

Track: **THANK YOU**
 Writer: DIDO ARMSTRONG & PAUL HERMAN
 Artist: DIDO
 Year: 1998
 UK Chart: 3

This is Dido's most successful song. It became a huge hit, not least because firstly it was sampled by Eminem in his hit 'Stan' and secondly it received media exposure in the film 'Sliding Doors'. The track won 'song of the year' at the 2002 ASCAP awards. In a society where people have heard it all before, the simplicity of 'Thankyou' benefited from minimal instrumentation and creative production, which gave the track a mesmerising but childlike simplicity which appealed to people. Below is simply the chord chart, minus vocal line and lyric.

Fig. 1

The musical score for 'Thank You' is presented in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The score is divided into three systems of staves.

System 1 (Measures 1-7):

- Voice:** Rests in all measures.
- Guitar:** Measures 1-2 are rests. Measures 3-7 feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a *Simile* marking.
- Piano:** Measures 1-2 are rests. Measures 3-7 feature a bass line with a *Ped.* (pedal) marking and a *Simile* marking.

System 2 (Measures 8-14):

- Voice:** Melodic line starting at measure 8 with a repeat sign. Chords above: G#m E/G# G#m E/G# G#m E/G# G#m E/G# F# B F#/A# E/G# F# B F#/A#.
- Guitar:** Slashed staves (diagonal lines) from measure 8 to 14.
- Piano:** Slashed staves (diagonal lines) from measure 8 to 14. A *Bass guitar in* marking appears at the start of measure 10.

System 3 (Measures 15-20):

- Voice:** Melodic line starting at measure 15. Chords above: G#m E/G# F# B F#/A# G#m E/G# G#m E/G# G#m E/G# G#m E/G#.
- Guitar:** Slashed staves (diagonal lines) from measure 15 to 20.
- Piano:** Slashed staves (diagonal lines) from measure 15 to 20.

A first ending bracket labeled '1.' spans measures 19 and 20.

2.

