



### MTO 32.1 Examples: Nick Braae, Closure in 1970s Rock Songs

(Note: audio, video, and other interactive examples are only available online)

<https://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.26.32.1/mto.26.32.1.braae.html>

#### Example 1. Musical markers of structural and rhetorical closure

Marker of structural closure	Marker of rhetorical closure
Return of initial thematic material at the end of the song, such as a verse or chorus (Patti Smith, “Because the Night”)	Local cadence to conclude song (The Runaways, “You Drive Me Wild”)
Harmonic and melodic arrival into closing section (Queen, “Bohemian Rhapsody”)	Completion of vocal/instrumental melody on the tonic (Heart, “Alone”)
Harmonic stability of closing section (The Commodores, “Still”)	Song concludes with a “final” chord (Jimi Hendrix, “The Wind Cries Mary”)
	“Fading” gesture through final section, such as textural diminuendo, ritenuto (Linda Ronstadt, “When Will I Be Loved”)
	Expansion towards a “climactic” gesture, such as textural growth, accelerando, rallentando, stop/free time (Pat Benatar, “Heartbreaker”)
Resolution of any ambiguities and/or conflicts in the song’s lyrical narrative (Bread, “Diary”)	Lyrical reference to ending (Tracy Chapman, “Give Me One Reason”)

**Example 2.** Musical markers that negate structural and rhetorical closure

**Marker that negates structural closure      Marker that negates rhetorical closure**

Introduction of new material in final section (Guns N' Roses, "Sweet Child O' Mine")	Lack of final cadence (Fleetwood Mac, "Silver Springs")
Lack of tonal stability or modulation through final section (Queen, "Bohemian Rhapsody")	Vocal melody ends off-tonic (Dire Straits, "On Every Street")
Unresolved ambiguities and/or conflicts in the song's lyrics (Carly Simon, "You're So Vain")	Fade-out (Stevie Wonder, "Signed, Sealed, Delivered")
	Constant texture through final section (The Eagles, "Hotel California")
	Lyrical reference to continuing (Journey, "Don't Stop Believing")

**Example 3.** Billy Joel, “Piano Man,” structural overview

<b>Section</b>	<b>Timecode</b>	<b>Description / Notes</b>
Introduction	0’00”	Two-bar piano solo; subsequent introduction of primary melodic (harmonica) and harmonic (piano) patterns as well as the four-bar tag phrase
VCU 1 (Low Verse—10-bar Link—High Verse—Pre-Chorus—Chorus—14-bar Tag)	0’30”	
VCU 2 (Low Verse—4-bar Link—High Verse—Pre-Chorus)	1’57”	VCU is truncated; the link between the low and high verses omits the primary harmonic pattern; the extended dominant chord at the end of the pre-chorus leads to the start of a new VCU, not the chorus as anticipated
VCU 3 (Low Verse—10-bar Link—High Verse—Extended Instrumental Prechorus—Chorus—14-bar Tag)	2’44”	VCU features an extended pre-chorus doubling as a piano solo; this instrumental variation is four bars longer than the vocal pre-choruses and builds to a strong arrival for the subsequent chorus
VCU 4 (Low Verse—4-bar Link—High Verse—Pre-Chorus—Chorus—14-bar Tag)	4’12”	Dynamics drop at the beginning of the low verse, before building through the shortened link, high verse and pre-chorus; there is gradual diminuendo in dynamics through the final tag section, which functions as an instrumental codetta

**Example 4.** Bruce Springsteen, “Thunder Road,” structural overview

<b>Section</b>	<b>Timecode</b>	<b>Description / Notes</b>
Instrumental Introduction	0’00”	Piano and harmonica introduction to the chorus-like melody and harmonic pattern
A – Verse 1	0’19”	Springsteen accompanied by ‘music box’ piano <sup>1</sup>
A – Verse 2	0’46”	Similar accompaniment but piano shifting to middle register
B – Verse 3	1’15”	Variation in harmonic content; similar lyrical flow of unfolding narrative (verse-like); bass guitar, electric guitar, drums enter into mix
<b>C – Verse 4 (Pre-Chorus?)</b>	1’45”	Increase in textural density (added backing vocals); raised melodic tessitura
B’ – Chorus	2’10”	Prevalence of the title lyric; textural emphasis of melodic line by glockenspiel
D – Bridge	2’39”	Starts off-tonic on IV; moves towards extended V chord
A’ – Verse 5	3’06”	Melodic tessitura shifts upwards relative to earlier verses; harmonic variations in second half with textural build towards final cadence
E – Instrumental Coda	3’50”	Repeated instrumental payout

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<sup>1</sup> The ‘music box’ description comes from Everett (2007, 83) and refers to the arpeggiated figuration played in the high register of the piano.

