



## MTO 32.2 Examples: Reese, "I Raq and Roll": Signs of War in Post-9/11 Country Music

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

<https://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.26.32.2/mto.26.32.2.reese.html>

### Example 1. Clint Black, "I Raq and Roll" (2003), third verse and chorus

#### VERSE 3

Now this terror isn't man to man, they can be no more than cowards.

I

IV

If they won't show us their weapons, we might have to show them ours.

I

IV

Now it might be a smart bomb; they find stupid people too.

bVII

IV

If you stand with the likes of Saddam, one just might find you.

bVII

I

#### CHORUS

I Raq, I rack'em up, and I roll. I'm back, and I'm a high-tech G.I Joe.

IV

I

IV

I

I got infrared, I got GPS, I got that good old fashioned lead.

II

IV

bVII

I

There's no price too high for freedom, so be careful where you tread.

bVII

bVI

I

## Example 2. Luke Stricklin, "American by God's Amazing Grace" (2005)

**Instrumental Intro: I | IV→III-I |**

**Verse 1: I | bVII | IV | I |**

Bottom of my boots sure are gettin' worn,  
There's a lot of holes in this faded uniform.  
My hands are black with dirt, and so is my face,  
I ain't never been to hell, but it couldn't be any worse than this place.  
Tell my wife don't worry 'cause I know what to do,  
It makes you feel better sometimes, but don't know if it's true.  
I know if I die, it's just my time to go,  
But I pray to God every day that I may get back home.

**Chorus: V | bVII | IV | I |**

Well, when you've seen what I've seen, things don't seem so bad,  
Quit worrying 'bout what you ain't got, thank God for what you have,  
'Cause I could be raising my family in this place,  
But I was born an American, by God's amazing grace.

**Verse 2**

For the last twelve months, I've had a new address,  
The neighborhood smells like sewerage, and the streets are lined with trash.  
You never know what's gonna be the next thing to explode,  
But unlike these people, I have another home.  
It breaks my heart to see these kids out on the streets,  
Walking barefoot through the trash, diggin' for something to eat.  
I give them what I got, just to let them know I care,  
And I thank God it's not my son that's standing there.

**Chorus + Instrumental Solos (electric guitar, then fiddle)**

**Verse 3**

You want to talk about it, you better keep it short,  
'Cause I got a lot of lost time I gotta make up for.  
Really don't care why Bush went in to Iraq,  
I know what I done there, and I'm damn sure proud of that.  
You got somethin' bad to say about the USA,  
You better save it for different ears 'less you want to crawl away.  
And I laugh in your face when you say you've got it bad,  
Until you've spent some time on the streets of Baghdad.

**Chorus + Outro**

Example 3. Luke Stricklin, "American by God's Amazing Grace" (2005), third verse

**INSTRUMENTS**

Voice, acoustic guitar,  
drums (snare emphasis)

+ Bass, steel guitar

+ Fiddle

+ Electric guitar

**LYRICS**

You want to talk about it, you better keep it short,  
'Cause I got a lot of lost time I gotta make up for.

Really don't care why Bush went in to Iraq,  
I know what I done there, and I'm damn sure proud of that.

