

**Music Theory Concepts**  
**Songs Written By Stevie Wonder**

**Compiled by Dr. Justin Binek**  
**Kansas City Kansas Community College**  
[justinbinek@gmail.com](mailto:justinbinek@gmail.com) – (215) 307-5251

Intervals (beginning of the song, unless otherwise noted):

- Minor Second (ascending)
  - As – vocal intro
  - Isn't She Lovely
- Minor Second (descending)
  - Bird of Beauty – intro
  - Boogie On Reggae Woman – intro
  - If You Really Love Me – piano intro
  - Knocks Me Off My Feet
  - Lately – melody
  - Never Dreamed You'd Leave In Summer
  - Never Said – melody
  - Pastime Paradise – melody
  - Ribbon In The Sky
  - Smile Please – melody
- Major Second (ascending)
  - All In Love Is Fair
  - Another Star – vocal intro
  - Do Like You
  - For Once In My Life
  - I Wish – melody
  - Living For The City – intro and melody
  - My Cherie Amour
  - Part-Time Lover – vocal intro
  - Signed, Sealed, Delivered – intro
  - Superstition – intro pickup and melody
  - That Girl – main theme
  - Too Shy To Say – melody
  - You Are The Sunshine Of My Life
  - You Haven't Done Nothin'
- Major Second (descending)
  - All I Do – melody
  - Blame It On The Sun
  - Boogie On Reggae Woman – melody
  - I Can't Help It – melody
  - He's Misstra Know-It-All – melody
  - I Was Made To Love Her – melody

- Love's In Need Of Love Today – intro
- Master Blaster – melody
- Moon Blue – intro
- Never Said – intro
- Part-Time Lover – main theme
- Superwoman – melody
- Tell Me Something Good
- That Girl – intro
- Minor Third (ascending)
  - All I Do – intro
  - As – keyboard intro
  - Golden Lady
  - I Ain't Gonna Stand For It
  - Signed, Sealed, Delivered
  - Sir Duke – melody
- Minor Third (descending)
  - Higher Ground
  - I Believe – intro
  - Smile Please – intro
  - Uptight – melody
- Major Third (ascending)
  - Master Blaster – horn intro
  - Sir Duke – intro
- Major Third (descending)
  - Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing – melody
  - If You Really Love Me – horn intro and melody
  - Overjoyed
- Perfect Fourth (ascending)
  - Another Star – main theme
  - Rocket Love
  - Too High – bass line/intro
  - Too Shy To Say – intro
- Perfect Fourth (descending)
  - Another Star – bass line/intro
  - Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing – intro
  - Love's In Need Of Love Today – melody
  - Superwoman – intro
  - Uptight – intro
- Perfect Fifth (ascending)
  - I Can't Help It – bass line/intro
  - I Was Made To Love Her – bass line/intro
  - Lately – intro
  - Visions

- Major Sixth (ascending)
  - As – melody
  - Too High – melody
- Major Sixth (descending)
  - I Wish – bass line/intro
  - You And I
- Perfect Octave (ascending)
  - Bird of Beauty – main theme
  - Moon Blue – melody
  - Superstition – downbeat of clavinet intro
  - You Haven't Done Nothin' – clavinet intro
- Perfect Octave (descending)
  - Master Blaster – bass/line intro
  - Pastime Paradise – intro

#### Mode Mixture

- Chromatic Mediants
  - Blame It On The Sun – use of VI in major
  - Lately – ending with a V-VI deceptive cadence in major
  - Too High – use of both (#)iii and (#)vi in minor
  - You And I – use of VI in major as deceptive non-modulation to relative minor
- Use of major I in minor (Picardy Third)
  - Golden Lady
  - Moon Blue
- Use of minor i in major (negative Picardy Third)
  - Superwoman
- Use of bIII in major
  - All In Love Is Fair
  - As
  - Do Like You
  - Living For The City
  - Smile Please
  - Superwoman
  - Tell Me Something Good
- Use of bVI in original (major) key as bIII pivot in new (major) key
  - Lately
- Use of minor iv in major
  - Bird of Beauty
  - Blame It On The Sun
  - Creepin'
  - Do Like You
  - He's Misstra Know-It-All
  - I Believe

