Chapter 1 – Combining Lyrics and Melodies

This is actually a VERY easy part of the whole songwriting/lyric writing process (if you follow my format!)

Remember this:

Option # 1: Intro (Verse) > Verse > Chorus > Verse > Chorus

Option # 2: Intro (Chorus) > Verse > Chorus > Verse > Chorus

The option you've chosen doesn't matter. All that matters right now is structuring the song and applying the chords to the lyrics.

Here are the lyrics to the 1st verse as you will recall:

> **Verse 1**
>
> Bitter and cold, I sit behind my own reflection, looking in.
> I've drawn the line, between right and wrong.
> You've left me standing, a frozen space in time.
> But only you and I know why.

Now we just need to add the chords. We know that our verse progression is Bm, E7, Am, Dm, G7, C. We have six chords to choose from. Obviously we want to divide those two because six chords in one line is a little too complex for this basic study. So, let's divide them as Bm, E7 and Am | Dm, G7, C. We have four lines of lyrics, so you can probably guess what we want to do. Assign three chords to one line and another three chords to another line. We want to keep the progression the same, so let's just do this:

> **Verse 1**
>
> Bm E7 Am
> Bitter and cold, I sit behind my own reflection, looking in.
> Dm G7 C
> I've drawn the line, between right and wrong.
> Bm E7 Am
> You've left me standing, a frozen space in time.
> Dm G7 C
> But only you and I know why.

Of course, these chords aren't lined up. Since we are actually CREATING the song, we can't just assume that they go somewhere in particular based on listening to the original (as we could with songs from EZ Strummer – they're already 'templated' so to speak.)

This is when you have to work with not only (1) your OWN voice – even if you are only speaking the lines, but also (2) delivery of the chords in a pleasing fashion. Experimentation is the key.

After practicing this over and over, I've come to the following conclusion:

Verse 1

Bm   E7   Am
Bitter and cold, I sit behind my own reflection, looking in.
Dm   G7   C
I've drawn the line, between right and wrong.
Bm   E7   Am
You've left me standing, a frozen space in time.
Dm   G7   C
But only you and I know why.

Based on the chords being placed above the lyrics, there are a variety of time signatures, strumming patterns, and even vocal productions that can change the entire song. We're STILL not worried about that quite yet, but as I've provided some logical changes here, let's add this same format to the additional verse.

Verse 2

Bm   E7   Am
Through these bloodshot eyes maybe I've fallen behind.
Dm   G7   C
Just like you, I don't know who I should be.
Bm   E7   Am
Sometimes I wonder if you'll ever change your mind.
Dm   G7   C
Til' then I'll just stay behind.

It's really just a plug and play situation here. You can alter the chords above the lyrics at any time, as long as you stay within the feeling of the song. At the end of this session I'll be playing this song for you in a variety of ways – probably to the point that you'll either LOVE or HATE hearing this song!

Now, on to the chorus. We have a total of eight chords played in the chorus. Dm – G7 – C – F – Bb – Gm – Am – Dm. Again, let's separate these into two parts.

The first four: Dm, G7, C, F
The next four: Bb, Gm, Am, Dm

Do we have a problem here? Technically yes. However, the progression still works, so we know we CANNOT separate these in the way we did with the verse. Instead, we need to play the chorus as shown here:

Chorus

Dm   G7
How much more can I take?
C   F
When will this feeling end?
Bb   Gm
How do I erase this mistake?
Am   Dm
When will this feeling end?

We still have the same number of chords, but we've 'stretched' them to fit the space we have for the chorus. When you play the entire first verse and then the chorus provided, you'll notice that there needs to be a little bit of 'filler' between the chorus and the second verse. You'll hear it immediately. You'll feel as though it would be inappropriate for the second verse to jump in. That's when we need to decide what to do. Do we need a bridge? Not yet. In this study I won't be using a bridge. So what do we do? Will we bore the audience if we play the chorus again? Yes. What about the verse theme without singing? Does that work? Not too well. (You can try it if you wish…it's boring.) Hmmm…this whole line of "when will this feeling end?" can be utilized. REMEMBER: YOU ARE TELLING A STORY! What about a little tongue-in-cheek humor here – on guitar? Try this….

