

Writing & Theory in the Key of D Major

Hi folks, trust you're all well. Lockdown's easing up but make sure you're staying creative and working on some new musical ideas to bring to sessions when Core Arts opens back up. Try to get some fresh air and/or exercise every day - Core Sports has many indoor and outdoor activities you can take part in so get in contact with your membership representative if you have any questions about that.

This week we're going to look at writing a song in the key of D Major. We'll look at a little bit of theory but try to keep it light.

- **What is the key of D Major?**

The key of D Major (or just 'D') is a musical scale of 7 notes that belong in the key of D Major. These 7 notes played in order are all of the notes you would expect to find when a piece of music is written in the key of D Major.

- **What are the notes in the D Major scale?**

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| D | E | F# | G | A | B | C# |

- **After the note of C# the pattern of notes repeats itself**

If you were playing on a piano you could start at the lowest note of D on the left hand side and play the scale of D Major repeatedly over and over until you reached the highest note of D on the right hand side of the piano.

- **What chords are in the key of D Major?**

As with all musical keys whether it be D Major, C major, or A Minor the chords in the key are based on the individual notes in the scale.

Below are the representative chords for each each note in the key of D Major

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---------|---------|----------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Chord | D Major | E minor | F# minor | G Major | A Major | B minor | C# minor |
| Chord Shorthand | D | Em | F#m | G | A | Bm | C#m |

Activity:

- Play the scale of D Major using only the root notes of each chord
- Play the scale of D Major using the fully voiced chords

- **When writing music you can use a selection of any of the chords in the key**

However, some chords are going to sound better when played in sequence with each other than others. As students of music it is our job to listen to the chords and figure out which ones sound nice when played with each other and in which order.

- **Alternating between the 1st chord of D Major and the 5th chord of D Major sounds harmonic and pleasing to the ear**

This would mean that you played one bar of D Major and one bar of G Major and then repeated this chord sequence over and over. These chords sound good together - and to that in every single key if you alternate between the 1st chord of the key and the 5th chord of the key the resulting chord sequence will always sound harmonically pleasing.

Activity:

- Find as many harmonically pleasing 2 chord sequences as you can
- Make sure that the first chord of the 2 chord sequence is always D major

- **You're only limit is what sounds good, or nice, to your own ears**

As i've said before - the only hard and fast rules in music are there to be manipulated, bent and sometimes wholly ignored!

Activity:

- Using the chords from D Major create 2 lists of 4 chord sequences
- One list should be titled 'I like' and the other list should be entitled 'I don't like'
- Try to find 4 chord sequences for each list
- Think about: Which was the easier list to complete? Why might that be?

I'm really looking forward to seeing the kind of lists you've come up with once sessions are back on at Core.

Take care,

Sam