

Gangnam Style Deconstructed



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Artist: PSY

Song/Album: Gangnam Style / PSY 6

Songwriters: Park Jae-Sang, Yoo Gun Hyung

Genre: Pop

Sub Genre: K-Pop/Dance, Hip Hop/Rap

Length: 3:39

Structure (Form): A-A-B-B-A-A-B-B-C-B

Tempo: 126 bpm

First Chorus: 1:07 (31% into the song)

Intro Length: 0:14

Outro Length: n/a

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Electric vs. Acoustic: Electric

Primary Instrumentation: Synth

Lyrical Theme: Cultural / Relationships / Parody

Title Occurrences: Gangnam Style occurs 17 times within the song

Primary Lyrical P.O.V: 1st & 2nd

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800,000,000 + YouTube views, **#1** on **30 charts** in **29 countries**, and a **horse dance** whose popularity is on the level of the **Macarena**. This is the global phenomenon otherwise known as **Gangnam Style**.

In this report we're going to take an in-depth look at the song and other factors that enabled a K-Pop artist who was relatively unknown outside his native Korea to become an international household name and score one of the biggest viral hits in Pop history!

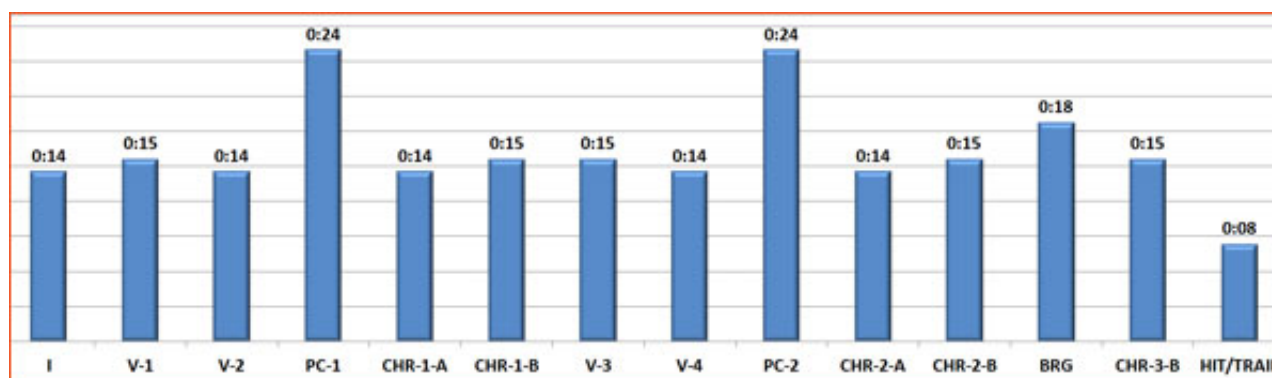
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At-a-Glance

	Intro	Verse	Pre-Chorus	Chorus	Bridge
# Of Occurrences	1	4	2	5	1
Length by Section	0:14	0:15/0:14	0:24	0:14/0:15	0:18
Section % to Total Song	6%	26%	22%	33%	8%

Section Length (Length of each individual section within the song)

I=Intro, **V**=Verse, **Chr**=Chorus, **Turn**=Turnaround, **Brg**=Bridge, **IB**=Instrumental Break



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Gangnam Style contains **13** individual sections within its framework, all of which land at **0:14/0:15** except for the **0:24** pre-chorus and the **0:18** bridge.

Key Points:

- The first thing to take note of is that there are **4 individual verse sections** within the song. Verses 1 & 2 act as a full **0:29 verse “group”** (each differing in nature from one another), as is the case with verses 3 & 4. It's also worth noting that the vast majority of top-charting Pop songs (including Dance) usually only contain **2** verse sections within the entire song.
- It's a similar story with the choruses. Each **0:29 full chorus section** is broken into **two halves**, with the first encompassing the repetition of the title and the second incorporating the “*Hey, sexy lady*” vocal into the mix. Notice that the backing music remains virtually the same through both halves (see the Music & Instrumentation section below for details).
- You can even say the same for the **pre-chorus** as well. The first half is defined by the “sung” portion of the song, while the second half launches into the grand build that sets up the payoff in the chorus that follows.
- Notice the **frequency** of which sections change over within the song. By providing the listener with something new entering the mix once every **0:14 – 0:15** (except for the **0:24** pre-chorus and the **0:18** bridge), the listener is always kept engaged and never has a chance to get “bored.”