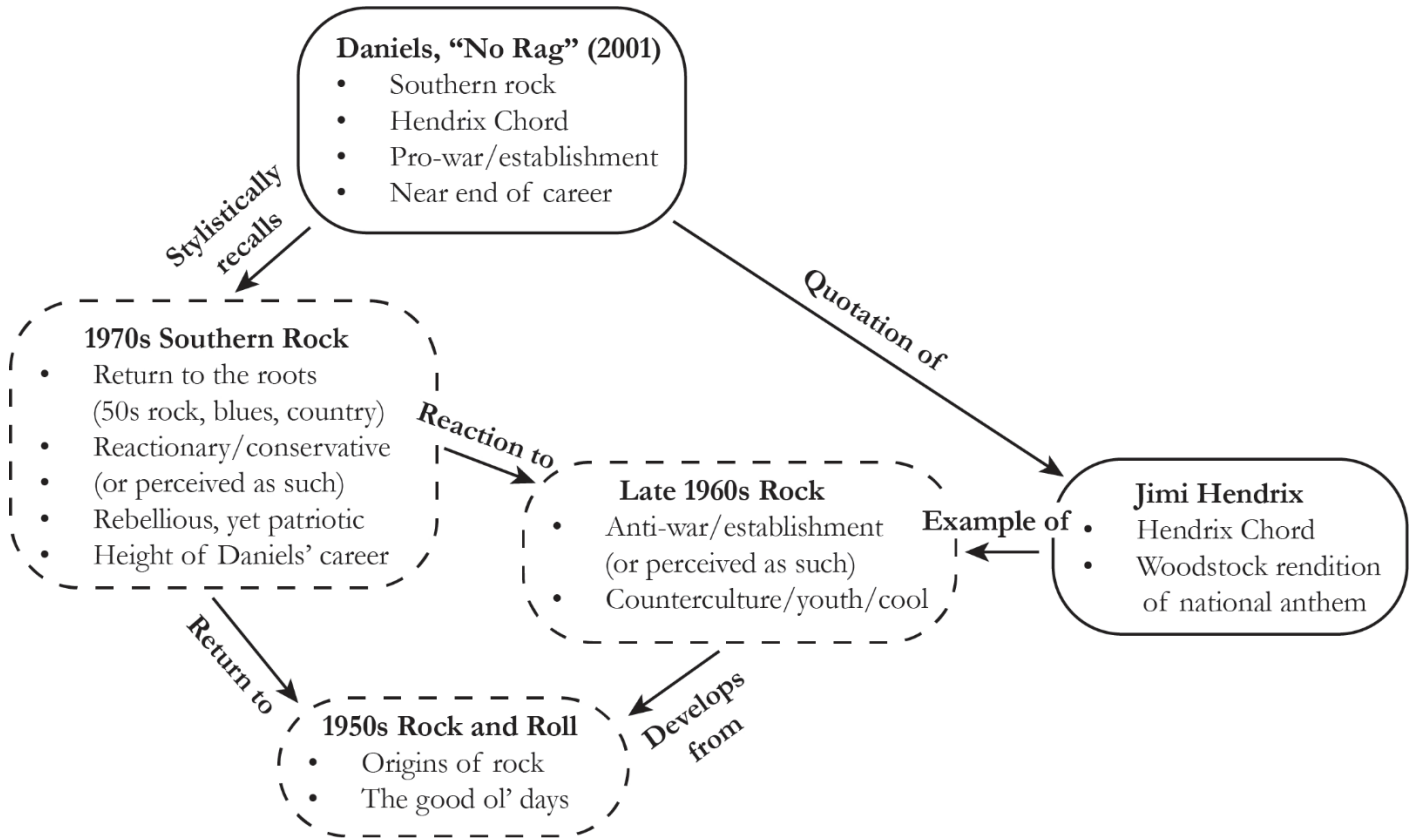
You got somethin' bad to say about the USA,  
You better save it for different ears 'less you want to crawl away.

And I laugh in your face when you say you've got it bad,  
Until you've spent some time on the streets of Baghdad.

## Example 4. The Charlie Daniels Band, "This Ain't No Rag, It's a Flag" (2001)

<u>CHORDS</u>	<u>RN</u>	<u>FORM/LYRICS</u>
		<b>Intro (Instrumental)</b>
		<b>A: Verse 1 (Blues)</b>
E <sup>7</sup> (#9)	I	This ain't no rag, it's a flag, And we don't wear it on our heads. It's a symbol of the land where the good guys live, Are you listening to what I said?
A <sup>7</sup>	IV	You're a coward and a fool, and you broke all the rules, And you wounded our American pride,
E <sup>7</sup> (#9)	I	And now we're coming with a gun, and we know you're gonna run, But you can't find no place to hide.
B <sup>7</sup>	V	We're gonna hunt you down like a mad dog hound,
D <sup>7</sup>	bVII	Make you pay for the lives you stole.
E <sup>7</sup>	I	We're all through talking and a'messing around, And now it's time to rock and roll.
		<b>A: Verse 2 (Blues)</b>
(Verse 1 progression)		These colors don't run and we're speaking as one When we say united we stand. When you mess with one, you mess with us all, Every boy, girl, woman and man. You've been acting mighty rash, and talking that trash, Let me give you some advice. You can crawl back in your hole, like a dirty little mole, But now it's time to pay the price. You might have shot us in the back, now you have to face the fact That the big boy's in the game. And the thunder's been crashing, and the lightning's been flashing, And now it's getting ready to rain.
		<b>B: Bridge ("Classic")</b>
A <sup>7</sup>	IV	This is the United States of America, The land of the brave and the free.
E <sup>7</sup>	I	We believe in God, we believe in justice, We believe in liberty.
A <sup>7</sup>	IV	You've been pulling our chain, we should've done something 'Bout you a long time ago,
F# <sup>7</sup>	V/V	But now the flag's flying high and the fur's gonna fly,
B <sup>7</sup>	V	Soon the whole world's gonna know.
		<b>A: Verse 3 (Blues)</b>
(Verse 1 progression)		This ain't no rag, it's a flag, Old Glory red, white, and blue. The stars and the stripes, when it comes to a fight, We can do what we have to do. Our people stand proud, the American crowd, Is faithful and loyal and tough. We're good as the best and better than the rest, And you're gonna find out soon enough. When you look up in the sky, and you see the eagle fly, You better know he's a headed your way, 'Cause this ain't no rag it's a flag, And it stands for the USA, USA, USA, USA, USA!
(Verse 1 progression)		<b>Instrumental Solo (Electric Guitar)</b>
		<b>Verse 3 (partial reprise)</b> When you look up in the sky, and you see the eagle fly, You better know he's a headed your way, 'Cause this ain't no rag it's a flag And it stands for the USA, USA, USA, [etc.]
		<b>Outro (Texted): Child recites the Pledge of Allegiance</b> ["USA" chants continue underneath] I pledge allegiance, to the flag, Of the United States of America, And to the Republic, for which it stands, One Nation, under God, indivisible, With liberty and justice for all.
		<b>Outro (Instrumental)</b>

