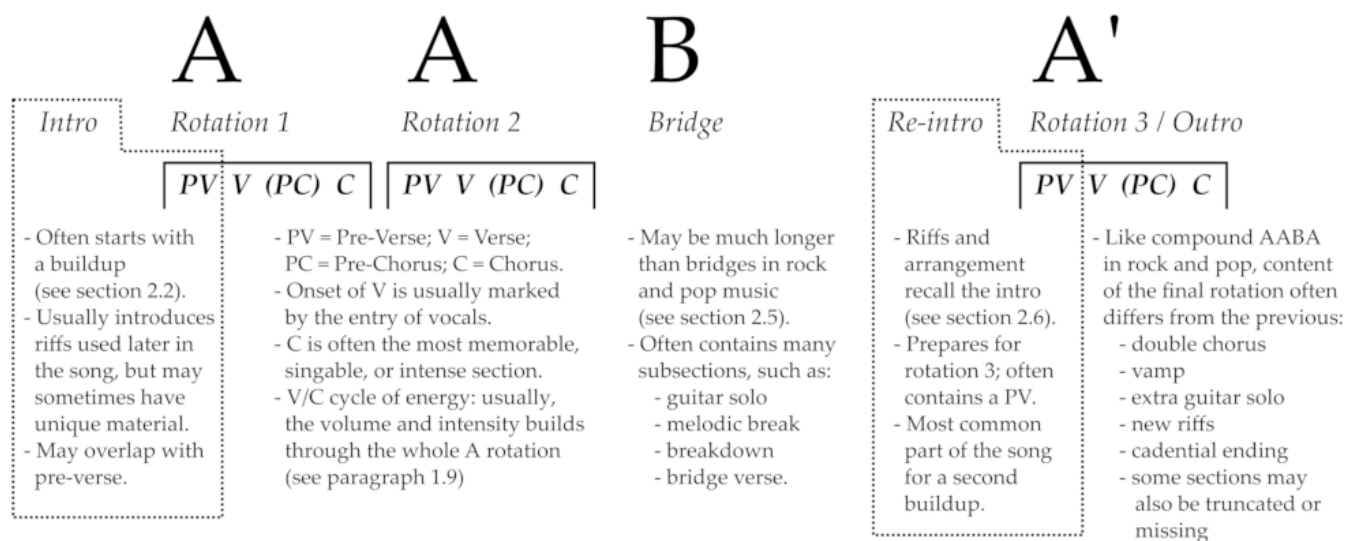**MTO 27.1 Examples: Hudson, Compound AABA Form and Style Distinction in Heavy Metal**

(Note: audio, video, and other interactive examples are only available online)
https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.21.27.1/mto.21.27.1.hudson.html

Example 1. Map of AABA form in metal music

A — Intro / Rotation 1
A — Rotation 2
B — Bridge
A' — Re-intro / Rotation 3 / Outro

PV | V (PC) C | PV V (PC) C

Intro
- Often starts with a buildup (see section 2.2).
- Usually introduces riffs used later in the song, but may sometimes have unique material.
- May overlap with pre-verse.

Rotation 1 / Rotation 2
- PV = Pre-Verse; V = Verse; PC = Pre-Chorus; C = Chorus.
- Onset of V is usually marked by the entry of vocals.
- C is often the most memorable, singable, or intense section.
- V/C cycle of energy: usually, the volume and intensity builds through the whole A rotation (see paragraph 1.9)

Bridge
- May be much longer than bridges in rock and pop music (see section 2.5).
- Often contains many subsections, such as:
  - guitar solo
  - melodic break
  - breakdown
  - bridge verse.

Re-intro
- Riffs and arrangement recall the intro (see section 2.6).
- Prepares for rotation 3; often contains a PV.
- Most common part of the song for a second buildup.

PV | V (PC) C

Rotation 3 / Outro
- Like compound AABA in rock and pop, content of the final rotation often differs from the previous:
  - double chorus
  - vamp
  - extra guitar solo
  - new riffs
  - cadential ending
  - some sections may also be truncated or missing

Example 2. Hierarchy of formal structure in metal music

Biggest ↓ Smallest		
	Compound AABA	whole song form
	Supersection	either a Verse/Chorus rotation, or a Bridge
	Section	such as Verse, Chorus, Pre-Chorus, etc.
	Module	several contiguous repetitions of a riff
	Riff	distinct melodic/rhythmic idea that repeats

Example 3. Van Halen, "Atomic Punk" (1978)