Now – let's see how the length of each section within *Gangnam Style* compares to the **Dance songs** that landed in the Billboard Pop Songs Chart top 10 during **Q3-2012**:

Intro

Gangnam Style: **0:14**

Dance/Pop Average: **0:10**

Verse

Gangnam Style: **0:14 – 0:15**

Dance/Pop Average: **0:21 – 0:22**

Pre-Chorus

Gangnam Style: **0:24**

Dance/Pop Average: **0:19**

Chorus

Gangnam Style: **0:14 – 0:15**

Dance/Pop Average: **0:30 – 0:31**

Bridge

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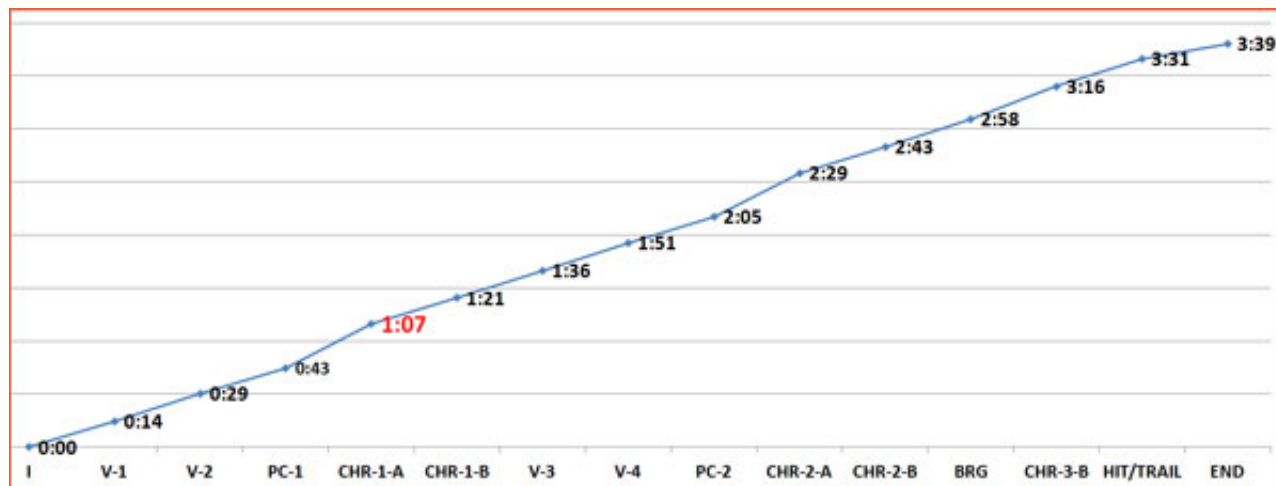
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Gangnam Style: **0:18**

Dance/Pop Average: **0:22**

As you can see, for the most part *Gangnam Style* is fairly close to that of top 10 Dance/Pop song averages. The largest variations occur in the **verse** and **chorus** sections, but when you look at them as full "grouped" sections (i.e. verses 1 & 2, choruses A and B), the verse gap shrinks to about **0:08** and the chorus lengths wind up being virtually the same (off by just **0:01**).

