

Ionian Tonic Arrivals as Generators of Chorus Quality in Pop/Rock Songs

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Typical Characteristics of a Chorus Section

General

- Focal point of song (Covach 2005)
- More energy than verse (Stephan-Robinson 2009)
- Most memorable section (Harris 2006, Osborn 2010)

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- Includes the title of the song (Endrinal 2008)
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Pitch and Rhythm

- Less pentatonic (Temperley 2007)
- Melody more coordinated with harmony (Temperley 2007)
- Has slower vocal rhythm than verse (Stephenson 2002)

I. Background

Prototypical Verse-Chorus:

Bruno Mars, "Just the Way You Are" (2010)

Verse:

I know, I know when I compliment her she won't believe me. And it's so, it's so sad to think that she don't see what I see.

But every-y-time she asks me_ "Do___ I look O- kay?" I say:

Chorus:

"When I see your face___ there's not a thing___ that I___ would change,___ 'cause you're a-maz-

- ing just___ the way_ you are.___

Typical Characteristics of a Chorus Section

Harmonic

- Sometimes identical to verse, i.e. “simple” (Covach 2005)
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(Summach 2012)

	starts on tonic			ends on tonic		
	A	V	C	A	V	C
1955–9	92%	92%	84%	100%	84%	100%
1960–4	93%	94%	60%	92%	70%	80%
1965–9	90%	88%	75%	83%	43%	58%
1970–4	83%	78%	70%	83%	52%	67%
1975–9	85%	79%	78%	85%	37%	60%
1980–4	95%	82%	73%	79%	43%	61%
1985–9	100%	91%	74%	75%	29%	55%

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- Shifts to relative major if verse is in minor
(Perricone 2000, Neal 2008, Doll 2011)

Five Scenarios for Ionian Tonic Arrivals as Generators of Chorus Quality

- 1) Verse and chorus have the same diatonic collection but different tonal centers (e.g., minor and relative major)

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- 4) Verse and chorus have same tonal center and diatonic collection, but chorus includes more arrivals on the Ionian tonic
- 5) Verse and chorus have same tonal center and diatonic collection, but verse avoids Ionian tonic

Scenario 1: Same diatonic collection, different tonal centers

Justin Timberlake, "Mirrors" (2013)

Verse (C minor)

Cm	Gm	Fm	. G/B	
Just know that I'm always	parallel	on the other side		

Cm	Gm	Fm	Ab	
... hand in my hand and a pocket full of soul, I can tell you there's no place we couldn't go				

Cm	Gm	Fm		
...hand on the glass, I'll be tryin' to pull you through, You just gotta be strong				

Chorus (Eb major)

Eb	Bb	Ab		
... I don't wanna lose you now, I'm lookin' right at the other		half of me		

Eb	Bb	Ab		
The vacancy that sat in my heart	is a space that now you hold			

Scenario 1: Same diatonic collection, different tonal centers

Justin Timberlake, "Mirrors" (2013)

Verse (C minor)

Just know that I'm always | **i** | parallel | **v** | on the other side | **iv** | . **V6** |

... hand in my hand and a pocket full of soul, I can tell you there's no place we couldn't go | **i** | | **v** | | **iv** | | **bVI** |

...hand on the glass, I'll be tryin' to pull you through, You just gotta be strong | **i** | | **v** | | **iv** | |

Chorus (Eb major)

... I don't wanna lose you now, I'm lookin' right at the other half of me | **I** | | **V** | | **IV** | |

The vacancy that sat in my heart is a space that now you hold | **I** | | **V** | | **IV** | |

Scenario 1: Same diatonic collection, different tonal centers

Neil Young, "Rockin' in the Free World" (1991)

Verse (E minor)

Em	D C	Em	D C	
There's a warning sign on the road ahead, There's a lot of people sayin' we'd be better off dead				
Em	D C	Em	D C	
Don't feel like Satan, but I am to them, So I try to forget it, any way I can.				