### Example 5. Semantic snowballing in "This Ain't No Rag"



**Example 6. Toby Keith, "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue (The Angry American)" (2002), opening verses and chorus**

<u>FORM/LYRICS/CHORDS</u>	<u>TENSE</u>	<u>INSTRUMENTS</u>
<p><b>Verse 1</b>            American girls and American guys,                <b>I</b>                    <b>V</b></p> <p>We'll always stand up and salute, we'll always recognize,                        <b>vi</b>                            <b>V/vi</b></p> <p>When we see Old Glory flying, there's a lot of men dead,                        <b>IV</b>                            <b>I</b></p> <p>So we can sleep in peace at night when we lay down our heads.                <b>V</b>                                            <b>V<sup>7</sup></b></p>	<p><b>Timeless</b> <b>Present</b></p>	<p>Voice &amp; acoustic guitar</p>
<p><b>Verse 2</b>            My daddy served in the army, where he lost his right eye,            But he flew a flag out in our yard until the day that he died.            He wanted my mother, my brother, my sister and me,            To grow up and live happy in the land of the free.</p>	<p><b>Past</b></p>	<p>+ Electric guitar &amp; bass</p>
<p><b>Verse 3</b>            Now this nation that I love has fallen under attack,            A mighty sucker punch came flyin' in from somewhere in the back.            Soon as we could see clearly through our big black eye,            Man, we lit up your world like the Fourth of July.</p>	<p><b>Present</b></p>	<p>+ Drums (minimal) &amp; keyboard</p>
<p><b>Chorus</b>            Hey, Uncle Sam put your name at the top of his list,                        <b>IV</b>                            <b>V</b></p> <p>And the Statue of Liberty started shakin' her fist,                <b>I</b>                            <b>vi</b></p> <p>And the eagle will fly, man, it's gonna be hell,                <b>IV</b>                            <b>V</b></p> <p>When you hear mother freedom start ringin' her bell,                <b>I</b>                            <b>vi</b></p> <p>And it'll feel like the whole wide world is raining down on you,                <b>IV</b>                            <b>V</b>                            <b>vi</b></p> <p>Brought to you courtesy of the red, white, and blue.  <b>IV</b>                            <b>V</b>                            <b>I</b></p>	<p><b>Present</b></p> <p><b>Future</b></p>	<p>+ Drums (full), additional guitars, backing vocals</p>

Example 7. Toby Keith, "Courtesy," final verse

**FORM/LYRICS**

**Verse 4**

Justice will be served, and the battle will rage.

**I**

**V**

This big dog will fight when you rattle his cage.

**vi**

**V/vi**

You'll be sorry that you messed with the U.S. of A.,

**IV**

**I**

**V<sup>7</sup>/V**

'Cause we'll put a boot in your ass; it's the American way.

**V**

**TENSE**

**Future**

**INSTRUMENTS**

Return to voice +  
acoustic guitar,  
added organ

Return to chorus  
instrumentation

## Example 8. Jason Aldean, "Try That in a Small Town" (2023)

### Verse 1:

Sucker punch somebody on a sidewalk,  
Carjack an old lady at a red light,  
Pull a gun on the owner of a liquor store,  
You think it's cool, well, act a fool if you like,  
Cuss out a cop, spit in his face,  
Stomp on the flag and light it up,  
Yeah, you think you're tough.

### Chorus 1

Well, try that in a small town,  
See how far you make it down the road,  
Around here, we take care of our own,  
You cross that line, it won't take long,  
For you to find out, I recommend you don't,  
Try that in a small town.

### Verse 2

Got a gun that my granddad gave me,  
They say one day they're gonna round up,  
Well, that shit might fly in the city, good luck.

### Chorus 2

Try that in a small town,  
See how far ya make it down the road,  
Around here, we take care of our own,  
You cross that line, it won't take long,  
For you to find out, I recommend you don't,  
Try that in a small town,  
Full of good ol' boys, raised up right,  
If you're looking for a fight,  
Try that in a small town.

### Electric Guitar Solo + Chorus 3