Example 5. Bruce Springsteen, "Thunder Road," coda, melody and piano.

Driving rock

Springsteen

It's a town\_\_ full of lo - sers\_\_ I'm

Piano

$Gm^7$   $Bb$   $8^{va}$

Detailed description: This system shows the first part of the coda. The vocal line (Springsteen) is in 4/4 time, starting with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F4. The piano accompaniment consists of a right hand with a descending eighth-note line (G4, F4, E4, D4, C4) and a left hand with a steady eighth-note bass line (G3, F3, E3, D3, C3). Chords  $Gm^7$ ,  $Bb$ , and  $8^{va}$  are indicated above the piano part.

$\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  descent ----->

pul-ling out-ta here to win

C F  $8^{va}$

Big perfect cadence ----->

Detailed description: This system shows the second part of the coda. The vocal line continues with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F4. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note patterns. Chords C, F, and  $8^{va}$  are indicated above the piano part. A dashed arrow labeled  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  descent points to the vocal line. Another dashed arrow labeled Big perfect cadence points to the end of the piano part.

(Example 5, continued)

*Tenor Sax + Glockenspiel*

*Chordal embellishment of melody*

This system contains two staves. The top staff is for Tenor Sax and Glockenspiel, showing a melodic line with two triplet eighth notes. The bottom staff is for piano accompaniment, with a treble clef staff containing chords and a bass clef staff with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Chord symbols F, C, F, and Bb are placed above the piano staff. The piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes in the treble clef.

*Open-ended melody; leads into repeat*

*F* *C* *Bb* *C*

This system also contains two staves. The top staff continues the melodic line from the first system, ending with an open-ended phrase. The bottom staff continues the piano accompaniment with the same eighth-note pattern. Chord symbols F, C, Bb, and C are placed above the piano staff. The piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes in the treble clef.

## Example 6. Meat Loaf, “Paradise by the Dashboard Light,” structural overview

Section	Timecode	Description / Notes
Instrumental Introduction	0'00"	Electric guitar lick before boogie groove in D major
Sectional Group—Verse (“I remember every little thing...”) + Duet Refrain (“Though it’s cold and lonely...”) + Duet Refrain 2 (“Ain’t no doubt about it...”)	0'08"	<p>Lyrics take the listener into the memory and set the scene and character motivations for the song’s narrative; female character enters in the refrain section; the first Duet Refrain section features the title lyric; the second features also repeating lyrics that summarize rather than advance the story</p> <p>The full sectional group sits in D major, with the diatonic harmonic language enlivened through boogie patterns and a range of chromatic chords (predominantly <math>bIII</math>, <math>bVI</math>, <math>bVII</math>; but also a striking major III leading into a IV—V—I cadence)</p> <p>Shift into the Duet Refrain is marked by a change to half-time groove, before a return to original pattern for Duet Post-Refrain</p>
Sectional Group—Verse (“Baby doncha hear my call...”) + Extended Duet Refrain (“Though it’s cold and lonely...”) + Truncated Duet Refrain 2 (“Ain’t no doubt about it...”)	1'41"	<p>Musical patterns predominantly repeat (slight harmonic variation in Verse and the Extended Duet Refrain)</p> <p>Verse lyrics change but emphasise the same ideas of male sexual anticipation</p> <p>Lyrics in Duet Refrain sections are often similar to first iterations; the second refrain section is truncated and cuts directly to subsequent section</p>
“We’re gonna go all the way” Build	3'15"	<p>Two-bar phrase which repeats four times; male character sings solo on first iteration with female vocalists creating block harmonies one voice at a time on second and third iterations.</p> <p>Harmony is fundamentally static on A: electric guitar in A octaves; bass guitar introduces a funky riff predominantly in A Mixolydian; vocal block chords outline Mixolydian neighbouring motion as the melody descends (e.g. A—Bm—A—G—A—G—A) through the two bars.</p> <p>Sharp cut to slower tempo with funky sixteenth-note groove</p>
“Underscore” Narration	3'30"	Funky accompaniment (Em <sup>7</sup> vamp) underneath “baseball commentary”
Female Verse (“Stop right there...”)	4'28"	Starts on emphatic A chord; winds towards D major
Male Verse (“Let me sleep on it...”)	5'09"	
Female Verse + Build (“I gotta know right now...What’s it gonna be boy?”)	5'44"	Lyrical questioning over “chugging” dominant at conclusion of this verse
Male/Female Verse (“Let me sleep on it...Will you love me forever?” + Build	6'19"	Singers reprise lyrics concurrently; section ends with one-bar phrases from each singer over chromatically ascending accompaniment
“I couldn’t take it” Verse	6'58"	Narrative snaps back to present tense; sudden modulation and arrival in C major with boogie/rock ‘n’ roll accompaniment
“End of time” Verse	7'15"	Crux of narrative (“praying for the end of time”) is revealed
Coda + Fade	7'46"	Repeating two-bar loop over tonic pedal