After you've picked out the Dm a bit and are ready to move back into the verse, QUICKLY try a D. The D chord is a NOTORIOUS turnaround chord for virtually any song. I think you'll like it. (Plus a minor chord to a Major chord is beautiful – and vice versa)

Here is the 'mostly' finished product thus far:

Verse 1

Bm   E7   Am
Bitter and cold, I sit behind my own reflection, looking in.
Dm   G7   C
I've drawn the line, between right and wrong.
Bm   E7   Am
You've left me standing, a frozen space in time.
Dm   G7   C
But only you and I know why.

Chorus

Dm   G7
How much more can I take?
C   F
When will this feeling end?

```
Bb            Gm
How do I erase this mistake?
Am                    Dm   D
When will this feeling end?
```

Verse 2

```
Bm                                E7            Am
Through these bloodshot eyes maybe I've fallen behind.
Dm          G7                      C
Just like you, I don't know who I should be.
Bm                                E7            Am
Sometimes I wonder if you'll ever change your mind.
Dm          G7          C
Til' then I'll just stay behind.
```

Chorus

```
Dm                G7
How much more can I take?
C                F
When will this feeling end?
Bb            Gm
How do I erase this mistake?
Am                    Dm
When will this feeling end?
```

How does it sound so far? Great? Eh? Terrible? It's a matter of opinion really.

One thing you'll definitely notice is that the song seems to 'end' at the Dm in the last chorus. You'll also notice that I removed the D, because as of right now we have nowhere to 'take it' that makes sense.

SO…how do we freaking end this song? A great way to do this without too much going on is to take the chords you've already played within the song and rearrange them. James Taylor is a PRO at this. Believe it or not, most of his songs are very repetitive. He just knows how to rearrange them.

THERE IS NO RIGHT WAY TO DO THIS! All you have to do is take the chords and work with them. I've already done the hard part in deciding the chords. Let's see if you know why I've chosen them:

The 'outro' is this:

Bb – Gm – Am – D

Obviously you understand why I am ending the song with Bb – Gm – Am (if not, it's the last three chords in the chorus that can be repeated) but why the D MAJOR chord?

Huh? It's ONLY played one time in the whole song, and that's as a 'filler' into the verse.
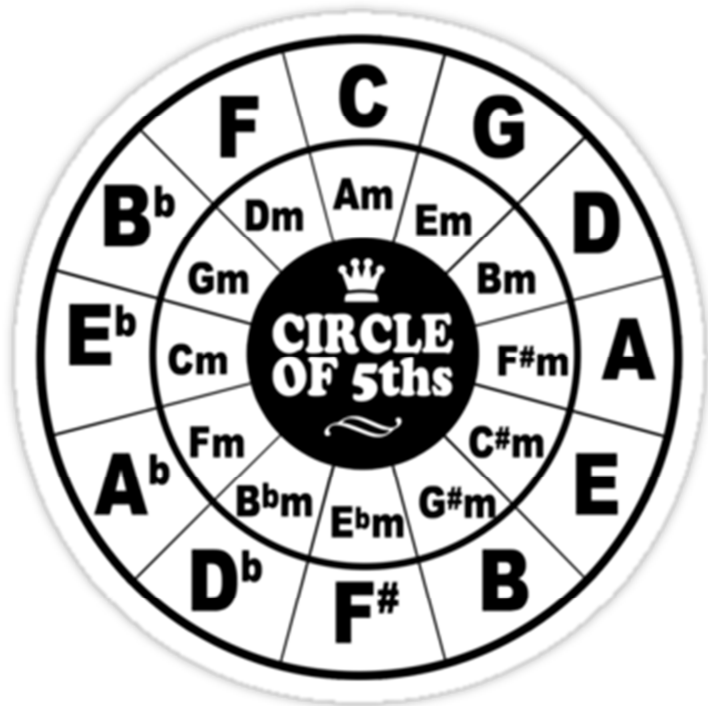
The song starts in Bm. We know that so far. What is ONE of the accompanying chords that can be played with Bm to make it work great? The D chord! Eureka! Mathematically it is 100% accurate. Weird – but accurate.

As you'll notice on the DVD, I discuss that the D Major chord works, but doesn't REALLY fit does it? While it is 100% possible to end on the D, if you stick to the overall format, you'll find that the Dm sounds even better.

Option # 1: Intro (Verse) > Verse > Chorus > Verse > Chorus

Intro Theme

Bm – E7 – Am – Dm – G7 - C

Verse 1

Bm   E7   Am
Bitter and cold, I sit behind my own reflection, looking in.
Dm   G7   C
I've drawn the line, between right and wrong.
Bm   E7   Am
You've left me standing, a frozen space in time.
Dm   G7   C
But only you and I know why.