Supersection	Section	Module	Notes
Intro	0:00 **Buildup Intro**	Ax4	(one guitar, scratching riff)
A	0:17 **Pre-Verse**	Bx4	(all instruments join -- continuation of Intro)
	0:27 **Verse 1**	Cx2	(add vocals)
		Bx2	
		Cx2	
		Bx2	
	0:46 **Chorus**	*Eb5__ Db5__*	
		Ax1	
A	0:52 **Pre-Verse**	Bx4	(no vocals during Pre-Verse)
	1:03 **Verse 2**	Cx2	(add vocals again)
		Bx2	
		Cx2	
		Bx2	
	1:22 **Chorus**	*Eb5__ Db5__*	
		Ax1	
B	1:29 **Guitar Solo**	Bx8	(no vocals during Guitar Solo)
		Dx4	
	1:58 **Re-Intro**	Ax4	(one guitar, as in Intro)
A'	2:08 **Pre-Verse**	Bx4	(all instruments join)
	2:17 **Verse 3**	Cx2	
		Bx2	
		Cx2	
		Bx2	
	2:36 **Chorus**	*Eb5__ Db/Eb__*	(Chorus vocals with new chords)
		Ab/Eb__ Cb/Eb__	
		Dx1	
		Fb_____ Eb!	(cadence)

Example 4. Metallica, "Master of Puppets" (1986), second Verse-Chorus rotation (2:09–3:33)

A		
2:09 **Pre-Verse**	Bx2	
2:20 **Verse**	Cx4	
2:37 **Verse** part II? Or **Pre-Chorus**?	C'x2 (whole step higher)	
2:47 **Pre-Chorus**? Or **Chorus**?	Dx4	
	E E. F F. "Master! Master!"	
3:08 **Chorus**? Or **Post-Chorus**?	*E___ G..G____ (each line is 4 + 2 + 4 + 4 beats)*	(italics indicate single notes rather than riffs)
	C___ A..A____	
	D___ C..B___	
	E___ D..C____	
	E E. F F. "Master! Master!"	
	E___ F#..C____	
	E E. F F. "Master! Master!"	
3:30 **Link**	(echoing "Master…" followed by Bridge)	

Example 5. Metallica, "Blackened" (1988), Bridge (2:36–5:50)

B			
2:36 **New Build-Up** (!)	Ex2	(one guitar alone)	
Bridge Pre-Verse	Ex2	(all instruments together)	
3:07 **Bridge Verse**	E'x2	E' means this riff is a variation of Riff E	
	E''x1		
3:30 **Bridge Pre-Verse**	Ex2		
3:44 **Bridge Verse 2**	E'x2		
	E''x1		
4:07 **Melodic Break**	Fx8		
4:31 **Guitar Solo**	Gx7		
	B'x1	B' is a variation of a riff used throughout the song	
5:01 *(faster tempo)*	Hx2		
	D'x1	D' is based on a Chorus riff	
5:33 **Re-Intro**	Bx4	Resembles 0:55, the final module of the Intro	

Example 6. AC/DC, "Back in Black" (1980): Two B Sections?

Intro	0:00 **Buildup Intro**	*quarter notes* (left-hand muted guitar)	
		Ax4 a2	
A	0:27 **Verse 1**	Ax4	
	0:47 **Chorus**	Bx2 B'x2	
		Bx2 TA	
A	1:07 **Verse 2**	Ax4	
	1:28 **Chorus**	Bx2 B'x2	
		Bx2 TA	
B	1:49 **Guitar Solo**	A'x8	mild contrast; sounds like Verse riff
A'	2:30 **Chorus**	Bx2 B'x2	
		Bx2 TA	
C	2:50 **Vamp**	Cx4	stronger contrast than B section
		C'x2	
		Cx2	
A'	3:09 **Chorus**	Bx2 B'x2	
		Bx2 TA	
		hold_____	
B	3:35 **Guitar Solo II**	A'x7	fading out; same riff as B