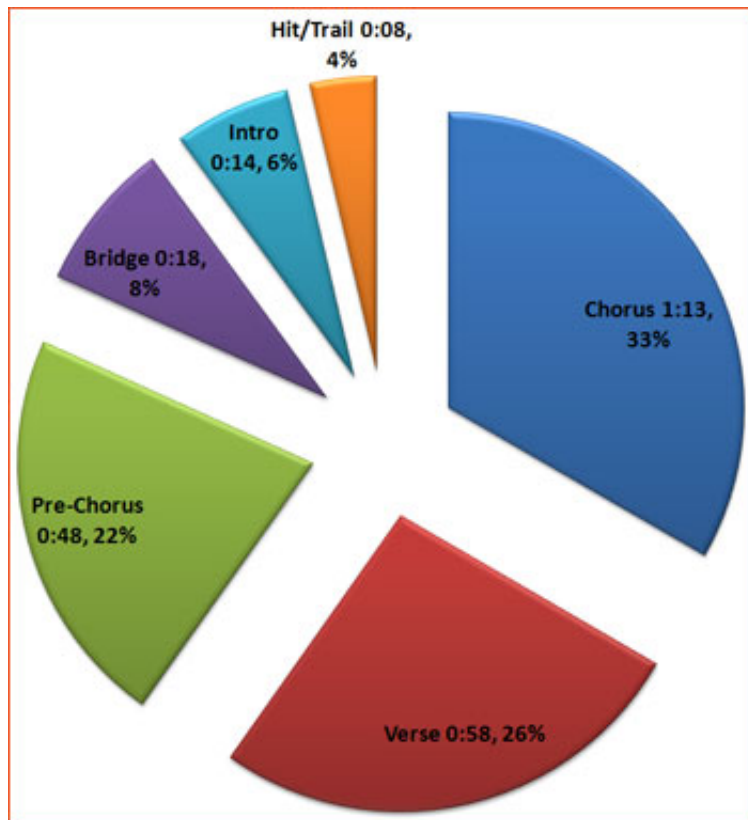
Timeline (Shows when each section hits within the timeline of the song)



Total Section Analysis (Total time consumed by each section and its percentage of the total song)

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Gangnam Style is comprised of **5 full sections** within its framework (i.e. all choruses, verses, pre-choruses plus the intro and bridge), accounting for **33%** of the song's total composition all the way down to just **6%**. Not surprisingly, the majority of time within the song was allocated to the **chorus (33%)**, followed close behind by the **verse** (with all 4 occurrences totaling **26%** of the total song).

Let's now see how the sectional breakdown of *Gangnam Style* stacked up against the **Dance songs** that landed in the Billboard Pop Songs Chart top 10 during Q3-2012:

Intro

- ***Gangnam Style***: Comprises **6%** of the total song.
- **Q3-2012 Average**: Comprises **5%** of the total song.

Comparison: *Gangnam Style*'s intro is **right in-line** with the Q3-2012 average.

Verse

- ***Gangnam Style***: Comprises **26%** of the total song.
- **Q3-2012 Average**: Comprises **20%** of the total song.

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Comparison: *Gangnam Style* allocated **6% more time** to the verse sections than the Q3-2012 average. This was primarily due to the fact that *Gangnam Style* has **4** verse sections as opposed to the majority of Dance/Pop songs which have just **2**.

Pre-Chorus

- **Gangnam Style:** Comprises **22%** of the total song.
- **Q3-2012 Average:** Comprises **16%** of the total song.

Comparison: *Gangnam Style* allocated **6% more time** to the pre-chorus than the Q3-2012 average. This is primarily due to the extended build that occurs during the second half of the section that leads into the chorus.

As a side note, the difference is actually greater if you remove Rihanna's *Where Have You Been* from the equation, which allocated **25%** of the total song to the pre-chorus. That song aside, the Q3-2012 average is closer to **12%**.

Chorus

- **Gangnam Style:** Comprises **33%** of the total song.
- **Q3-2012 Average:** Comprises **37%** of the total song.

Comparison: *Gangnam Style* allocated **4% less time** to the choruses than the Q3-2012 average.

Bridge

- **Gangnam Style:** Comprises **8%** of the total song.
- **Q3-2012 Average:** Comprises **10%** of the total song.

Comparison: *Gangnam Style* allocated **2% less time** to the bridge than the Q3-2012 average.

Summary:

In-Line/Close To In-Line with Top 10 Pop Song Averages: The intro & the bridge.

Deviates from Top 10 Pop Song Averages: *Gangnam Style* allocated **more time** to the verse and pre-chorus sections of the song and **slightly less time** to the chorus than Dance/Pop song averages.

Overall, the total section breakdown of *Gangnam Style* is **pretty much in line** with Dance/Pop averages. Yes, less time is devoted to the chorus, but that was because more time was allocated to the verse and pre-chorus sections of the song (remember – there are **4** verse sections as opposed to **2** which is indicative of the vast majority of top 10 hit Pop songs).

