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Introduction

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[1] The genesis of the present volume and its focus on issues of form in rock music was an SMT Popular Music Interest Group session entitled "(Per)Form in(g) Rock," presented at the November 2010 meeting of the Society for Music Theory in Indianapolis. The session title, devised by Brad Osborn, reflects its integration of formal theory ("Form in Rock") and performance ("Performing Rock"). The session comprised four papers exploring issues of form in popular music, with a response by Mark Spicer. As a way of reflecting the aural and performative traditions of rock music and reconnecting the practices of theory and analysis to that of music making, each presentation—including the response—incorporated live music examples, which have been replaced in this volume by audio and video excerpts. These five papers are presented here in expanded form, along with three essays concerned with aspects of form in pop-rock music not addressed in the original session.

[2] The Popular Music Interest Group decided to focus on the topic of form in rock music because it has been undertheorized compared to form in art music, and underanalyzed compared to other modes of popular music analysis such as hermeneutics, intertextuality, style analysis, and social and cultural contexts. Formal patterns in rock often feature greater complexity than is generally realized, particularly in regard to the interactions of form with domains other than pitch, such as rhythm, texture, and timbre. This holds true even for the apparently straightforward simple and compound strophic forms that abound in the pop-rock repertoire, as well as for more intricate multipart and through-composed forms.

[3] Published scholarship on form in rock has been accumulating at an increasing pace over the last decade. Formal analyses have typically focused either on the delineation of sections through lyrics, chord patterns, texture, and key, with secondary considerations of rhythmic activity, register, dynamics, and timbre, or on the interaction of these sections with overall forms as regards repetition, ordering, thematic content and interrelationships, and rhetorical function. General discussions of formal sections and patterns include the brief definitions of basic section types in Stephenson 2002; a survey of the relationship of section types to larger formal patterns in Covach 2005; a detailed investigation of phrase, form, and function in Everett 2009; historic, cultural, and generic contextualizations in Middleton 1999; a model for the interactions of formal sections and tonal centers in Capuzzo 2009; and an exploration of large-scale dramatic structures in Spicer 2004. (1) There are also many studies of idiomatic formal structures and relationships within the works of a single artist or band—or genre or era, although these are less common—and comparisons of a given song's transformation through covers, remixes, and mashups. (2)

[4] The four papers on the original SMT session investigate, respectively: the development and function of the prechorus section (Summach), expressive modulations between verses and choruses (Doll), through-composed forms in recent rock music (Osborn), and a transformational and gestural theory of guitar fretboard chord-voicing patterns (Koozin). To these papers we have added three essays that explore additional aspects of form through the works of a single artist or group: a broad consideration of formal structures in the music of U2 (Endrinal), a case study of phrase structure in the music of Sarah McLachlan (Attas), and a reconciliation of Schenkerian analysis with formal issues in early Beatles songs (Nobile).

[5] In "The Structure, Function, and Genesis of the Prechorus," Jay Summach examines the historical and functional evolution of the prechorus section as an expansion of contrasting phrases in strophic and verse-chorus forms. He applies the sentential SRDC model of statement, restatement or response, departure, and conclusion or return described in Everett 2009 to phrases (as in AABA patterns within a verse or chorus section) and to song sections (as in the bridge of a verse-chorus form), demonstrating through inductive analysis how "departure" phrases and sections coalesced into the prechorus, which intensifies expectation and desire for the climactic conclusion of the chorus. The historical emergence of the prechorus section is documented with statistics from the *Billboard* Annual Top 20 song charts.

[6] The idea of the chorus as culmination is a common thread in both Summach's and Doll's essays. Christopher Doll's "Rockin' Out: Expressive Modulation in Verse-Chorus Form" extends the paradigm presented in Capuzzo 2009, identifying conventional modulatory relationships between verses and choruses in different keys, and exploring the expressive connotations of different modulation types and their relationships to lyrical themes. The article also defines the "breakout chorus," which is marked in comparison to preceding musical material by contrasts in various parameters, typically some combination of dynamics, lyrics, melodic and harmonic structures, rhythmic activity, texture, timbre, and tonal center. (3)

[7] Brad Osborn's "Understanding Through-Composition in Post-Rock, Math-Metal, and other Post-Millenial Rock Genres" moves beyond the verse-chorus model, providing a brief historical contextualization of through-composition and a system of structural categories pertinent to music in the abovementioned genres, which resist analysis in terms of conventional formal paradigms due to their lack of repetition or recapitulation. The article delineates a taxonomy of four formal types distinguished by the presence or absence of hierarchical grouping structure and by thematic unity or contrast, and offers some preliminary correlations of these forms with genre. The examples are supported with detailed transcriptions, spectrographs, interviews with band members, and in one case, a ProTools screenshot of the master song file.

