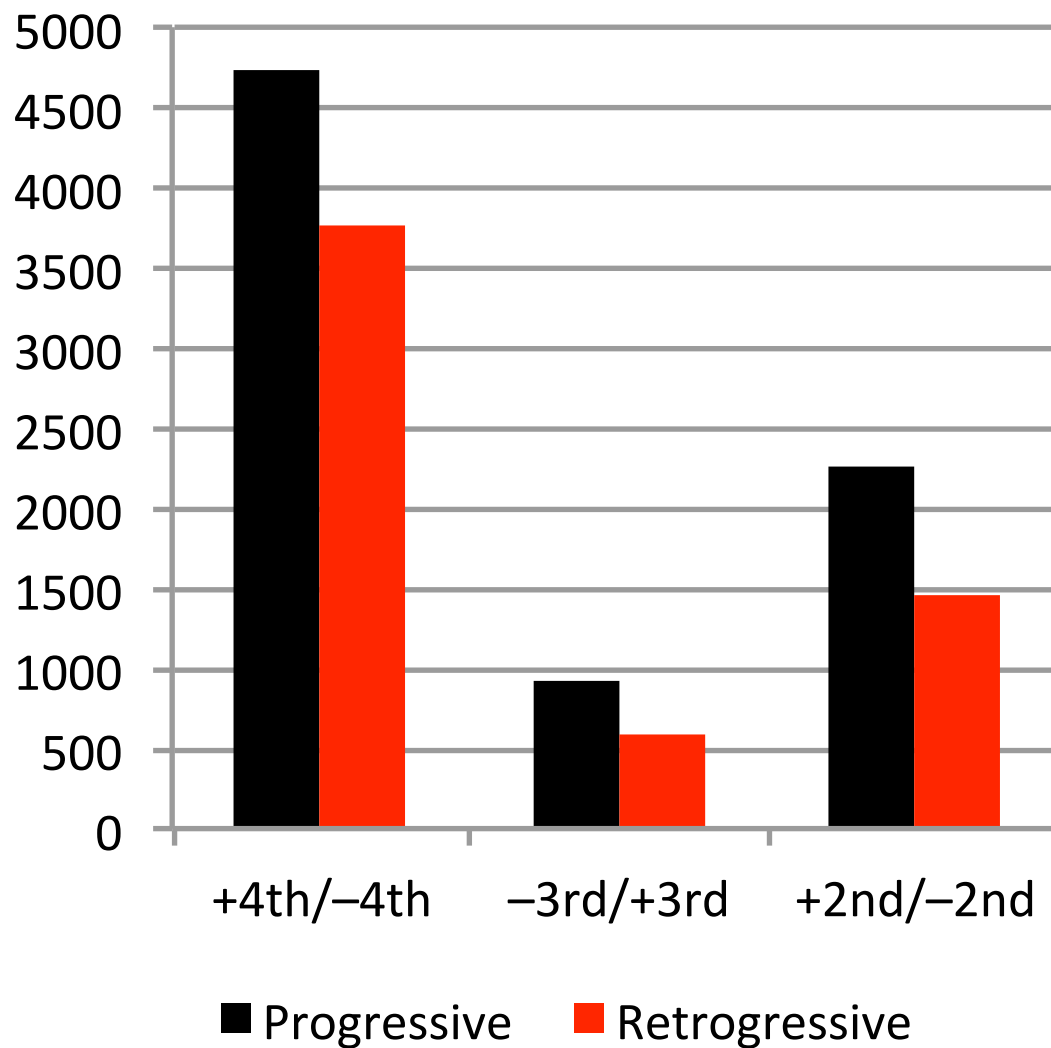
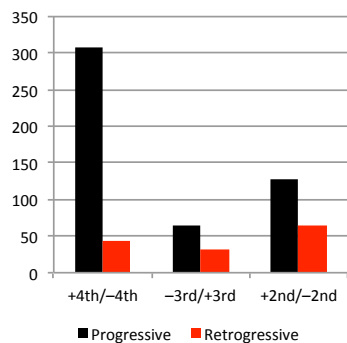
### C-P Music



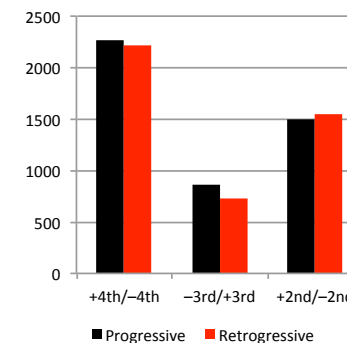
**RESULTS**

# Root Motion in Country Music (the NN 200)

## C-P Music



## Rock



**RESULTS**

# THANK YOU!

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