Example 7. Queen, "Bohemian Rhapsody," coda

*poco rall.* ♩ = 72

*E. Gtr.* *B.Vs*

Massive dominant chord leading into reprise of ballad progression

Ooh yea

*Piano*

*f*

Chords: Eb, Bb/D, Cm, G7/B, Cm

*Mercury*

ooh yea No-thing real-ly mat-ters

Chords: G7(b9)/B, Cm, Bb7, Eb, D, Gm, Ab, Eb, Cm, Gm

Melodic line converges on tonic from above and below

A-ny-one can see No-thing real-ly mat-ters No-thing real-ly mat-ters to

Chords: Cm, Gm, Cm, Abm, Abmaj7/Bb

V-I in Eb

(Example 7, continued)

*E. Gtr.*

me

Tonic embellishment

$\hat{1}$

Chords:  $E_b$ ,  $A_b/E_b$ ,  $E_b$ ,  $E_b^{\circ 7}$ ,  $B_b/D$ ,  $B_b m/D_b$

A - ny way the wind blows

*V/ii reinterpreted as V of F*

Reprise of plagal descent motif from earlier in song

Chords:  $C^7$ ,  $C^7$ ,  $F$

### Example 8. Pink Floyd, *Dark Side of the Moon*, structural and closure summary

Song	Primary Formal Components	Formal Arrangement	Treatment of Structural Closing Markers	Treatment of Rhetorical Closing Markers	Overall Closure	
Side A	<b>“Speak to Me”</b>	Gradual fade-in of heartbeat; free-form, but steady accumulation of sounds (including some appearing in later tracks)		No markers of structural closure	Textural and dynamic crescendo build towards a climactic gesture; direct cut to “Breathe”	Anticipates rhetorical closure
	<b>“Breathe”</b>	A—shuttle between Em <sup>7</sup> —A <sup>7</sup> over four bars; each A represents 16 bars of this pattern B—8 bars, cadential movement from C <sup>(maj)</sup> back to Em	AAB [Instrumental]—AB—AB	Cyclical return to A, but minimal deviation from AB sectional unit	Cadence of final B progression overlaps with the start of “On the Run”  No other markers of rhetorical closure	Partial/cyclical structural closure; rhetorically open
	<b>“On the Run”</b>	Assorted sound effects over repeating 8-note sequence in E minor		No markers of structural closure	Explosion stops the sequencer and drone, leaving “running” footsteps and then clock sounds	Partial rhetorical closure
	<b>“Time”</b>	Instrumental Introduction—32-bar shuttle of E—F <sup>#</sup> notes (four bars each) + 16-bars alluding to A progression (F <sup>#</sup> m—A—E—F <sup>#</sup> m; four bars each) A—harmonically closed pattern, F <sup>#</sup> m—A—E—F <sup>#</sup> m, over 8 bars; each A represents this pattern played twice B—sixteen-bar progression, oriented towards A major; ends on apparent dominant chord of A	Intro—AB—AAB’ [Instrumental; extended B section]—AB	Cyclical return to A, but minimal deviation from AB sectional unit	Final lyric—“The time is gone, the song is over, thought I’d something more to say”—alludes to ending  Cadence of final B progression overlaps with start of “Breathe (Reprise)” Ritenuto and drum fill in final bar of “Time” to transition into “Breathe (Reprise)”	Partial/cyclical structural closure; partial rhetorical closure
	<b>“Breathe (Reprise)”</b>	Reprise of A and B material from “Breathe”	AB	Sense of larger-scale cyclical return back to AB sectional unit	Ritenuto into final cadence of B  Clear “final” chord with slow fade, but also piano of “The Great Gig in the Sky” beginning over the dying organ sound  Apparent completion of melodic line but deceptive cadential resolution to B minor instead of E minor	Partial/cyclical structural closure; ambiguous rhetorical closure
	<b>“The Great Gig in the Sky”</b>	A—16-bar progression, winding from Bm chord to a strong cadence in B <sup>b</sup> major B—two-bar Dorian shuttle Gm <sup>7</sup> —C <sup>9</sup> B’—14-beat passage, B <sup>b6</sup> /D—B <sup>b</sup> m <sup>6</sup> /D <sup>b</sup> —F <sup>#7(b9)</sup> —Bm, that links section B back to section A	A [Instrumental + spoken voiceover]—B (18 bars of vocal extemporisation)—B’—A (vocal extemporisation continues)—B (13 bars; vocal extemporisation continues; ends on Gm <sup>7</sup> )	Apparent structural completion at end of second A section with cadence in B <sup>b</sup> major; undercut by turn back towards the open G Dorian shuttle	Some swells in intensity, but general textural and dynamic fade through final A and B sections  Clear final chord with piano, bass guitar and “distant” voice; the sounds decay to silence	Structurally open; rhetorical closure