Chorus (G major)

G	D	C	C Em	
Keep on rockin' in the free world,				
G	D	C	C Em	
Keep on rockin' in the free world,				

Scenario 2: Same tonal center, different diatonic collections

Duran Duran, “Rio” (1982)

Verse (E minor)

	Em		C/E		A		C	
	With a step to the left and a flick to the right you catch the mirror way out west							
	Em		C/E		A/C#		C	
	You know you're something special, and you look like you're the best							

Chorus (E major)

	E		B		D		A	
	Her names is Rio		and she dances		on the sand			
	E		B		D		A	
	Just like that river		twisting through		the dusty land			

Scenario 2: Same tonal center, different diatonic collections

Duran Duran, “Rio” (1982)

Verse (E minor)

	i		bVI6		IV		bVI	
	With a step to the left and a flick to the right you catch the mirror way out west							
	i		bVI6		IV6		bVI	
	You know you're something special, and you look like you're the best							

Chorus (E major)

	I		V		bVII		IV	
	Her names is Rio			and she dances		on the sand		
	I		V		bVII		IV	
	Just like that river			twisting through		the dusty land		

Scenario 2: Same tonal center, different diatonic collections

Grassroots, “Temptation Eyes” (1970)

Verse + Prechorus (Bb minor)

Bbm	Bbm/A	Eb/G	Gb F	
She’s got something that moves my soul		and she knows	I’d love to love her	
Bbm	Bbm/A	Eb/G	Gb F	
But she let’s me down every time,		can’t make her mine,	she’s no one’s lover tonight	
Gb	Ab		F/A	
With me she’ll	be so inviting,	I want her all for myself		

Chorus (Bb major)

Bb	C/Bb	Bb	C/Bb	
Temptation eyes,		looking through my-my-my	soul	
Bb	C/Bb	Eb	F	
Temptation eyes,		you got to love me,	got to love me	tonight

Scenario 3: Different diatonic collections, different tonal centers

Duran Duran, “Hungry Like the Wolf” (1982)

Verse (E major)

	E							
	Woman		you		want		me,	
	give		me		a		sign,	
	and		catch		my		breathing	
	even		closer		behind			
	D				E			
Do	do	do	do	do	do	do	do

Chorus (C major)

	C		G		F			
	In		touch		I'm		on	
	with		the		the		hunt,	
	ground,				I'm		after	
	you							
	C		G		F		D	(C)
Smell	like	I	sound,	I'm	lost	in	a	crowd,
					and	I'm	hungry	like
							the	wolf

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Verse (E major)

	I							
	Woman		you		want		me,	
	give		me		a		sign,	
	and		catch		my		breathing	
	even		closer		behind			
	bVII				I			
	Do		do		do		do	
	do		do		do		do	
	do		do		do		do	
	do		do		do		do	
	do		do		do		do	
	do		do		do		do	

Chorus (C major)

	I		V		IV			
	In		touch		I'm		on	
	with		the		the		hunt,	
	ground,				I'm		after	
	you							
	I		V		IV		II	(I)
	Smell		like		I		smell	
	I		sound,		I'm		lost	
	I'm		lost		in		a	
	crowd,				crowd,			
					and		I'm	
					hungry		like	
					the		wolf	

Scenario 3: Different diatonic collections, different tonal centers

The Police, “Don’t Stand So Close To Me” (1980)

Verse (G minor)

E_b		G_m	
Inside her	there’s longing,	this girl’s an open page	
E_b		G_m	
Bookmarking,	she’s so close now,	this girl is half his age	

Chorus (D major)

D A	D A	B_m7	A_{sus}	
Don’t stand so,	don’t stand so,	don’t stand so close to me		
D A	D A	B_m7	A_{sus}	
Don’t stand so,	don’t stand so,	don’t stand so close to me		

Scenario 4: Same tonal center and diatonic collection, more Ionian tonic arrivals in chorus

The Cars, “Just What I Needed” (1978)

Verse (E major)

E	B	C#m	G#	
You always knew to wear it well, and...		you look so fancy I can tell		
E	B / D#	G#m	A	
...and I don't mind you hanging out		and talking in your sleep.		

Chorus (E major)

E	B	A . C#m	B	E	B	A	C#m	
I guess you're just what I needed,				I needed someone to feed				
E	B	A . C#m	B	E	B	A	C#m	
I guess you're just what I needed,				I needed someone to bleed				

Scenario 4: Same tonal center and diatonic collection, more Ionian tonic arrivals in chorus

The Cars, “Just What I Needed” (1978)

Verse (E major)

I	V	vi	V/vi	
You always knew to wear it well, and...		you look so fancy I can tell		
I	V6	iii	IV	
...and I don't mind you hanging out		and talking in your sleep.		

