

Analysis 3: Modern Popular Music Form

Learn how to read, analyze, and understand the form of modern popular music. These lessons apply to most modern genres including pop, rock, CCM, metal, hard rock, funk, R&B, jam bands, hip-hop, country, and more!

Parts of Songs

I = Intro

An intro is the introduction of a song. There can be instruments and singing/words.

V = Verse

V' = Secondary Verse

A verse is where the story of the song is told. "Once upon a time...Happily ever after...."

C = Chorus

A chorus is the repeated part of the song that happens in between verses, typically using the same words each time it repeats. This is usually the most catchy part of the song that everyone remembers.

PreC = Pre-Chorus

A pre-chorus is a part of a song that transitions a verse to a chorus by increasing anticipation for the chorus about to happen.

PostC = Post-Chorus

A post-chorus is like a secondary chorus. After the main part of a chorus happens the post-chorus gives a change of energy to higher or lower levels of intensity with different highly memorable content.

R = Refrain

A refrain is a series of words repeated at the end of a verse or a chorus. All choruses are a type of refrain, not all refrains are choruses. Refrains are written above the song maps (see next page) they happen in.

Inst = Instrumental

Intr = Interlude

An instrumental is a brief moment between two sections of a song. When there are voices we could call this same section an "interlude". It is about giving a pause in the song, a break from the action.

S = Solo

A solo is an instrumental that is highlighted by a single instrumental performer performing a solo which could be improvised on the spot, written out beforehand, or some mix of both.

B = Bridge

A bridge can help tell the story from the verse. It is usually very different musically from the rest of the song, with different notes, chords, rhythms, and instruments. A bridge is a change of pace, a new flavor, a shift in gears.

O = Outro/Fade Out

An outro is the end of a song, sometimes similar to the intro, but often very different. When the song ends with the volume of the music being reduced to silence over time, it is called a "fade out". Sometimes when an outro is short we can call it a coda, in reference to the coda repeat mark and how it can create a small section at the end of a song! (Hey, remember that from earlier in the book?? So cool!!)

Some of these songs are so old that there are no recordings from when they were written because the technology did not exist.

Notice how song structures become more and more complex over time. Memorize the song structures for these 20 songs using the song maps on the following pages.

I = Intro

PreC = Pre-Chorus

Inst = Instrumental

V = Verse

C = Chorus

S = Solo

V' = Secondary Verse

PostC = Post-Chorus

O = Outro/Fade Out

R = Refrain

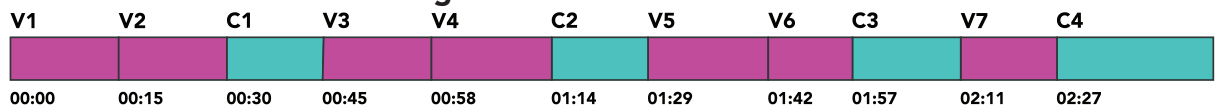
B = Bridge

Numbers = More than 1 in the Song

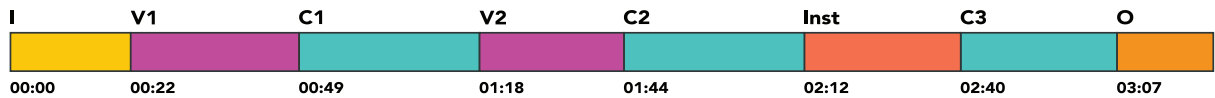
I = Intro	PreC = Pre-Chorus	Inst = Instrumental
V = Verse	C = Chorus	S = Solo
V' = Secondary Verse	PostC = Post-Chorus	O = Outro/Fade Out
R = Refrain	B = Bridge	Numbers = More than 1 in the Song