(Example 8, continued)

Side B	<b>“Money”</b>	A—12-bar blues in B minor, with 7/4 riff on tonic harmony	Intro [Cash Registers FX + 8 bars of riff on tonic]—AA—A” [Saxophone solo; extended blues pattern]—A” x 3 [three guitar solos in 4/4; extended blues pattern]—A—Coda [Repeat of riff on tonic and final lyric]	Cyclical return of A vocal section in 7/4 after guitar solos in 4/4	Shift back to 4/4 for effective one-bar vamp on B minor; vocal ad libs. (“away” and “oooh”) and track slowly disappear, before crossfading into the organ introduction of “Us and Them”  Introduction of random “dialogue” through fading vamp	Partial/cyclical structural closure; rhetorically open
	<b>“Us and Them”</b>	A—10-bar voice-led motion over D pedal (D <sup>sus2</sup> —E <sup>sus2</sup> —Dm <sup>7</sup> —G—D <sup>sus2</sup> ) B—open 8-bar phrase moving from Bm to C, as an alternative V of D (Bm—Bm/A—G <sup>9</sup> —C)	Free Hammond Organ Intro—AA [Instrumental]—AAB—AAB—AAB [Instrumental]—AAB	Cyclical return to A, but minimal deviation from AAB sectional unit	Final lyric—“The old man died”—alludes to ending  Cadence of final B progression overlaps with start of “Any Colour You Like”	Partial/cyclical structural closure; partial rhetorical closure
	<b>“Any Colour You Like”</b>	Partial reprise of “Breathe” material with D tonal centre A—shuttle between Dm <sup>7</sup> —G <sup>7</sup> , one bar each B—truncated reprise of “Breathe” material; final four bars of cadential movement from C <sup>7</sup> back towards Dm	A [Synthesizer Solo; 24 bars]—A [Guitar/s Solo; 36 bars]—B	Sense of larger-scale cyclical return to AB sectional unit	Slight textural fade and decrease in surface rhythmic activity through truncated B section  Cadence of final B progression overlaps with start of “Brain Damage”	Partial/cyclical structural closure; partial rhetorical closure
	<b>“Brain Damage”</b>	A—voice-led motion over D tonic pedal (12 bars) + perfect cadence (4 bars) B—18-bar progression starting on IV and culminating with ii—V motion	Intro [Instrumental on tonic harmony]—AAB—AAB—A” [Instrumental; second half of A repeats]	Cyclical return to A, but minimal deviation from AAB sectional unit	Drum fill under final chord signals a phrase/sectional end  No other markers of rhetorical closure	Partial/cyclical structural closure; anticipates rhetorical closure
	<b>“Eclipse”</b>	A—8-bar descending pattern (D—D/C—B <sup>b</sup> —B <sup>b</sup> —A <sup>7</sup> ; each two bars, except for the B <sup>b</sup> harmonies)	A [Instrumental]—A x 7	No structural deviation from A section  Final lyric—“But the sun is eclipsed by the moon”—encapsulates the album’s themes	Vocals and band conclude together on D major tonic  Chromatically altered final perfect cadence (effectively A <sup>7</sup> ( <sup>b</sup> 5, <sup>sus</sup> 4)/B <sup>b</sup> )  Ritenuito into final chord  Heartbeat sound effect recapitulates the opening of the album and creates a unifying frame	Structurally static; rhetorical closure

**Example 9.** Pink Floyd, *Dark Side of the Moon*, Summary of closure and album flow

“Speak to Me”

*Build and continuation*

“Breathe”

*Cyclic continuation*

“On the Run”

*Climax and continuation*

“Time”

*Cyclic continuation*

“Breathe (Reprise)”

*Cyclic completion and rhetorical “breath”*

“The Great Gig in the Sky”

*Open-ended and anticipatory pause*

“Money”

*Cyclic drifting*

“Us and Them”

*Cyclic continuation*

“Any Colour You Like”

*Cyclic continuation*

“Brain Damage”

*Cyclic continuation*

“Eclipse”

*Conclusive and final musical statements*