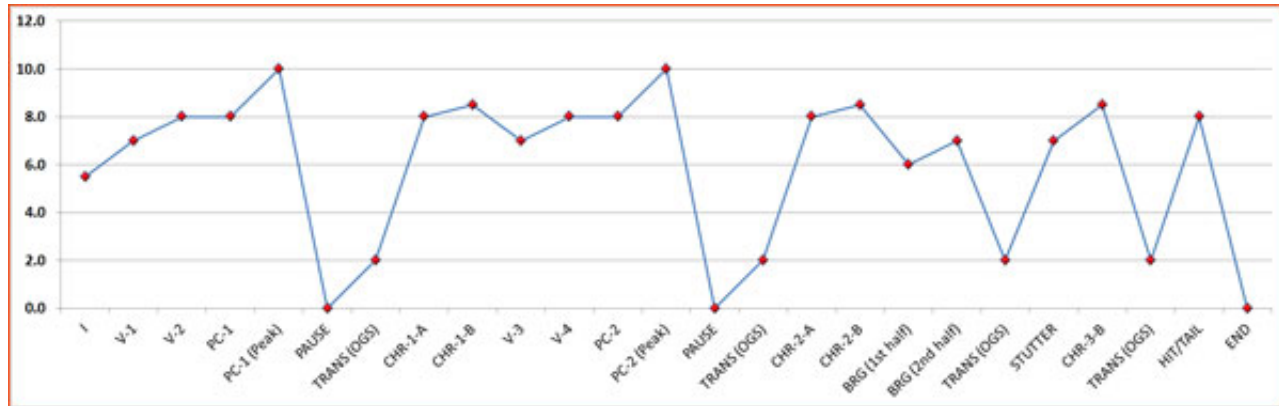
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Music, Instrumentation & MTI (Momentum/Tension/Intensity) [Back to Top](#)

(Evaluation of the intensity of each section within the song timeline on a scale of 1 – 10, 10 being the most intense)



When we talk about a song's **MTI level**, we're referring to how fluctuations in **momentum**, **tension** and **intensity** levels are utilized in each section of the song.

MTI Level Key Points:

Sectional Fluctuations

As you can see in the graph above, aside from the transitions, the second-half of the pre-chorus and the bridge, all of the other sections within the song are quite close in nature from an MTI level standpoint.

For example, take verse-1, verse-2 and the first half of the pre-chorus (before the song embarks on the build that leads into the chorus). There's just minor fluctuation in the overall intensity level brought about changes in the nature of PSY's vocal delivery as well as the change-up in the nature of the backing music.

MTI Peak / Drop Out

As was the case with its "sister" song *Sexy & I Know It*, *Gangnam Style* builds the tension/intensity level of the song to a rousing peak at the tail-end of the pre-chorus before hitting with a transitional pause (i.e. silence), which is then followed by a solo title lyric vocal before hitting with the full chorus. This pause does a great job of both relieving and increasing tension at the same time for the listener (i.e. you get a respite from the intensity that built during the pre-chorus, but the tension remains high because you're waiting for the payoff to hit).

Sonic Break

Although it's not a full-fledged "breakdown" as is the case with many other top-charting Pop songs (i.e. a sparse section usually with the drums being pulled from the mix), the first half of the bridge does provide the listener with a "breather" from the intensity that defined the preceding sections by reverting back to the nature of the intro (i.e. low filtered backing music plus vocals). The intensity then starts to grow during the second half as the filter moves more

toward the high-end of the spectrum plus the additional pulsing synth that's added to the mix (see the Music & Instrumentation section below for details). Without this "breather," the listener would start to suffer from "auditory overload."