Example 7. List of albums in my corpus, with tallies of form types

Rank (Elflein)	Artist	Title	Year	# of Tracks	Perfect AABA	Other RFWB Track# (type) -- See key below	Non-RFWB Tracks
1	Guns N' Roses	Appetite For Destruction	1987	12	7	#1 (2 B), #2 (2 B), #6 (3 V), #9 (AAB) #12 (2 B)	None
2	AC / DC	Back in Black	1980	10	9	#6 (2 B)	None
3	Metallica	Kill 'Em All	1983	10	6	#1 (AAB), #2 (2 B), #3 (2 B)	#5 (Instr)
4	Slayer	Reign In Blood	1986	10	4	#3 (AAB), #4 (AAB), #6 (3 V), #8 (AAB), #9 (AAB)	#10 (ThruC)
5	Black Sabbath	Paranoid	1970	8	2	#1 (1 V), #2 (3 V), #4 (4 V), #8 (1 V)	#3 (Simple V), #7 (Instr)
(tie) 6	Metallica	Ride The Lightning	1984	8	4	#3 (AAB), #4 (AAB), #6 (AAB)	#8 (Instr)
6	Metallica	Master of Puppets	1986	8	5	#1 (2 B), #4 (AAB)	#7 (Instr)
6	Queensrÿche	Operation: Mindcrime	1988	15	9	#8 (Suite)	#1 (Dialogue), #2 (Dialogue), #10 (Single V), #13 (Single V), #14 (Single V)
9	Iron Maiden	The Number Of The Beast	1982	8	5	#2 (AAB), #8 (2 B)	#4 (ThruC)
10	Led Zeppelin	IV	1971	8	1	#1 (2 B), #5 (3 V), #6 (3 V), #8 (2 B)	#3 (TermC), #4 (TermC), #7 (Simple V)
11	Motörhead	Ace of Spades	1980	12	10	#10 (AAAB), #11 (AAAB)	None
12	Deep Purple	Machine Head	1972	7	5	#1 (2 B), #7 (3 V)	#6 (Simple V)
13	Megadeth	Peace Sells... But Who's Buying?	1986	8	0	#2 (AAB), #3 (AAB), #4 (2 B), #6 (AAB), #8 (AAAB)	#1 (ThruC), #5 (ThruC), #7 (Simple V)
14	Exodus	Bonded By Blood	1985	9	7	#4 (AAB), #6 (AAB)	None
(tie) 15	AC / DC	Highway To Hell	1979	10	7	#3 (3 V), #5 (2 B)	#10 (Simple V)
15	Venom	Black Metal	1982	10	8	#9 (2 B), #10 (2 B)	None
17	Van Halen	Van Halen 1	1978	11	5	#1 (2 B), #5 (2 B), #8 (3 V), #11 (1 V)	#2 (Instr), #10 (Simple V)
18	Mötley Crüe	Shout At The Devil	1983	11	9	None	#1 (Single V), #5 (Vamp)
19	Metallica	And Justice For All	1988	9	6	#4 (AAB), #5 (2 B)	#8 (Instr)
20	Pantera	Vulgar Display Of Power	1992	11	7	#1 (AAB), #5 (2 B), #11 (AAB)	None
		TOTAL:		195	116	54	25

(ranked based on number of citations in Elflein's aggregated list)

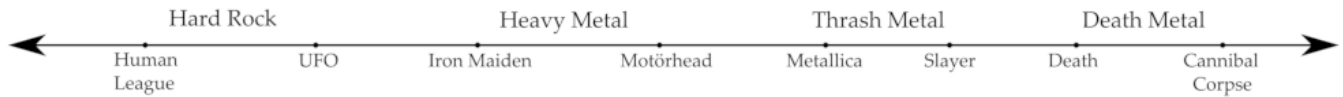| KEY:	RFWB = Rotational Form With Bridge	Single V = short track consisting of a single strophe of lyrics
	2 B = Two Bridges, such as AABABA	Simple V = Simple Verse form (repeating Verse, often 12-bar Blues)
	1 V = One Verse before Bridge, or ABA	TermC = Terminally Climactic
	3 V = Three Verses before Bridge, or AAABA	ThruC = Through-Composed (no riffs/modules reappear later in the song)
	AAB or AAAB = Ends with Bridge, w/out final A	Instr = Instrumental (forms vary, rarely AABA)
	Suite = expanded AABA with diff types of Verses	Vamp = repeats same riff, no vocals

Example 8. Rotational form patterns, with or without Bridge

- Perfect (AABA)
- Incomplete (AAB)
- Two bridges (AABABA)
- Three verses before the bridge (AAABA)
- One verse before the bridge (ABA)
- Two rotations (ABAB or ABABA)
- Extra intro or intro verse (IAABA)
- Simple verse (AAAA)
- Through-composed (ABCD...)
- Repetitive Terminally-Climactic (A A'A")

Example 9. Slayer, "Reign in Blood" (1986)

0:00 **Extra Intro**		rain sounds, drum tattoo
0:33 **Buildup Intro**	Ax4	guitars only (in unison)
	Ax2	lead doubling at 4th
	Bx4	a2
1:06 **Buildup Intro 2 (?)**	Cx1	introductory drum pattern
	Cx6	double-time backbeat
1:21 **Verse A**	Dx8	or Intro Verse?
1:39 **Pre-Verse**	Ex2	
1:49 **Verse B**	Ex2	
2:00 **Reintro (?)**	Ax2	guitars only (in unison)
	Ax2	lead doubling at 4th + vox
2:10 **Bridge**	Fx2	some lyrics / tabs call this the
2:21 **Melodic Break**	Fx3	"instrumental break" or "breakdown"
2:38 **Chorus**	F'x4	or Bridge Chorus?
2:48 **Link**	*tremolo picking one note*	
2:53 **Guitar Solo**	Gx4	
	G'x2	transposed higher
	Gx10 speeding up	
3:23 **Outro**	THUNDERCLAP and rain sounds	