Traditional

Blow the Man Down - The Longest Johns

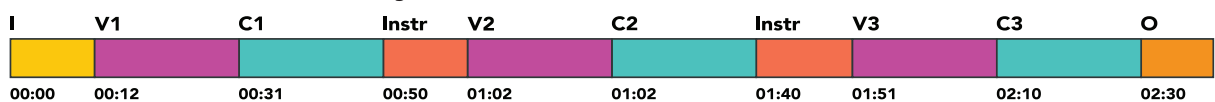


Greensleeves - The Celtic Ladies



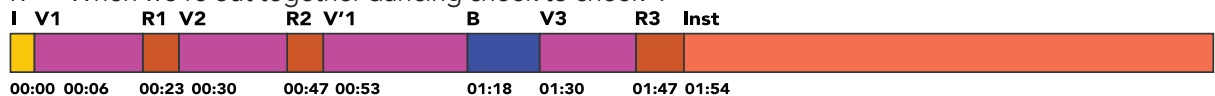
1930's

Wabash Cannonball - Johnny Cash



Cheek to Cheek - Fred Astaire

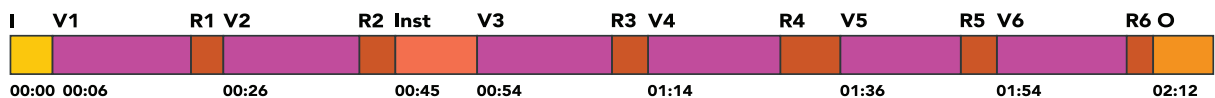
R = "When we're out together dancing cheek to cheek".



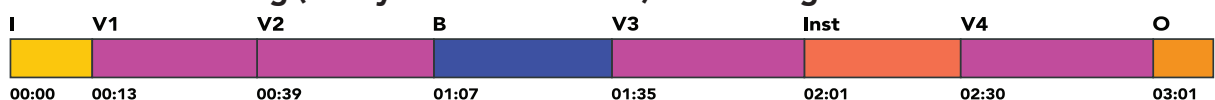
1940's

This Land Is Your Land - Woody Guthrie

R = "This land was made for you and me". V1 and V5 are almost a chorus, since they contain the same words. In modern versions of this song, V1 is often sung between each verse, making it really seem like a chorus, and when it is used that way it is arguably a chorus.

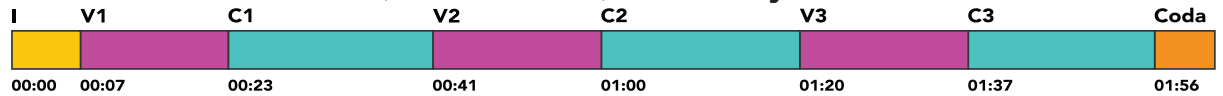


The Christmas Song (Merry Christmas To You) - Nat "King" Cole



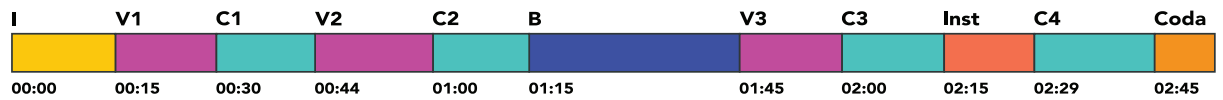
1950's

Whatever Will Be, Will Be (Que Sera, Sera) - Dorris Day



Vaya Con Dios - Les Paul and Mary Ford

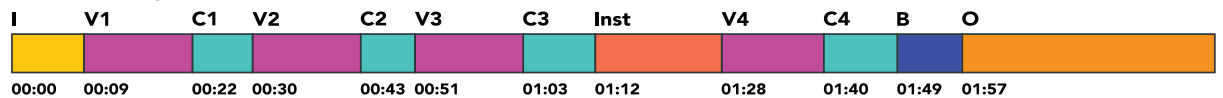
Because the chorus is so short, you could also call it a refrain.



1960's

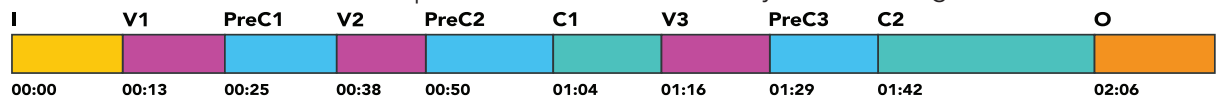
Respect - Aretha Franklin

This song does not have a chorus. There is a section after each verse that is "kinda" a chorus. Likewise, there is no bridge, but there is a breakdown section where Aretha sings "R, E, S, P, E, C, T..." we will call this the bridge.



