

That's R.E.M. in the corner, sort of

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My first year in college, I had a friend who was going through a bit of a Goth stage. He dressed in all black and spent a lot of his time with his guitar, playing really intense (and often really good) original music.

For his birthday, another friend of ours shot a goofy video (on VHS, I think!) about him. She asked me to appear as his bizarro-world self, so I dressed in all white (can't believe I found white pants somewhere on my dorm floor!) and showed up with my guitar. Then I improvised a major-key adaptation of "The Sound of Silence": "Hello lightness my new friend..." (I didn't get very far; should have written some lyrics ahead of the time. And, of course, interrogated my careless use of black and white as symbols.) Then I think the video shows me running off to frolic in the daffodils or something.

I remembered this when I came across the [Major Scaled](#) project, which digitally alters pop songs recorded in minor keys. It also renames them, rather cheerily ("[Riders on the Rainbow](#)," anyone?)—suggesting that a song in a major key is inherently more upbeat than one in a minor key.

I'm not sure I buy that as a general rule anymore, though it's certainly true with that example from the Doors. But this altered R.E.M. song basically hangs on to its original mood. Sometimes the melody sounds just like a harmony part to sing with the original; other times it sounds like a different, reasonably interesting melody. But what's striking about the whole thing is how uncannily *normal* it (mostly) sounds:

The digital-music wizards who did this called the result "Regaining My Religion." Nice. But even if this does sound way more upbeat to you than [the original](#), you could also keep the title "Losing My Religion" and hear it as an anthem written with some melancholy by early Gen-X-ers but borrowed to express the positive outlook of today's 20-something [Nones](#).

In other pop-music-and-religion news, [this Fred Clark post](#) from last week is lots of fun.