

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

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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, *SMT-V* 7.6 (2021). This video-essay may be found at: <https://vimeo.com/societymusictheory/smtv076> .

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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

Max Martin, Top-40, form, 2000s, boy bands, cumulative chorus, songwriting, production, pop music, “It’s Gonna Be Me”, “It’s Gotta Be You”, “Don’t Wanna Lose You Now”, “I Want It That Way”, “Bye Bye Bye”, “No Strings Attached”, “I’ll Never Stop”, “Shape of My Heart”, “Get Another Boyfriend”, “Lucky”, “Stronger”, Justin Timberlake, descant, alternate chorus, B chorus, Rami Yacoub, rhythm, energy, climax, climactic chorus, Y2K, repetitiveness, contrasting chorus, secondary chorus, repetition, pop, B-choruse.

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

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

Discography and Filmography

Backstreet Boys. 1999. "It's Gotta Be You." Track 4 on *Millennium*. Jive 01241-41672-2R, compact disc.

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*NSYNC. 2000. "It's Gonna Be Me." Jive JDJ-42664-2, compact disc.

*NSYNC. 2000. "Bye Bye Bye." Jive JDJ-42679-2, compact disc.

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