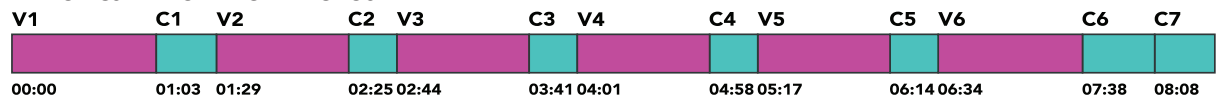
She Loves You - The Beatles

These PreC sections could also be part of the verse, however they drive the song towards the chorus.

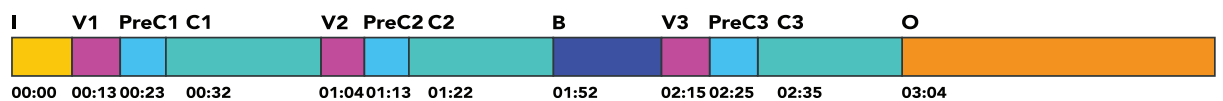


1970's

American Pie - Don McLean

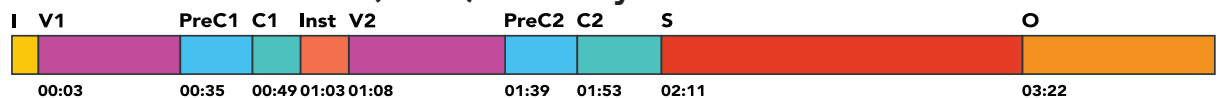


Stayin' Alive - Bee Gees

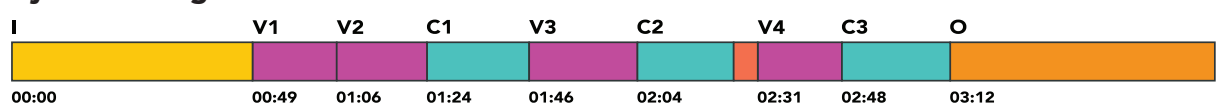


1980's

Another Brick in the Wall (Part 2) - Pink Floyd



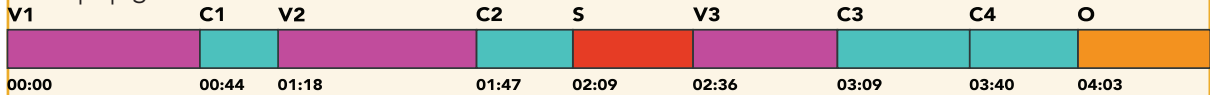
Eye of the Tiger - Survivor



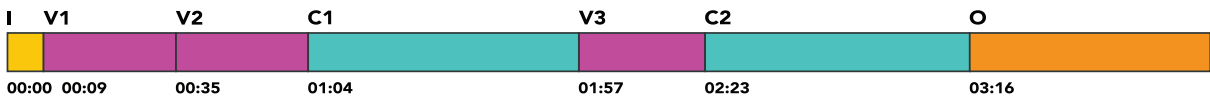
1990's

I Will Always Love You - Whitney Houston

Starting in the 90s, an interesting trend shows up! Singers sometimes change how they sing over the final chorus to bring tension and excitement to the next level! This trend has continued into the 2020's in the pop genre.



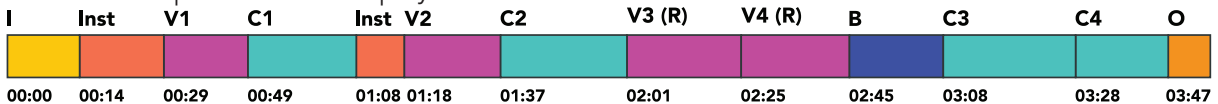
The Way You Look Tonight - Elton John



2000's

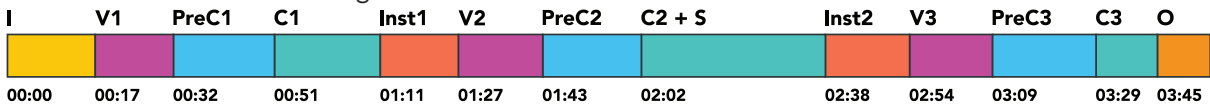
Crazy in Love - Beyoncé

The instrumental sections in this song show both an interlude (vocals) and a purely instrumental section. V3 and V4 are performed as a rap by JAY Z.