- I Can't Help It
- I Was Made To Love Her
- Lately
- Smile Please
- You And I
- Use of both unaltered and altered (raised 6<sup>th</sup> scale degree) iv and IV chords in minor
  - I Wish
- Use of minor v in major
  - Creepin
  - Lately
  - Superwoman
  - Tell Me Something Good
- Use of both unaltered and altered (raised leading tone) v and V chords in minor
  - Another Star
  - Pastime Paradise
- Use of bVI in major
  - Creepin'
  - Living For The City
- Use of bVII in major
  - As
  - Boogie On Reggae Woman
  - If You Really Love Me
  - Knocks Me Off My Feet
  - Love's In Need Of Love Today
  - My Cherie Amour
  - Overjoyed
  - Ribbon In The Sky
  - Smile Please
  - Tell Me Something Good
  - Too Shy To Say
- Use of iv-bVII "backdoor ii-V" in major
  - All In Love Is Fair
  - Knocks Me Off My Feet
  - You And I
- Use of iv-bVII in major, superimposing bIII-iv chords over iv-bVII bass
  - Do Like You
- Use of #iv-VII "backdoor ii-V" in major
  - Golden Lady
- Use of bVI-bVII-I walkup in major
  - I Was Made To Love Her
  - Superwoman
- Use of I-bVII-bVI-V walkdown in Major
  - For Once In My Life

## Modulation

- Chromatic Modulation
  - Golden Lady
  - For Once In My Life
  - Ribbon In The Sky
  - Rocket Love
- Modulation to closely related key
  - Another Star
  - Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing
  - Golden Lady
  - Lately
  - Never Dreamed You'd Leave In Summer
  - Visions
- Parallel Modulation
  - Never Dreamed You'd Leave In Summer
- Relative Modulation: major to minor
  - As
  - Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing
  - Moon Blue
- Relative Modulation: minor to major
  - As
  - Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing
  - Moon Blue
- Remote modulation
  - Creepin'
  - Golden Lady
  - If You Really Love Me (parallel major of relative minor)
  - Never Said
  - Overjoyed
  - Smile Please
  - That Girl
  - Too Shy To Say
  - You Are The Sunshine Of My Life

## Secondary Dominant Chords

- V7/ii
  - All In Love Is Fair – as part of a ii-V sequence
  - Bird of Beauty
  - For Once In My Life
  - I Wish
  - If You Really Love Me
  - Isn't She Lovely

- Knocks Me Off My Feet
- Love's In Need Of Love Today
- My Cherie Amour
- Overjoyed
- Ribbon In The Sky
- Superwoman
- Too Shy To Say
- You And I
- V7/iii
  - Blame It On The Sun
  - Too Shy To Say
- V7/IV
  - As
  - Bird of Beauty
  - Creepin'
  - For Once In My Life
  - He's Misstra Know-It-All
  - I Believe
  - Knocks Me Off My Feet – as part of a ii-V sequence
  - Lately
  - Living For The City
  - Signed, Sealed, Delivered
- V7/IV resolving to IV, but with a passing V7/vi in between
  - Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing
- V7/iv resolving to VI in minor (via common tones)
  - Rocket Love
- V7/V
  - All In Love Is Fair
  - Bird of Beauty
  - Boogie On Reggae Woman
  - Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing
  - For Once In My Life
  - He's Misstra Know-It-All
  - Higher Ground
  - If You Really Love Me
  - My Cherie Amour
  - Overjoyed
  - That Girl
  - You Are The Sunshine Of My Life
  - You And I
- V7/V resolving to V, with passing ii in between
  - As
- V7/V resolving to V, with passing iv (borrowed) in between

- I Can't Help It
- V7/V resolving to IV
  - Higher Ground, with passing V7/vi in between
  - Smile Please
- V/V serving as pivot to a parallel modulation
- V7/VI (in minor)
  - Part-Time Lover
- V7/vi (in major)
  - All I Do – as part of a ii-V sequence
  - As
  - I Ain't Gonna Stand For It
  - Isn't She Lovely
  - Knocks Me Off My Feet
  - Smile Please – as part of a ii-V sequence
  - You And I
- V7/vi resolving to ii without passing vi or IV (in major)
  - As
- V7/VI resolving to iidim without passing VI or iv (in minor)
  - Moon Blue
- V7/bVII (!)
  - My Cherie Amour
- V7/viidim (!)
  - You And I – as part of a ii-V sequence

