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Song Structure

Every piece of music—whether classical, jazz, rock, Latin, or any other musical style—always follows a well-defined structure. This chapter deals with the basic musical structures most commonly used in modern music.

The fundamental elements of musical structures are as follows:

1. Introduction (Intro) and Interlude
2. Verse
3. Chorus (or Refrain)
4. Bridge
5. Coda and Ending

Introduction and Interlude

In a musical piece, the *introduction* is the beginning section, where the piece preparation occurs. As a rule, this musical section (which also may be presented subsequently in the structure in the form of an *interlude*) is often instrumental and contains a *riff* (a rhythmic and melodic phrase) or a characteristic musical idea.

Verse

The *verse* is the first important section of the piece. It presents the initial part of the theme—either sung or instrumental—which, soon afterwards, may be followed by the bridge (or second part of the theme), and the chorus. The verse recurs many times in the structure of a piece. If the piece is sung, the melody is quite often maintained while the lyrics are changed.

Note that sometimes the verse is divided into two parts to create greater tension before the chorus. In this case, the latter part is often called the *pre-chorus* or *transitional bridge*.

Chorus

The *chorus*, also called the *refrain*, is the most important section of a song. As a rule, the chorus includes the most recognizable and “catchier” part of the entire composition. If the piece is sung, the chorus often contains the title of the song.

Bridge

The *bridge* of a piece is where a musical change is introduced through a transitional passage that is different from the rest of the song. (Sometimes “bridge” also means the second part of a verse.)

Note that “chorus” and “bridge” have different meanings in jazz music, as explained on page 10.

Coda and Ending

The last part of a tune is usually called the *coda*. Generally, the coda is the repetition of either the chorus or another section, followed by an *ending*. Sometimes the ending is a *fade-out*, meaning a gradual decrease of volume down to the end. While the use of the fade-out is quite frequent in recorded songs, the live performances of some tunes are often concluded by well-defined endings with rhythmic figurations.

RHYTHM & BLUES 2

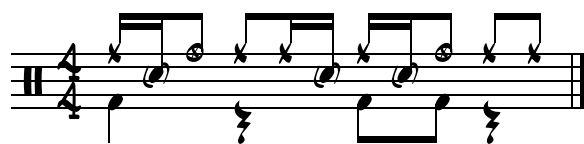
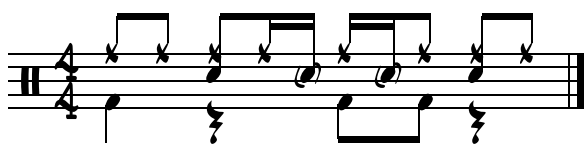
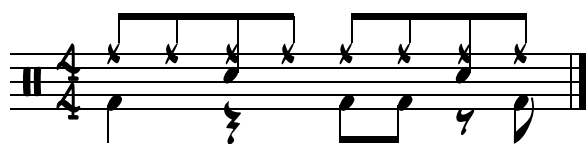
The second rhythm and blues drum chart relates to a rather traditional, medium-fast song that calls for a full horn section with woodwinds and brass together with the standard rhythm section. This type of band requires a fairly good drive from the drums in order to support a rather numerous group of instruments.

“Rhythm & Blues 2” starts with a four-bar introduction (Intro) with eighth notes on the hi-hat and quarter notes on the snare drum, accenting the last eighth note at the end of the third bar and subsequently playing a fill leading to the first verse (A). The rhythm of the verse is a typical groove

in the rhythm and blues style, which is the basic rhythm played throughout the whole song. After eight bars and a fill, you get to the eight-bar chorus (B). Follow the repeat sign and go back to the verse and the chorus (A and B), then move on with another fill to the bridge* with an upbeat accent at the end of the seventh bar. Then, start from the beginning and again play the introduction, the verse, and the chorus in order to get to the coda sign. Here, the ride pattern in the sax solo is played on the ride cymbal to create a different sonority. After sixteen bars and a fill, you go to the bridge, switching to the hi-hat. Then, after

two choruses, you move to the final section of the piece, where you play the same rhythm as the introduction, concluding the piece with an ensemble figure together with the entire band.

The rhythms played in this song are not particularly difficult, but you have to perform them the right way, following the intent of the other instruments of the rhythm section. As far as the fills are concerned, it is important to avoid playing out-of-style passages and always stick to the essentials, given the characteristics of this musical genre. A few alternative rhythms for this tune are shown below.



*See the explanation of the bridge in the section “Song Structure” on page 7.