MTI Level Fluctuation Recap

- Intro into Verse 1: **MTI Increase**
- Verse 1 into Verse 2: **MTI Increase**
- Verse 2 into Pre-Chorus-1: **MTI Remains Constant**
- Start of Pre-Chorus-1 through the end: **MTI Increase**
- Pre-Chorus 1 into Transition: **MTI Decrease**
- Transition into Chorus 1-A: **MTI Increase**
- Chorus 1-A into Chorus 1-B: **MTI Increase**
- Chorus 1-B into Verse-3: **MTI Decrease**
- Verse-3 into Verse-4: **MTI Increase**
- Verse-4 into Pre-Chorus-2: **MTI Remains Constant**
- Start of Pre-Chorus-2 through the end: **MTI Increase**
- Pre-Chorus-2 into Transition: **MTI Decrease**
- Transition into Chorus 2-A: **MTI Increase**
- Chorus 2-A into Chorus 2-B: **MTI Increase**
- Chorus 2-B into 1st half of the Bridge: **MTI Decrease**
- 1st half of the Bridge into the 2nd half: **MTI Increase**
- 2nd half of the bridge into Transition: **MTI Decrease**
- Transition into Chorus 3-B: **MTI Increase**
- Chorus 3B into Transition: **MTI Decrease**

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- Transition into final hit: **MTI Increase**

Waveform



Looking at the waveform graphic above, you can easily see how sonic levels and the use of compression jibe with shifts in the MTI level throughout the song.

Key Points:

- Notice how the song is basically divided into three distinct segments, broken up by the transitional pause coupled with the splash of black which denotes PSY's spoken "Opan Gangnam Style" vocal.
- The sonic levels build from the intro through the peak in the first pre-chorus (where it's basically wall to wall black).
- The sonic level within the first chorus remains pretty much constant, which is then brought down a notch as we enter the second verse and once again grows through the second pre-chorus peak.
- Directly following the second chorus, you can see how the overall levels are brought down in the bridge, before once again hitting the limits when the third (and last) chorus hits.

Overall, the levels within *Gangnam Style* are pretty much pushed to the max in order to **accentuate the overall Dance nature** of the song and achieve **maximum sonic impact**. (The loudness war is still in full effect in the mainstream).

MUSIC / INSTRUMENTATION / VOCALS

Note: Pan is represented on a scale from 9:00 to 3:00 (i.e. left to right, with 12:00 being right up the middle). Keep in mind that in most cases an instrument will bleed throughout the entire mix, but the pan depicted here represents its primary placement in the mix (i.e. where the level is most pronounced).

Harmonic Progression

Verse

No chord (just the primary B-B-B-B-B-D-B-A-G-F lead synth pattern)

Transition

Em – Em – Em – F#m – F#m – F#m progression

Pre-Chorus

G – A – B / G – A – F#

Chorus

No chord (just the primary B-B-B-B-B-D-B-A-G-F lead synth pattern)

Bridge

No chord (just the primary B-B-B-B-B-D-B-A-G-F lead synth pattern)

Music Key Points

Primary Synth Melody

The primary synth melody (the one that is first established in the intro) defines EVERY section of the song except for the pre-chorus. If you were wondering why you can't get it out of your head, well, that's your answer.

In order to make it so that it's not overly monotonous throughout the song (to a point where it would have an adverse effect on the listener), its **tonal characteristics** are changed up between sections:

- **Intro:** Transitions from low to high filter
- **Verses:** A combination of low and high pitched synths, with a fuzz overtone prevalent on the low end
- **Pre-Chorus:** N/A (that melody does not occur in the pre-chorus)
- **Chorus:** Resides mostly in the higher-register (the low-end fuzz is not as prevalent)
- **Bridge:** Reverts back to the low to high filtered nature of the intro

Sectional Transitions

There are two primary methods used to transition between sections within the song:

#1: The "bright synth" Em – Em – Em – F#m – F#m – F#m progression + drum fill

This transitions the following sections into one another in pretty much the exact same manner

(i.e. there's basically no variation – it's “cookie cutter”).

- **Intro** into **Verse-1**
- **Verse-1** into **Verse-2**
- **Verse-2** into **Pre-Chorus-1**
- **Chorus-1a** into **Chorus-1b**
- **Chorus 1b** into **Verse-3** (plus the “*eh, eh, eh...*” vocal)
- **Verse-3** into **Verse-4**
- **Verse-4** into **Pre-Chorus-2**
- **Chorus-2a** into **Chorus-2b**
- **Chorus 2b** into the **bridge** (plus the “*eh, eh, eh,*” vocal)
- **Bridge** into **Chorus-3b** (occurs after the solo “*Opan Gangnam Style*” vocal – includes the “*eh, eh, eh*” vocal)
- **Chorus-3b** into the **Ending** (plus the “*eh, eh, eh,*” vocal)