Chorus (E major)

I	V	IV . vi	V	I V	IV vi	
I guess you're just what I needed,				I needed someone to feed		
I	V	IV . vi	V	I V	IV vi	
I guess you're just what I needed,				I needed someone to bleed		

Scenario 4: Same tonal center and diatonic collection, more Ionian tonic arrivals in chorus

AC/DC, “Highway to Hell” (1979)

Verse (A major)

A . . D / F#	G . . D / F#	G D / F# G D / F#	A	
Don't need reason,	don't need rhyme,	ain't nothing that I'd rather do		
A . . D / F#	G . . D / F#	G D / F# G D / F#	E	
Going down	for a time,	my friends are gonna be there, too		

Chorus (A major)

A	D / A .	G D / F#	A	D / A .	G D / F#	
Highway to Hell,			Highway to Hell,			
A	D / A .	G D / A	A	D		
Highway to Hell,			I'm on the Highway to Hell,			

Scenario 5: Same tonal center and diatonic collection, verse avoids Ionian tonic

Prince, “Little Red Corvette” (1982)

Verse (Db major)

Gb	Ab	Bbm	Gb	
Guess I must be dumb,	shared a pocket full of horses,	Trojan and some of them used		
Gb	Ab	Bbm	Ab	
... Saturday night,	I guess that makes it all right,	you said what have I got to lose?		

Chorus (Db major)

Gb	Ab	Db	Gb	Ab	Bbm	
Little	red	Corvette,	Baby,	you're much to fast		
Gb	Ab	Db	Gb	Ab		
Little	red	Corvette,	You need a love that's gonna last			

Scenario 5: Same tonal center and diatonic collection, verse avoids Ionian tonic

Prince, “Little Red Corvette” (1982)

Verse (Db major)

	IV		V		vi		IV		
	Guess		shared		a pocket full of horses,		Trojan		and some of them used
	IV		V		vi		V		
	...		Saturday night,		I guess that makes it all right,		you said		what have I got to lose?

Chorus (Db major)

	IV	V		I		IV	V		vi	
	Little	red		Corvette,		Baby,	you're		much to fast	
	IV	V		I		IV		V		
	Little	red		Corvette,		You need	a love		that's gonna last	

Scenario 5: Same tonal center and diatonic collection, verse avoids Ionian tonic

The Police, “Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic” (1981)

Verse (D major)

(G)	(A)	(B)	(C#)	
For I have tried before to tell her		of the feelings I have for her in my heart		
(G)	(A)	(B)	(C#)	
(G)	(A)	(B)	(C#)	
Every time that I come near her		I just lose my nerve as I've done from the start		
D . G A	D . G A	D . G A	D	

Chorus (D major)

A	D	A	D	
Every little things she does is magic,		everything she do just turns me on.		
A	D	A	Bb	
Even though my life before was tragic,		now I know my love for her goes on.		

Counterexample: “Chorus” in Relative Minor

Foreigner, “Cold as Ice” (1977)

“Chorus” (Eb minor)

Ebm		Cb		
	You're as cold as ice		You're willing to sacrifice our love	
Ebm		Cb		
Ebm		Cb		Abm
	You never take advice		Someday you'll pay the price I know.	

“Verse” (Gb major)

Gb	F	Abm	Cb Db	
I've seen it before, it happens all the time,		You're closing the door,	you leave the world behind	
Gb	F	Abm	Bb	
You're digging for gold, yet throwing away a fortune in feelings,		but someday you'll pay		

Counterexample: “Chorus” in Relative Minor

Foreigner, “Cold as Ice” (1977)

Start	Mm.	Key	Covach 2003	Alt. Analysis
0:00	4	Eb min	Intro	Intro
0:08	12	Eb min	Chorus	Verse
0:32	8	Gb maj	Verse	Chorus
0:47	16	Eb min	Chorus	Verse
1:17	8	Gb maj	Verse	Chorus
1:33	8	Eb min	Solo	Solo
1:47	14	Eb min	Bridge	Bridge
2:13	32	Eb min	Chorus	Verse

Counterexample: “Chorus” in Relative Minor

Foreigner, “Cold as Ice” (1977)

“Chorus” (Eb minor)

i	bVI
You’re as cold as ice	You’re willing to sacrifice our love
i	bVI
i	bVI
You want paradise	But someday you’ll pay the price I know.

“Verse” (Gb major)

I	VII	ii	IV V
I’ve seen it before, it happens all the time,	You’re closing the door,	you leave the world behind	
I	VII	ii	V/vi
You’re digging for gold, yet throwing away a fortune in feelings,	but someday you’ll pay		

Counterexample: “Chorus” that avoids Ionian tonic

Led Zeppelin, “Communication Breakdown” (1969)

Verse (E major)

E . D	A D	E . D	A D	
I don't know what it is I like about you but I like it a lot				
E . D	A D	E . D	A D	
Won't you let me hold you, let me feel your lovin' charms?				

