



Listening Skills

Major and Minor Tonality in Pop and Rock





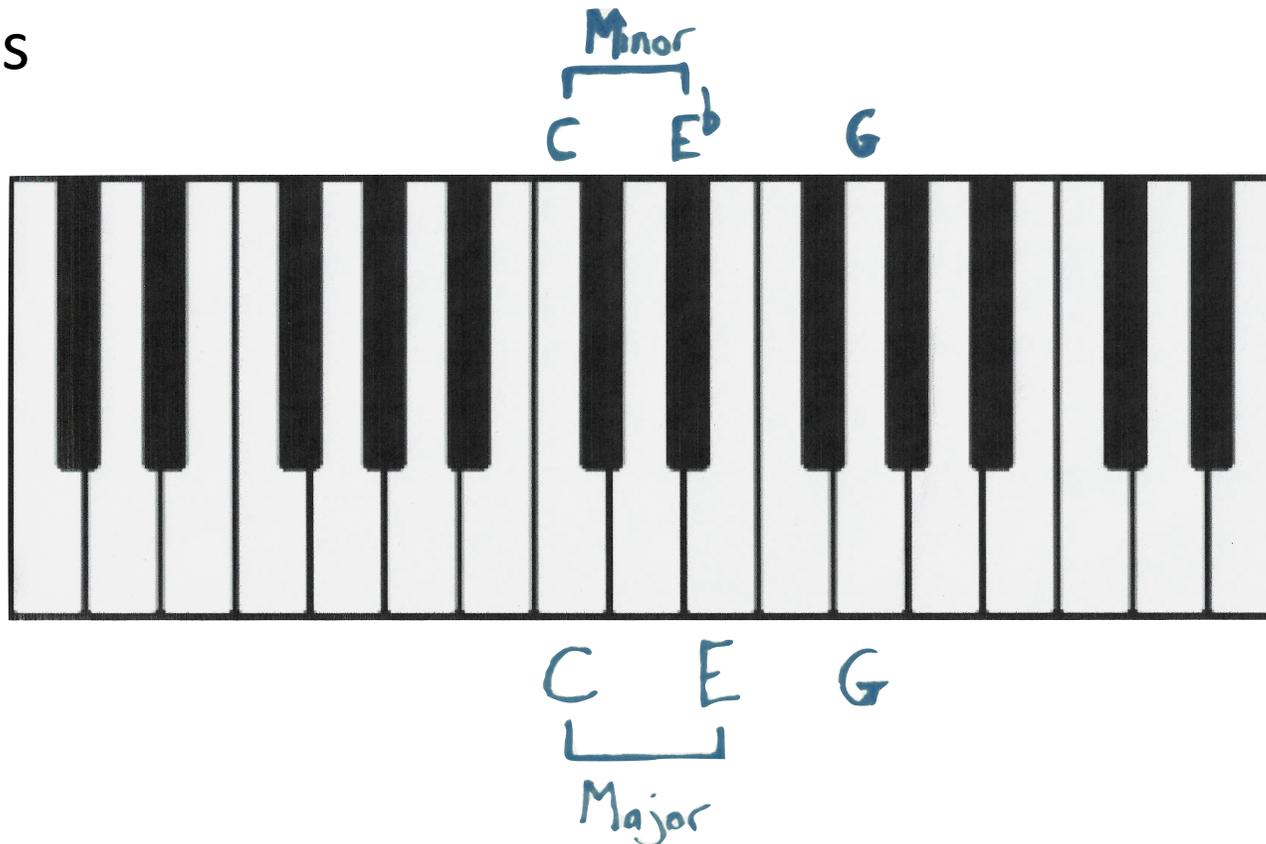
Happy and Sad

- Often when learning how to work out songs and chord progressions, we're told to listen for 'happy' major chords and 'sad' minor chords
- This doesn't always help
 - Music can represent any emotion, not just happy or sad
 - Songs will have a mixture of major and minor that change the overall sound into something more emotionally complex
 - Happy or sad lyrics might be contrasting against the music and distract you from hearing the actual chords



Major and Minor

- We use these terms to differentiate between a triad (three notes played simultaneously) with a small or large interval between the first two notes





Radiohead

- Creep

|G /// |B /// |C /// |Cm /// |

- Exit Music (For A Film)

|Am /// |E /// |C /// |D /// |

|Am /// |E /// |A_{sus}⁴ /// |A /// |



Activity - Part 1

- Write a four bar loop
- Use all major chords
- For example - |E /// |A /// |D /// |G /// |
- Play it and listen to the interactions between the chords



Activity - Part 2

- Alter all the chords so they're minor
- For example - |Em / / / |Am / / / |Dm / / / |Gm / / / |
- Play it again and listen to how it's changed



Activity - Part 3

- Now choose a mixture of major and minor
- Keep swapping around until you've found a combination you like
- For example - |Em /// |Am /// |D /// |G /// |
- Listen to how altering just one of the chords completely changes the sound



Practice

- Just like any aspect of music, listening is something you can practise
- When you listen to a song you like, try to work out which chords you think are major and which are minor, then check with an instrument or look online



Thank
You