



The concepts discussed in this article are a part of the comprehensive analysis of songwriting presented in the complete book "Songcrafters' Coloring Book: The Essential Guide to Effective and Successful Songwriting" , by Bill Pere. For additional information or to order a copy, visit <http://www.songcrafterscoloringbook.com>

*(More on this topic in the complete Songcrafters' Coloring Book)*

## **SONGCRAFTERS' COLORING BOOK**

### **Writing a Bridge Should Not Take a Toll** by Bill Pere

I am often asked about when, how, and why a song should or should not have a bridge (sometimes called a "middle 8", although it may have more or less than 8 measures) and how to write a musically effective one. First, let's look at the role of a bridge and why it should (or should not) be in a song.

A bridge is a section of a song distinctly different musically from either verse or chorus, and its purpose is to either provide new information in the song, a turn of circumstances, or a summation of the song's overall message. It usually comes after at least two verses and two choruses, because prior to then, it can interfere with the verse and/or chorus establishing their own clear identities. Also, by coming in the latter part of the song, it provides a new injection of fresh musical ideas, if the verses or chorus are too plain. A song should only have a bridge if it actually needs one. In rare cases a song will have two instances of the bridge (the same bridge, not two different ones), but that is an exception (e.g. Billy Joel's "Goodbye to Hollywood", or Dan Fogelberg's "How Do We Make Love Stay").

If new information needs to be conveyed beyond a typical 3 verse structure, or if three repetitions of verse/chorus would start to get dull, a bridge is indicated. If the song can be told in two or three verses and there is enough musical interest, then a bridge is

probably not needed. In no case should you add a bridge just to "throw in" extra lyrics that don't convey new information, or just to try out a new musical idea.

There are many options to writing a musically effective bridge. Since a bridge must have a musical identity clearly different and distinct from the verses and the chorus, a bridge is often in a different key. A typical way to get there is to go to the relative minor i.e. if the song is in G, drop the bass line (g, f# e) and end up on Em for the bridge. This always works, but it is very common and won't sound particularly fresh. You'll get more musical interest if you use a less common transition e.g., going to the chord a minor third higher or lower (if the song is in G, go to Bb or E) while singing the note common to the original key (d in the first case, b in the second case).

Best of all is to actually make the key transition on the last chord of the prior section, rather than on the first chord of the bridge. For example, if the song is in the key of "A" and the last note you sing is "a", then instead of using a typical A-chord to end the section, you can use ANY other chord that contains the note "a". Each choice will tend to lead you to a new, unique place.

#### EXAMPLES:

If you are singing "a", play D or D7 ("a" is the 5th) and you can now go to G or Bm

If you are singing "a", play B7 ("a" is the 7th) and you can now go to E

If you are singing "a", play F#m ("a" is the m3) and you can now go to B

If you are singing "a", play BbM7 ("a" is the M7) and you can go to F or Eb

If you are singing "a", play F or FM7 ("a" is the 3rd) and you can go to Bb, Bbm, or C or Dm

If you are singing "a", play Esus ("a" is the 4th) and you can go to E or Em

There are many additional options, but you get the idea. This latter technique is not used as frequently as others, so when used well, it can really give your song some extra 'zing'. There is no right or wrong, just choices -- and the best choice is whatever your ear says is best for the song. Try these techniques and see what works for your particular song. Each song has its own specific needs. Whatever you choose to do, writing a bridge should not take a toll.

For more: [www.songcrafterscoloringbook.com](http://www.songcrafterscoloringbook.com)

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*Grammy-Winning songwriter Bill Pere was named one of the "Top 50 Innovators, Groundbreakers and Guiding Lights of the Music Industry" by Music Connection Magazine. With more than 30 years in the music business working with top industry pros as a songwriter, performer, recording artist and educator, Bill is well known for his superbly crafted lyrics, with lasting impact. Bill has released 16 CDs, and is President of the Connecticut Songwriters Association. He is an Official Connecticut State Troubadour, and is the Founder and Executive Director of the LUNCH Ensemble ([www.lunchensemble.com](http://www.lunchensemble.com)). Twice named Connecticut Songwriter of the Year, Bill is a qualified MBTI practitioner, trained by the Association for Psychological Type. He is a member of CMEA and MENC, and as Director of the Connecticut Songwriting Academy, he helps develop young talent in songwriting, performing, and learning about the music business. Bill's song analyses and critiques*

*are among the best in the industry. Bill has a graduate degree in Molecular Biology, an ARC Science teaching certification, and he has received two awards for Outstanding contribution to Music Education.*

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