



Writing Music Tips from Musician Leo McFadden

Song writing combines two genres in one. Not only are you writing lyrics, but you are also setting them to music. This process can be a little bit like changing a recipe as you cook—modifying the ingredients and measurements to match the taste you’re going for. Musician Leo McFadden has some fantastic tips for helping songwriters write (and play) their way to a hit:

- You don’t need to reinvent the wheel! “[Blackbird](#)” by The Beatles started when Paul and George learnt Bach’s “[Bouree](#)” to impress girls at parties. Paul was mucking around with some of the chords—mashing them up a bit—and started Blackbird from there. If you listen to “Blackbird” it sounds nothing like “Bouree”, but “Blackbird” is a masterpiece in itself. So “Bouree” served as a departure point for “Blackbird” to come into being. There’s nothing new under the sun!
- The chordal accompaniment for almost every pop song can be explained with [four simple chords*](#) These four chords form the harmony over which your melody will be heard. The harmony is the collection of chords that your piece uses and the melody is the line that is sung. The harmony is played by the backing instruments (such as guitar and piano) and the melody (or tune) is generally sung.
[Four chords for guitar](#)
[Four chords for piano](#)
[Four chords for ukulele](#)
- Sometimes people have a strong melody in their heads before they begin the lyrics. If you don’t have a tune in mind, and have written your lyrics, a simple strategy might be to loop the four chords whilst speaking your words to the rhythm in which they should be sung. Over time, a melody will come to you. Use your phone or any recording device to quickly hum your melody when it comes to you. If you wait, it might have already left you!! There are many stories of people waking up in the middle of the night and running desperately to record or write down a tune!!!



- Sometimes songwriters start with the lyrics and sometimes with the music. If you start with the music, you will be conscious that you are singing the tune when you are writing the words. If you start with the lyrics, as you flesh out the tune, you can make tweaks... some words won't seem to fit and you can change as you go.

**Please note there is some language which could be offensive at the beginning of this recording.*