Chorus

Dm   G7

How much more can I take?

C   F

When will this feeling end?

Bb   Gm

How do I erase this mistake?

Am   Dm   D (here we WANT the D)

When will this feeling end?

Verse 2

Bm   E7   Am

Through these bloodshot eyes maybe I've fallen behind.

Dm   G7   C

Just like you, I don't know who I should be.

Bm   E7   Am

Sometimes I wonder if you'll ever change your mind.

Dm   G7   C

Til' then I'll just stay behind.

Chorus

Dm   G7

How much more can I take?

C   F

When will this feeling end?

Bb   Gm

How do I erase this mistake?

Am   Dm

When will this feeling end?

Outro

Bb – Gm – Am – Dm

Option # 2: Intro (Chorus) > Verse > Chorus > Verse > Chorus

Intro Theme

Dm – G7 – C – F – Bb – Gm – Am – Dm - D

Verse 1

```
Bm                              E7            Am
Bitter and cold, I sit behind my own reflection, looking in.
Dm          G7                    C
I've drawn the line, between right and wrong.
Bm                      E7        Am
You've left me standing, a frozen space in time.
Dm      G7              C
But only you and I know why.
```

Chorus

```
Dm                  G7
How much more can I take?
C                F
When will this feeling end?
Bb            Gm
How do I erase this mistake?
Am                  Dm   D
When will this feeling end?
```

Verse 2

```
Bm                              E7            Am
Through these bloodshot eyes maybe I've fallen behind.
Dm          G7                        C
Just like you, I don't know who I should be.
Bm                          E7            Am
Sometimes I wonder if you'll ever change your mind.
Dm          G7            C
Til' then I'll just stay behind.
```

Chorus

```
Dm                  G7
How much more can I take?
C                F
When will this feeling end?
Bb            Gm
How do I erase this mistake?
Am                  Dm
When will this feeling end?
```

Outro

Bb – Gm – Am – Dm

Maybe this song didn't work too well for you. You might hate it, and you might love it. Maybe it'll grow on you. Either way, it's not one that I would necessarily 'produce' without some fine tuning, but what you've learned during this process can apply to any song you use. ESPECIALLY once you get down the Circle of 5ths, because the progressions found within that simple wheel will work wonders for you down the road.

a. The Art of Co-Writing - You don't have to go it alone! Even if you are super-secret about your song, odds are there is someone out there that you don't mind sharing your work with. It could be a loved one or a friend, and their help might just change the way you look at your overall sound. By adding a co-writer to your work, you'll get an 'outsider' look at how you can define your progress. A co-writer need not be a fellow guitarist. Sometimes all it takes is just a music lover.

You basically just co-wrote a song with me. Grant I couldn't listen to your input, but the idea is still the same. However, there are some VERY general and useful rules when co-writing a song. Let's discuss those right now.

Rule #1:

Don't hog the floor. The key word here is "CO." I would recommend when trying to co-write deciding which one of you are going to work on which part. The hardest aspect of that is deciding how a song will transition. It needs to make sense. Two heads working on the same song without an understanding of how the song will operate will confuse both of you. The checklist I provide will help a great deal. Regardless of what others say, the KEY of the song DOES NOT MATTER. Usually that only matters when you are trying to play with a musician or sing. In this case, you are WRITING the song, so the writing doesn't need to be restricted. To ease the frustration, assign a verse or a chorus. Avoid the whole bridge or outro (or other elements) until you've at least shown each other what you have down on paper.

Rule #2:

DO NOT write in the same room. Especially if you are a guitarist. You need complete and total concentration. While you might feel as though you're picking up on a lick or a chord progression from the other musician, you're really just filling your head with possibilities that might not actually come into fruition. The co-writer might change something at any point. Instead, just take a piece of paper and your guitar far from each other and begin brainstorming the music.

Rule #3:

There is no wrong answer. I know you assume this already, but people tend to toss an idea out the window if they don't initially like it. I was reading in "Entrepeneur" magazine about having round table discussions, and one key note they talked about is 'what sticks.'

This means that while an initial idea might not be great, it may be addressed later and work perfectly. Don't discard a single idea. Ever wonder how Metallica makes such complex music? I don't think they throw ANYTHING out the window.

Rule #4:

Less is more. Odds are you want a finished product when you get back together, but you don't need that. You just need to have a framework. Personally I DO NOT agree with one person writing the music and one writing the lyrics. Unless you are Elton John and Bernie Taupin it tends to create a confusion over what the song is about.