“Oops!... I Did It Again”: The Complement Chorus in Britney Spears, The Backstreet Boys, and *NSYNC

*SMT-V*7.6 (2021)

*Society for Music Theory: Videocast Journal*

Megan L. Lavengood

*(George Mason University)*

Editor: L. Poundie Burstein
Associate Editor: Seth Monahan

ISSN 2689-5471 DOI: [http://doi.org/10.30535/smtv.7.6](http://doi.org/10.30535/smtv.7.6)

This file includes the abstract, extensive keyword list, and selected bibliography for the video essay “‘Oops!... I Did It Again’: The Complement Chorus in Britney Spears, The Backstreet Boys, and *NSYNC,” by Megan L. Lavengood, *SMTV* 7.6 (2021). This video-essay may be found at: [https://vimeo.com/societymusictheory/smtv076](https://vimeo.com/societymusictheory/smtv076).

*SMTV* is the open-access, peer-reviewed video journal of the Society for Music Theory. Founded in 2014, *SMTV* publishes video essays that showcase the latest research in music theory in a dynamic, audiovisual format. The journal features a supportive and collaborative production process, and publishes three to four videos per year. The videos may be found at [www.smt-v.org](http://www.smt-v.org).

*SMTV* is overseen by an Editor who organizes the vetting of the videos, along with an Associate Editor who aids with the technical details. Members of the editorial board help to vet submitted videos. Those wishing to publish a video on *SMTV* should first submit a written proposal summarizing the proposed project. If the proposed project is deemed appropriate, the author will be invited to submit a draft of a storyboard or script. Upon acceptance of the script, the author will be invited to produce a full video in conjunction with guidance and assessment from selected members of the Editorial Board. Details regarding the submission process are found at [https://societymusictheory.org/smt-v/submission_guidelines](https://societymusictheory.org/smt-v/submission_guidelines).
Abstract for

“Oops!... I Did It Again’: The Complement Chorus in Britney Spears, The Backstreet Boys, and *NSYNC,” by Megan Lavengood, SMT-V7.6 (2021).

Choruses are the sections of pop songs that tend to worm their way into your ears. Take “Oops!... I Did It Again” by Britney Spears as an example: even if you don’t already know the song, after hearing the chorus once, you could sing along by the second repeat of the chorus. Like most standard-issue pop songs, the chorus of “Oops!” comes back for a third time after the bridge, but what is not at all standard is the surprise withheld until this climactic moment: the third chorus brandishes a new melodic line with a distinct rhythmic profile. The signature lyric, “Oops!”, is pushed back into a syncopated rhythm, imbuing the now-familiar melody with new vigor.

This special chorus section, which I call the complement chorus, was a distinctive feature of turn-of-the-millennium singles performed by the Backstreet Boys, NSYNC, and Britney Spears. The complement chorus lets the songwriter repeat the carefully-crafted chorus while simultaneously mixing up the musical material; in other words, the complement chorus technique makes the third chorus a high-energy climax rather than a tedious restatement. Complement choruses seem to have been a trick used exclusively by Max Martin and his associates during the years 1998–2000, making them a distinctly Y2K phenomenon.

Main Keywords
Max Martin, Top-40, form, 2000s, boy bands, cumulative chorus
Extensive Keyword List


About the author

Megan Lavengood is Assistant Professor and Area Director of Music Theory at George Mason University. Her research primarily deals with popular music, timbre, synthesizers, and recording techniques. She is also an active performer as a soprano in a Renaissance chamber ensemble.
## List of songs with complement choruses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Month/year of (single) release</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Baby One More Time”</td>
<td>Britney Spears</td>
<td>September 1998</td>
<td>Uses different lyrics than the chorus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It’s Gotta Be You”</td>
<td>Backstreet Boys</td>
<td>October 1998</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Don’t Wanna Lose You Now”</td>
<td>Backstreet Boys</td>
<td>October 1998</td>
<td>Uses slightly different lyrics than chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I Want It That Way”</td>
<td>Backstreet Boys</td>
<td>April 1999</td>
<td>Only partial layering of chorus and complement chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Bye Bye Bye”</td>
<td>*NSYNC</td>
<td>January 2000</td>
<td>Max Martin not credited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No Strings Attached”</td>
<td>*NSYNC</td>
<td>March 2000</td>
<td>Max Martin not credited; complement chorus is less overt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Oops! …I Did It Again”</td>
<td>Britney Spears</td>
<td>March 2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It’s Gonna Be Me”</td>
<td>*NSYNC</td>
<td>June 2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’ll Never Stop”</td>
<td>*NSYNC</td>
<td>June 2000</td>
<td>Only partial layering of chorus and complement chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Shape of My Heart”</td>
<td>Backstreet Boys</td>
<td>July 2000</td>
<td>No cumulative chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Get Another Boyfriend”</td>
<td>Backstreet Boys</td>
<td>July 2000</td>
<td>Uses different lyrics than chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Lucky”</td>
<td>Britney Spears</td>
<td>August 2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Stronger”</td>
<td>Britney Spears</td>
<td>November 2000</td>
<td>Only partial layering of chorus and complement chorus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discography and Filmography


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_kwZaTdl0bw.


Selected Bibliography

   https://doi.org/10.30535/smtv.6.4.