[8] Formal analysis is integrated with gestural analysis in Tim Koozin's "Guitar Voicing in Pop-Rock Music: A Performance-Based Analytical Approach." In this methodologically original essay, Koozin maps guitar chords and riffs as both harmonic transformations and as transformations of generalized hand-position shapes on the guitar fretboard. He explores the expressive connotations of open-chord versus barre-chord voicings, and the multifaceted role of the resulting transformational networks as embodied gestures that project a rich array of meanings: not only large-scale harmonic and formal relationships but also expressive connotations, stylistic tropes, and cultural commentaries. Drawing on work in cognition by Saslaw (1996) and Zbikowski (2002), he theorizes these patterns as body-derived image schemas and conceptual models.

[9] In "Burning Bridges: Defining the Interverse Using the Music of U2," Christopher Endrinal explores a variety of formal section types as they occur in the music of the Irish rock band U2, defined in terms of their lyric structure, instrumentation (encompassing timbre and texture), melodic motives, harmonic patterns, and formal position. He problematizes the term "bridge" on the grounds that it is often not transitional in nature, and argues for its replacement with either "transition," for an unstable section, or "interverse," his new term for a stable texted section.

[10] The concept of "phrase" in popular music has received even less attention than have issues of form; it is discussed in Moore 2001, Stephenson 2002, and Everett 2009, but is most extensively investigated by Jocelyn Neal in the context of country music (Neal 2000 and 2002). In her essay "Theorizing Phrase Rhythm in Popular Music: A Sarah McLachlan Case Study," Robin Attas defines a phrase as a musical unit characterized by directed motion towards a goal, with closure accomplished lyrically, harmonically, rhythmically and/or melodically. She explores phrase structure and phrase rhythm and

their interactions with meter, hypermeter, and song structure in McLachlan's works, and identifies both norms and deviations that can also be applied to works of other artists.

[11] Drew Nobile's "Form and Voice Leading in Early Beatles Songs" builds on Walter Everett's work, adopting a Schenkerian approach to relate voice leading and form. He constructs a general voice-leading model for the most common formal structure found in the music of the Beatles through 1965, an AABA form in which each A is an SRDC phrase structure (statement, restatement or response, departure, and conclusion or return) and B represents a contrasting bridge section that typically begins off-tonic and ends with a dominant retransition. Nobile presents numerous middleground graphs of song structures, and identifies the most typical melodic, harmonic, and cadential formulations that occur in conjunction with this model.

[12] Mark Spicer's response comments on each essay and offers additional musical examples that engage with several of the issues raised. He also offers two new ideas in dialogue with the first and last papers of the original session. Inspired by Koozin's mapping of guitar fretboard topography, Spicer considers keyboard topography and presents examples of characteristic "white-key" and "black-key" riffs in 1980s pop-rock and Stevie Wonder songs, respectively. In response to Summach's investigation of the origins of the prechorus, Spicer identifies the postchorus, a brief refrain-like section following the chorus, and offers examples of this structural device from its first appearance in 1970 onwards.

[13] Collectively, these papers consider the structures and functions of a variety of formal section types and designs, drawing from a broad chronological and stylistic span of pop-rock repertoire. The essays in this volume provide significant new insights and details regarding formal issues and norms in rock music. The ideas and paradigms presented here provide a solid groundwork for future research that might build upon or expand these models, or explore their applicability to other styles and genres.

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Footnotes

- 1. Within the practical rather than scholarly literature, there are also many (and varied!) definitions and exemplars of formal sections in songwriting manuals. Outside of the English language, definitions of formal sections in pop-rock music in French and German are provided in Julien 2008 and Kaiser 2011 respectively.
- Return to text
- 2. These works are too numerous to permit listing a comprehensive bibliography here, so I offer a brief selection of sources for readers unfamiliar with the literature on this topic. Studies concerned primarily with form in the works of particular artists or bands are Covach 2006, Fabbri 1996, Fitzgerald 1996, Nurmesjärvi 1998, Nurmesjärvi 2000, and Pollack 2000 on the Beatles; Spicer 2008 on Genesis; Covach 2010 on Leiber and Stoller; Van Valkenburg 2010 on Metallica; Walsh 2002 on early Rush; Stephan-Robinson 2009 on Paul Simon; Endrinal 2008 on U2; Hughes 2003 on Stevie Wonder; and Borders 2001 on Frank Zappa. A few sources focused on particular genres or historical periods are Josephson 1992 on classical structures in progressive rock; Zak 2008 on large-scale forms in 1970s rock; and Osborn 2010 on large-scale forms in 21 st-century rock. Some general considerations of formal issues in covers, remixes, and mashups are Moorefield 2010, Malawey 2011, Marshall 2011, and several essays in Plasketes 2010.

 Return to text

3. Doll also discusses the "pump-up" (or "crowbar" or "truck driver's") modulation up a step in the latter part of a song. My favorite such example is They Might Be Giants' country-song parody "Alienation's for the Rich." The third and final verse-refrain unit modulates up a whole step, reaching—or perhaps exceeding—the limits of singer John Flansburgh's comfortable vocal range.

Return to text

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