Seven Nation Army - The White Stripes

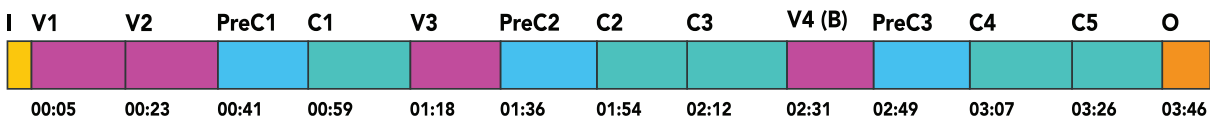
This song features an instrumental chorus! PreC1 could also be thought of as a secondary verse and the words " And the message coming from my eyes says "Leave it alone" " could be the PreC. C2 is almost a double chorus and almost a guitar solo.



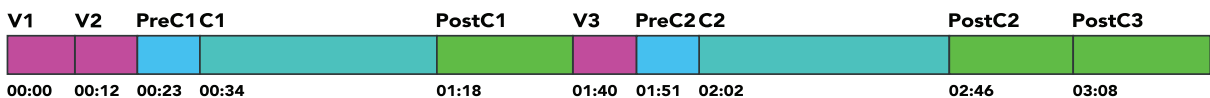
2010's

Rolling in the Deep - Adele

V4 acts like a bridge in that it gives a change of pace from the rest of the song. It is still a verse.



Chandelier - Sia



How to Perform a Form Analysis

How to Identify Parts of Songs

1. Use the quick reference table on this page as well as the extra ID tips along with the song maps on the previous pages to figure out which section of a song is which.
2. Write the full name of the song section with a number when needed above the first measure of that section.

1.



This is a leadsheet song.

2.



This is a leadsheet song.

Extra ID Tips

- Sometimes double bar lines can show the change from one section to the next.
- Identify verses by similar rhyme scheme and melody/chords. The lyrics tell a story.
- Identify chorus with identical or near identical rhyme scheme, lyrics and melody.
- Identify pre-chorus by different lyrics/melody/chords than the verse. Leads to chorus.
- Identify post-chorus by different lyrics/melody/chords than the chorus with higher energy than verse and leads to a verse, bridge, instrumental section or solo.
- Identify refrains by repeating phrases at the end of a V, Pre-C, C, Post-C, B.
- Identify instrumentals/interludes by looking for measures of rest for the vocals between verses and choruses that have no lyrics and melody. Listen to the song, if you hear only instruments playing in this area for more than a measure it may be an inter or instr!
- Identify a solo by looking for measures of rest in the vocal or the solo instrument to take over the voice melody staff for the duration of the solo.
- Identify a bridge by looking for a change in rhyme scheme, lyrics, and melody towards the back half of the song. If you see more than one bridge, it might be a post-chorus.
- Identify an outro/fade out when the music/lyrics change at the very end of a song.

Section	Length	Arrangement	Lyrics	Extra ID
I = Intro	1-8+ mm.	Instruments/Vocals/Mix	Intro content	Always at the beginning of a song.
V = Verse	4-8+ mm.	Instruments/Vocals/Mix	Tells the story	Repeat with variations in the song.
PreC = Pre-Chorus	4-8 mm.	Instruments/Vocals/Mix	Story/Repetition	Repeat same lyrics, melody, build into C.
C = Chorus	4-16 mm.	Instruments/Vocals/Mix	Repetition/Memorable	Repeat similar/same lyrics, melody.
PostC = Post-Chorus	4-8 mm.	Instruments/Vocals/Mix	Repetition/Memorable	Repeat same lyrics, melody into V/B/Inst.
R = Refrain	1-8 mm.	Instruments/Vocals/Mix	Repetition/Memorable	Repeated phrase at the end of V/C/B.
Inst = Instrumental	1-16+ mm.	Instruments	None	Instruments only between V/C/PostC/B.
S = Solo	4-16+ mm.	Instruments	None	Solo instrument is highlighted.
B = Bridge	8-16+ mm.	Instruments/Vocals/Mix	Story/Change	Always towards the end of the song.
O = Outro/Fade Out	1-8+ mm.	Instruments/Vocals/Mix	Repetition/Memorable	Always at the end of a song.