

EDITORIAL

I've always been told things stop being scary once you face them. I don't believe that's true. There are things that never get not scary enough. Covid is one of those things.

We keep hoping for things to change, that miraculously this will be the last lockdown and the pandemic will be over. We'll go back to days of not wearing masks and things will be as they were before March 2020, but we're in denial and we need to snap out of it. This isn't the time to be extremely optimistic, nor is it the time to dabble in the labels and controversies that seem to have plagued our minds.

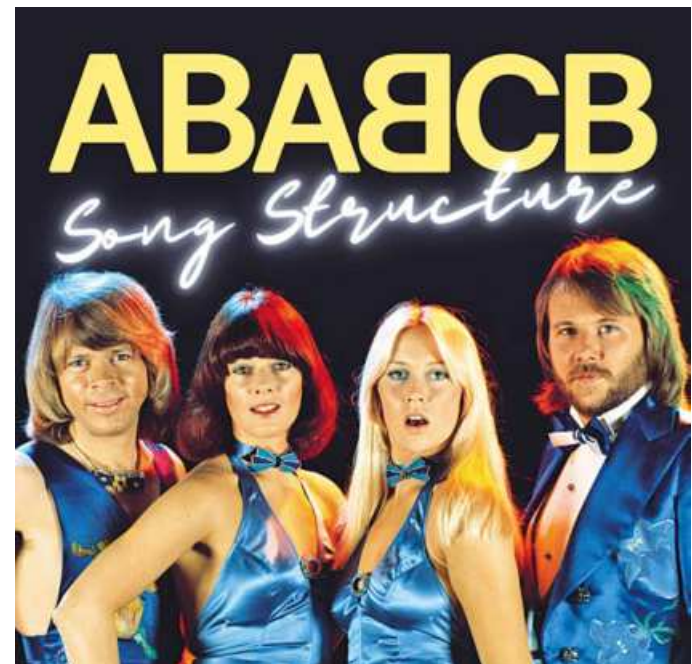
I'm not a scientist, nor am I studying to become one, but from general observation and watered down explanations of actual scientific papers from my sister who is, in fact, a scientist, I can tell Covid-19 is stubborn and here to stay. It won't magically disappear until we play our parts. Wear masks, stay inside and if you qualify to register for the vaccine, GET VACCINATED.

- Syeda Afrin Tarannum, Sub-Editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

MUSIC



The Usual and Rare Structures of Songs

SABIH SAFWAT

The dynamics in contemporary music often resemble the ebb and flow of ocean tides. In songs, there are defined sections of varying levels of energy.

There are sections where energy is minimal while tension builds up – the lull in the sea – and where the pent-up tension gets released, like torrents during high tide.

In a simple combination, the build-up is titled a “verse” and the release section a “chorus”. Songs are structured in the form ABACB where A represents a verse, B denotes a chorus, and C is a bridge connecting the sections. It creates tension for the chorus to resolve. At the very ends, an intro and an outro.

This structure is very common in rock, pop, electronica, folk and metal music. Some songs sound slightly different, but in all probability, that's because of one or two instrumental sections inserted here and there within the ABACB structure, or variations like ABCAB or ACBACB.

I went through albums from local artists to find how many Bangla songs have been made with *unconventional* structures. While the number wasn't exactly impressive, I did come across a few gems.

“Olosh Shomoyer Pare” by Artcell uses six unique sections, with only two significant lines being repeated throughout the song. The song begins with very low energy, releasing some at the midpoint of the song. From there it falls back down, cascading into an epic peak at the end.

“Nirbashon” by Warfaze pieces together sections with subtle changes in dynamics, putting off the release till the very end of the song. There's no chorus; the tension builds until the finale when

Sunjoy's insane high notes stab you right in the heart.

“Lal Neel Golpo” by Shironamhin doesn't have any defined verse or chorus either. All the sections are high energy with similar levels of impact, but the song keeps itself interesting by varying the pace of the sections throughout the song. The catchy instrumental hook helps, too, of course.

“Tui Ki Janish Na” by Arnob is another track that fiddles with pacing in interesting ways. The song starts with a dark, almost ominous mood. Over the next three sections, the pace keeps getting faster till peaking at around the midpoint of the song, where the mood changes to a lighter one. Then, the song keeps losing momentum, ending at the same place it started.

“Shobuj Bagan” by Karnival holds your attention without even needing to change dynamics or mood. The whole song is pretty much a single section, the vocals droning on at the same intensity throughout. The slight variations in the piano accompaniment and clever placement of additional vocal layers throughout the song create motion, a technique rarely deployed by our local artists.

Note these are just a few picks to represent some types of variations. I've also skipped progressive tracks as, well, they're supposed to have complex structures.

Reference

Understanding Basic Music Theory by Catherine Schmidt-Jones. Chapter 5: Harmony and Form.

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