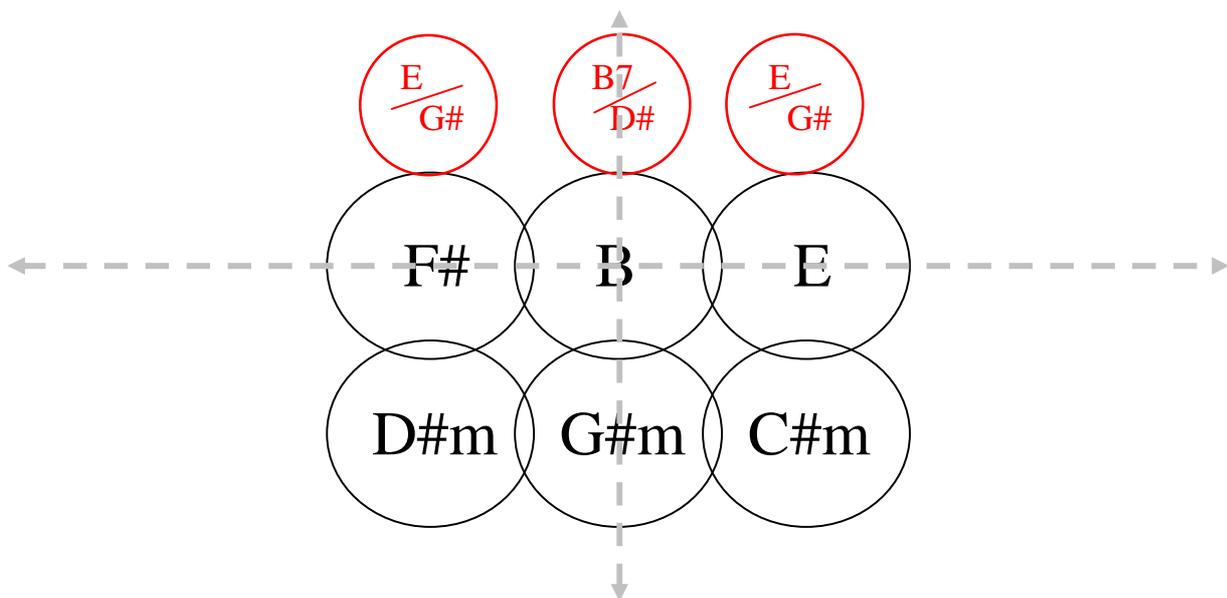
21 B B/D# E E/F# B B7/D# E B B/D#

BVs

26 E D#m C#m

The chord chart is helpful if you want to perform the song but when we place the chords into the grid (below) it shows not the chords in a sequential order but in context of how they relate to each other; harmonically, which is of much more benefit. We can see what chords were used relative to the key centre and what, if any, were used which lie outside the central group of six chords.

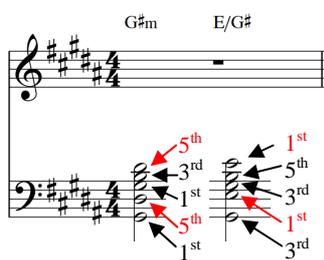
Fig.2



Straight away we can see that whatever the virtues of the song, it does not test people's aural cognition in terms of harmonic development. The song exists almost completely within the confines of the six chords which dominate and characterise the key centre. This is in-keeping with the majority of songs, which utilise a simple and predictable group of chords relative to the key centre they exist within.

So, can we draw any conclusions about the chords that do stray outside the norm? The chords that lay outside the central group of chords (featured in red) are exclusively either inversions or slash chords. In the case of the E/G# chords, these come at the start in the intro (and at the end of the verse) and creates an interesting dynamic between the G#m and the E/G#. The reason why it creates an interesting and subtle dynamic is because although the chord changes completely (from minor to major, inverted) only one note physically changes (the D# moves to the E).

Fig.3



As we can see from a normal root-positioned voicing of the two chords, only one note (the octaved D#, which I have red-inked) moves - to the E. However, looking at the intervals, which are listed, the rest of the notes in both chords also move, not physically but intervallically. Intervallic changes are more subtle in that they are not as obvious and overt as physical changes. However, they require more in terms of aural cognition on the part of the listener; the changes require us to listen to the note that has changed intervallically and adjust and respond to the readjustment.

So, in fig 46 when the B note, functioning as the 3rd in the G#m chord, changes not what it is but what it represents in becoming the 5th of the E/G#, what changes is not the note, but the harmonic subtext - the interval. We hear this adjustment and it is our interpretation of that very subtle change that we respond to.

The way the chord sequence is used in the song tends to italicise this affect in that the acoustic guitar places the G# at the top of the voicing; this top note is heard more than the rest because of its position, which draws attention to intervallic change.

Fig.4

The piano line, which is featured on the bottom staff of fig 47 is also quite subtle in that the top of the arpeggiations reaches at D#, which begins its life as a 5th of G#m but, while it is still sounding, becomes the maj7 of the subsequent E/G# chord.

Critics of the song referred to it being dull and unimaginative, but they missed the point that its simplicity, along with the carefully choreographed narrative of Dido, 'the girl next door', was part of its charm. There is warmth to the voice, despite one or two out-of-tune lines, which helped foster a homely feel. The backing vocals are a great strength of the song; beginning on bar 21 they create an interesting rhythmic and harmonic distraction. Although subtly mixed in the background, the rhythmic syncopation and the colourful extensions bring real colour to the song.

Fig.5

21 B B/D# E E/F# B B7/D# E B B/D#

The pushed notes

add4 & add2

26 E D#m C#m

This is a particularly pivotal moment which comes halfway through the chorus, where the 7th interval on the lower BV, along with the accompanying chord inversion, creates a real sense of warmth. Mostly this warmth is because of the sense of inevitability, resolution and conclusion as the 7th of the B chord (A) resolves to the 3rd of the E chord (G#) but secondarily it is the unilateral vertical interval between the A (the lower 7th) and the D# above (the 3rd) which together create a #4 interval, which helps it penetrate.