

SMA Popular Music Summer School

Temperley, “Theory and Analysis of Rock Music” - Questions to think about

The following are some questions that you might find useful, to guide you through the readings (all of which are in my book *The Musical Language of Rock*) and test your understanding of them. Please note that the musical examples in the book can all be heard at <https://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780190870522/audio/>

Day 1: Questions on Ch. 4

1. Unlike classical music, rock music relies on a specific convention to convey the meter; what is it? How would you answer my question about “Should I Say or Should I Go”?
2. During what decade do we see a decrease in tempo and the rise of the 16th-note level?
3. Explain anticipatory syncopation. What is the *function* of syncopation that I mention on p. 75?
4. What is special about the word “hearts” in Ex. 4.6B?
5. In discussing cross-rhythms, I focus on suggestions of a dotted-8th pulse, but I could also have mentioned melodic patterns that suggest a dotted-quarter pulse. Can you think of an example? (There is one in chapter 2.)
6. What point do I make about Ex. 4.13?
7. In Ex. 4.15, what are the factors that convey a five-measure hypermeasure?
8. In Peter Gabriel’s “Solsbury Hill,” where does the 7/4 meter shift to 4/4, and why?

You could also look at the questions on p. 86. What time signature would you choose for “Synchronicity 1”? (6/4 is *not* a good answer, in my opinion.) How is cross-rhythm used in “Iris”? If you want to try question 3 and 4, I’ll be happy to look at your attempt!

Day 2: Questions on section 5.3, chapter 7, sections 8.1 and 8.3, and pp. 167-71

1. (Section 5.3) What do I focus on as a key indicator of melodic-harmonic divorce? (That is, how do we know that melodic-divorce is happening?)
2. (Ch. 7) I suggest that musical emotion can be represented in a two-dimensional space; what are the two dimensions?
3. (Ch. 7) On p. 138 I refer back to an idea that I proposed earlier: if we stretch out the circle of fifths into a line (representing scale-degrees, not pitch-classes), we can represent a song by its mean position on the line. (See pp. 22-23 and 30-31 in ch. 2.) Here (on p. 138) I draw a connection that between the line-of-fifths position of a song and its expressive character; explain.

4. (Ch. 7) What are the main musical factors influencing the “energy” dimension of emotion?
5. (Ch. 7) My thoughts on complexity and tension are speculative, but do your best to understand them; I come back to them in late chapters. What are the factors influencing musical complexity?
6. (Ch. 7) What did the study by Witek et al. find, relating to the experience of “groove”?
7. (Section 8.1) Focus on verse-chorus form, which is the dominant formal structure for rock songs from the 1960s onwards. What is a VCU and how does it typically figure into the form of a song as a whole?
8. (Section 8.3) Study the list of differences between verses and choruses on p. 159. Some of them are fairly obvious; others are more subtle. See how many you can name after reading the section.
9. (Ch. 8, pp. 167–71) I discuss a number of characteristic features of the prechorus. Explain how these concepts relate to the prechorus: *contrast*, *completeness*, a *transitional* character, *energy*, and *tension*.

You could also consider questions 2 and 3 on p. 148 and questions 3 and 4 on p. 182.

Day 3: Questions on chapter 9

1. Make sure you understand the three strategies for the VCU boundary reflected in Exx. 9.1A, B, and C. It might help to diagram them in an abstract way (showing just barlines, hypermeter, and grouping boundaries).
2. I discuss a common cadential pattern in rock, the *plagal stop cadence*; its basic features are shown in Ex. 9.4, and examples are shown in Exx. 9.3 and 9.6. What are the effects of the “stop”?
3. How is the deceptive IV in rock similar to the deceptive vi in classical music? How is it different?
4. I argue that the IV chord in the chorus of “Bargain” functions in three different ways; how so?
5. Explain the distinction between middle-peaking and end-peaking VCU’s.
6. Explain tonal shift and scalar shift. What are some common patterns of tonal shift and scalar shift—what modulations and scales are typically involved?
7. I argue that tonal shift and scalar shifts have expressive implications, relating to the “line-of-fifths” model discussed earlier. Explain the argument.

In addition, you could look at any of the five questions on p. 210.