“Chorus” (E major)

A7			
Communication breakdown,		it's always the same	
B7			(E)
(I'm) havin' a nervous breakdown,		drive me insane	

Counterexample: “Chorus” that avoids Ionian tonic

Led Zeppelin, “Communication Breakdown” (1969)

Verse (E major)

| I | . bVII IV bVII | I | . bVII IV bVII |

I don't know what it is I like about you but I like it a lot

| I | . bVII IV bVII | I | . bVII IV bVII |

Won't you let me hold you,

let me feel your lovin' charms?

“Chorus” (E major)

| IVb7 | | | |

Communication breakdown,

it's always the same

| V7 | | | (I)

(I'm) havin' a nervous breakdown,

drive me insane

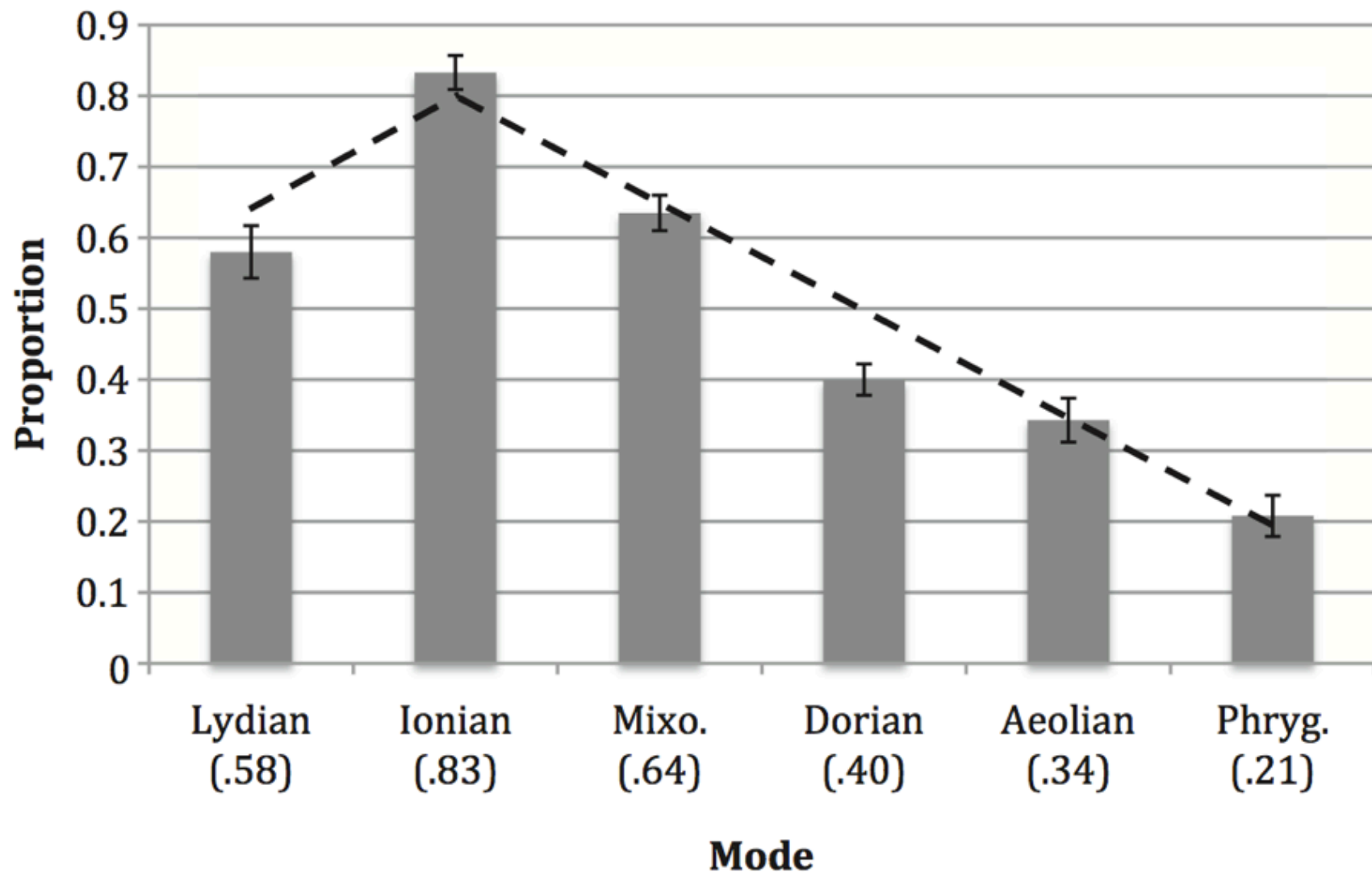
Counterexample: “Chorus” that avoids Ionian tonic

