

Transcribing a Melody into a New Mode

Refer to the lead sheets for *On Top of Old Smokey*. There you will find the melody transcribed into all modes. Note that the chord choices are subjective. You might select different chords. As long as the choice is consonant with the melody your choices would be every bit as good and proper as mine!

Here are the procedures for transcribing a melody into a different mode.

Begin with a melody in Ionian. For this example, let's select the G Ionian version of *On Top of Old Smokey*. Let's say that you want to change the mode to the Lydian mode of the G scale. Here are the steps.

1. Preserve the key signature

For *On Top of Old Smokey* the modulated tune will appear to have a key signature of G. That is, one sharp. But it will in fact become the Lydian mode of G.

2. Transpose the melody by the interval of the mode

The Lydian mode begins on the 4th degree of the scale. In the G tonality that is the tone of C. The tonal center of the Lydian version of the tune will become C rather than G. Simply move the pitch of each tone up by a 4th.

3. Choose the chords characteristic of the mode and that best support the melody

The chord guides that follow will help you make those choices.

The same procedure works if you are moving within the modes. For example if you wanted to transpose *On Top of Old Smokey* from A Dorian to E Aeolian, remember the interval from A to E is a 5th. Transpose all the tones in the A Dorian version by a 5th and the melody will be in E Aeolian. The chords will change, of course, to those characteristic of E Aeolian.