Example 10. Moore's Hard Rock-Heavy Metal continuum, extended

Hard Rock — Heavy Metal — Thrash Metal — Death Metal

Human League — UFO — Iron Maiden — Motörhead — Metallica — Slayer — Death — Cannibal Corpse

Example 11. Megadeth, "The Conjuring" (1986)

Intro	0:00 **Buildup Intro**	Ax1	(two guitars only)
		Ax1	(add bass pulsing)
	0:26 **Intro Verse**	Ax2	(add hihat and vocals)
	0:54 **More Buildup**	Bx4	(add lead guitar fills, no vocals)
		A'x4	
A	1:31 **Verse 1**	Cx2	
	1:44 **Link**	Dx2	(no vocals)
A	1:57 **Verse 2**	Cx2	
	2:09 **Pre-Chorus**	C'x2	
	2:21 **Chorus**	Ex4	
B	2:32 **Bridge / New Buildup**	Fx4	(one guitar + ensemble punches)
		Gx2	(one guitar + ensemble punches)
	3:06 **Breakdown**	Gx4	(whole band together)
	3:30 **Bridge Verse 1**	H H H' H''	
	3:41 **Link**	Gx1	more of a Post-Verse than Pre-Verse quality
	3:46 **Bridge Verse 2**	H H H' H''	
	3:56 **Link**	Gx1	
	4:02 **Bridge Verse 3**	H H H' H''	
	4:12 **Link**	Gx1	
	4:18 **Bridge Verse 4**	H H H' H''	
	4:28 **Link**	Gx1	
	4:34 **Bridge Verse 5** (instr)	H H H' H''	
	4:46 **Cadential Ending**		singer shouts the song's title "The Conjuring"

Example 12. Percent of tracks with perfect AABA form vs. year of album release

Percent of tracks with perfect AABA form

Example 13. Mayhem, "De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas" (1994)

Intro	0:00 **Buildup Intro**	Ax1	(one guitar + ensemble punches)
A	0:11 **Verse 1**	Ax2	(a2 + vocals+ blastbeats)
	0:33 **Link**	Bx4	(no vocals)
A	0:54 **Verse 2**	Ax2	
	1:15 **Link**	Bx4	(with vocals; but not Chorus-like)
A'	1:36 **Verse 3**	C	
	1:58 **Link**	Bx4	(without vocals)
A''	2:19 **Verse 4**	C	
	2:40 (cont.)	C	
B	3:02 **Bridge**	Dx4	first major change in drum pattern (!)
	4:09 **Bridge Verse**	Ex4	
	4:51 **Reintro**	Ax1	(one guitar, others sustaining)
		Ax1	(a2 halfway through)
A'''	5:12 **Link**	Bx4	(with vocals)
	5:33 **Verse 5**	Cx2	
	6:17 **Cadential ending**		

Example 14. Queensrÿche, "Suite Sister Mary" (1988)

Section	Time / Label	Form	Description
Intro	0:00 **Extra Intro**		Dialogue + sound effects
	0:33 **Buildup Intro**	Ax4	acoustic guitar
		Ax4	add "Dies Irae" chanting
		Ax4	add ensemble punches
A	1:14 **Verse 1**	Bx4	Narrator Strophe 1
		A'4	(no vocals)
		Bx4	Narrator Strophe 2
		A'x3 A*	(choir but no lead vocals)
A	2:56 **Pre-Verse / New Buildup**	Bx2	(one electric guitar)
		Bx2	(plus hihat)
	3:10 **Verse 2**	B'x4	Narrator Strophe 3
		Cx2	Mary Strophe 1
		B'x4	Narrator Strophe 4
		Cx2	Mary Strophe 2
	4:48 **Chorus**	Dx4	
B	5:16 **Bridge**	Ex3 E*	Guitar Solo
		E E* E'	
	5:45 **Re-Intro**		(choir chanting)
	(different from Intro?)	A''x2	(one guitar)
		A'x2	(add choir chanting "Domine Deo")
		A'x2	(whole band with choir)
A'	6:53 **Pre-Verse**	Bx2	(one guitar with choir)
	7:07 **Verse 3**	B'x4	Narrator Strophe 5
		Cx2	Mary Strophe 3
	7:57 **Chorus**	Dx4	
		____	(drums alone, building)
	8:36 **Vamp**	Bx6 B*	(whole band)
Outro	9:10 **Outro**	Ax4	(one guitar)
		Ax12	(whole band + orchestra + choir)
			Half time feel; bass etc. fade
		Ax2	(single guitar)
		rain sounds	