Led Zeppelin, “Communication Breakdown” (1969)

Mm.	New Form	Harmonies					
8	Intro (Link)	I	.	bVII	IV	bVII	
16	Verse	I	.	bVII	IV	bVII	
8	Pre-chorus	IV	*4	V	*4		
8	Chorus	I	.	bVII	IV	bVII	
16	Verse	I	.	bVII	IV	bVII	
8	Pre-chorus	IV	*4	V	*4		
8	Chorus	I	.	bVII	IV	bVII	
14	Solo	I	.	bVII	IV	bVII	
8	Pre-chorus	IV	*4	V	*4		
4	Link	I	.	bVII	IV	bVII	
16+	Outro (Chorus)	I	.	bVII	IV	bVII	

Listener preference for Ionian mode

Temperley and Tan (2012)



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Scenario 1: Same diatonic collection, different tonal centers

Neil Young, "Rockin' in the Free World" (1991)

Verse (E minor)

i	bVII bVI	i	bVII bVI	
There's a warning sign on the road ahead,	There's a lot of people sayin' we'd be better off dead			
i	bVII bVI	i	bVII bVI	
Don't feel like Satan, but I am to	them, So I try to forget it,		any way I can.	

Chorus (G major)

I	V	IV	IV vi	
	Keep on rockin' in the free world,			
I	V	IV	IV vi	
	Keep on rockin' in the free world,			

Scenario 2: Same tonal center, different diatonic collections

Grassroots, “Temptation Eyes” (1970)

Verse + Prechorus (Bb minor)

i	i42	IV6	bVI V	
She’s got something that moves my soul		and she knows	I’d love to love her	
i	i42	IV6	bVI V	
But she let’s me down every time,		can’t make her mine,	she’s no one’s lover tonight	
bVI	bVII		V6	
With me she’ll	be so inviting,	I want her all for myself		

Chorus (Bb major)

I	II42	I	II42	
Temptation	eyes,	looking through my-my-my	soul	
I	II42	IV	V	
Temptation	eyes,	you got to love me,	got to love me	tonight

Scenario 3: Different diatonic collections, different tonal centers

The Police, “Don’t Stand So Close To Me” (1980)

Verse (G minor)

bVI		i	
Inside her	there’s longing,	this girl’s an open page	
bVI		i	
Bookmarking,	she’s so close now,	this girl is half his age	

Chorus (D major)

I V	I V	vi7	Vsus	
Don’t stand so,	don’t stand so,	don’t stand so close to me		
I V	I V	vi7	Vsus	
Don’t stand so,	don’t stand so,	don’t stand so close to me		

Scenario 4: Same tonal center and diatonic collection, more Ionian tonic arrivals in chorus

AC/DC, “Highway to Hell” (1979)

Verse (A major)

I . . IV6	bVII . . IV6	bVII IV6 bVII IV6	I
Don't need reason,	don't need rhyme,	ain't nothing that I'd rather do	
I . . IV6	bVII . . IV6	bVII IV6 bVII IV6	V
Going down	for a time,	my friends are gonna be there, too	

Chorus (A major)

I	IV64 . bVII IV6	I	IV64 . bVII IV6	
Highway to Hell,		Highway to Hell,		
I	IV64 . bVII IV64	I	IV	
Highway to Hell,		I'm on the Highway to Hell,		

Scenario 5: Same tonal center and diatonic collection, verse avoids Ionian tonic

The Police, “Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic” (1981)

Verse (D major)

(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	
For I have tried before to tell her		of the feelings I have for her in my heart		
(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	
(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	
Every time that I come near her		I just lose my nerve as I've done from the start		
I . IV V	I . IV V	I . IV V	I	

Chorus (D major)

V	I	V	I	
Every little things she does is magic,		everything she do just turns me on.		
V	I	V	bVI	
Even though my life before was tragic,		now I know my love for her goes on.		