#### Secondary Leading Tone Chords

- Viidim7/ii
  - Love's In Need Of Love Today
- viidim7/V
  - Part-Time Lover – vocal intro
- Viidim7/V resolving down, rather than up - #iv walkdown

#### Suspensions and Retardations

- 2-3 retardation
  - Lately
- 3-4 “reverse suspension” created via a V-ii progression over a Dominant pedal
  - I Ain't Gonna Stand For It
- 4-3 suspension
  - All In Love Is Fair
  - As
  - Blame It On The Sun
  - Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing
  - Golden Lady
  - Lately

- Knocks Me Off My Feet
- Moon Blue
- Never Said
- Overjoyed
- Rocket Love
- Creation of 4-3 suspension via a ii-V progression over a Dominant pedal
  - Bird of Beauty
- Creation of 4-3 suspension via a IV-I cadential 6/4 progression over a Tonic pedal
  - He's Misstra Know-It-All
- Creation of 4-3 suspension via a IVsus4-iiisus4 progression over a Tonic pedal
  - Creepin'
- Creation of 4-3 suspension via a bVII-bviiø progression over a Tonic pedal
  - That Girl
- Creation of a 4-3 suspension via a bVII-I progression over a Tonic pedal
  - Do Like You

#### Tri-Tone Substitution

- Of the V7
  - Bird of Beauty
  - Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing
  - That Girl
- Of the V7, using a Major triad or Ma7 chord
  - Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing
  - Golden Lady
  - Living For The City
  - Superwoman
  - You Are The Sunshine Of My Life
  - You And I
- Of the V7, using a Major bIII with a b2 in the bass
- Of the V7/ii, using a IV chord over a bIII bass
  - Knocks Me Off My Feet
- Of the V7/IV
  - As
  - Bird of Beauty
  - Lately
  - Too High
- Of the V7/IV, using a Ma7 chord instead of a Dominant 7<sup>th</sup>
  - You Are The Sunshine Of My Life – actually resolves to ii
- Of the V7/V
  - Bird of Beauty
  - Never Dreamed You'd Leave In Summer
- Of the V7/V, using a Major triad, Ma6, or Ma7 chord
  - Overjoyed



- Sir Duke
- Too Shy To Say
- You And I
- Of the V7/vi
  - Creepin'
  - My Cherie Amour
- Of the V7/vi, using a Major triad, Ma6, or Ma7 chord
  - Too Shy To Say

#### Other Concepts

- Chromatic Embellishment of Static Harmony
  - All In Love Is Fair
  - Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing
  - For Once In My Life
  - Golden Lady
  - Moon Blue
  - Rocket Love
  - Smile Please
  - Tell Me Something Good
  - That Girl
  - Too High
  - Too Shy To Say
- Diatonic chord walkup
  - Creepin'
  - For Once In My Life
  - He's Misstra Know-It-All
  - Lately (with a iv in a major-key progression)
  - Ribbon In The Sky
  - Tell Me Something Good
- Diatonic chord walkdown
  - If You Really Love Me
  - Knocks Me Off My Feet
  - Love's In Need Of Love Today
- Harmonic motion over pedal point
  - Moon Blue
  - You And I
- Melodic motives based around Major Pentatonic scale
  - Sir Duke
- Melodic motives based on Minor Pentatonic/Blues scale
  - Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing
  - Master Blaster – bridge/interlude
  - Superstition
- Melodic motives based on Mixolydian scale

- Do Like You
- Living For The City
- Uptight – harmony and horn lines as well
- Melodic motives based on Whole Tone scale
  - Too High
  - You Are The Sunshine Of My Life – intro
- Negative Harmony – minor iv(add6) as substitution for V7
  - If You Really Love Me
  - Love's In Need Of Love Today
  - You And I
- Planing
  - Bird of Beauty
  - Boogie On Reggae Woman
  - Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing
  - You Haven't Done Nothin'
  - I Can't Help It
  - Living For The City
  - Never Said
  - Overjoyed
  - Sir Duke
  - Superstition
  - Too High
  - Visions