#2: The “warped music meltdown” (i.e. where the music comes to a full stop) + “*Opan Gangnam Style*” solo vocal:

- Transitions the **pre-chorus** into the full-on Dance **chorus**
- Transitions the **bridge** into the **Em – Fm transition** mentioned above before slamming into **Chorus – 3b**
- Transitions the **Em – Fm transition** that occurs right after **Chorus-3b** into the final **synth hit/”airy” explosion** of the song

Sectional Repetition

While *Gangnam Style* DOES vary the backing music from one section to the next to provide diversity (i.e. adding/subtracting instrumentation from the mix, changing up the beat, etc...), it DOESN'T provide variation between “**like**” **sections** throughout the song:

- **Verse 1** and **Verse 3**: Utilize the exact same backing music and are sung in a similar manner
- **Verse 2** and **Verse 4**: Utilize the exact same backing music and are sung in a similar

manner

- **Pre-Chorus 1 and Pre-Chorus 2:** They utilize the exact same music, vocal delivery and lyrics (it's "cookie-cutter")
- **Chorus 1a and 2a:** Utilize the same music, vocal delivery and lyrics
- **Chorus 1b, 2b and 3b:** Utilize the same music, vocal delivery and lyrics

Keep in mind that most top-charting songs (and even those that aren't) provide SOME type of diversity between "like" sections. For example, additional instrumentation might be added to the 2nd verse in order to change things up from the 1st. The same goes for the chorus, plus what I see in a lot of Pop songs is that the overall levels also increase from one chorus section to the next so that the "excitement" and intensity level increases as the song progresses. This wasn't the case in *Gangnam Style*. It seems more like "cut and paste" (i.e. chorus 1 is cut and pasted as chorus 2).

Sectional Diversity

As previously mentioned, *Gangnam Style* DID change-up the nature of the **backing music** (in addition to the vocal melody) from one section to the next in order to provide differentiation and heightened engagement value for the listener. Here's a concise recap of how it was done (some are subtle shifts and some are major):

- **Intro:** Low to High filtered synth and kick drum
- **Verse-1:** Full fidelity (i.e. non-filtered) plus synth, kick and hats
- **Verse-2:** "Screaming" synth is added to the mix plus change-up in the drums (hats plus the addition of the snare)
- **Pre-Chorus-1:** Complete change-up from all of the preceding sections (reference the pre-chorus section below for details)
- **Chorus-1a:** Complete change from the pre-chorus, reverts back to general nature of the 2nd verse plus additional synth)
- **Chorus-1b:** The backing music remains the same as chorus 1a (the differentiation stems from the "hey, sexy lady" vocal)
- **Verse 3 & 4:** Reverts back to the same nature that defined verses 1 & 2
- **Pre-Chorus-2:** Reverts back to the same nature that defined pre-chorus-1
- **Chorus 2a and 2b:** Same as chorus 1a and 1b

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- **Bridge:** Reverts back to the filtered nature of the intro plus additional synths
- **Chorus 3b:** Reverts back to the nature that defined chorus 2b and 3b

Bells & Whistles

Gangnam Style utilizes similar “bells & whistles” that are prevalent in many of today’s top-charting Dance/Pop songs. Some of the most prominent are:

- The “**airy**” **synth swell** that helps to build the tension at the tail end of the pre-chorus
- The **low to high pitch synth “siren”** that acts in conjunction with the synth swell above
- The “**airy**” **synth “explosions”** that occur in the Intro, pre-chorus and at the end of the song
- The “**stuttered**” **speed-up** that occurs at the tail end of the pre-chorus and bridge, helping to take the MTI level to a peak

SECTION BY SECTION

Intro (0:01 – 0:14)

Vocals & Primary Instrumentation Featured In The Mix:

- **Synths** (Primary melody – low and high pitched – transitions from low to high filter throughout the section plus level increase) **10:00 – 2:00** (primary at **12:00**)
- **Synth** (Transitional synth at the tail end of the section – bright in nature – up-front in the mix) **10:00 – 2:00**
- **Synth** (Effect – “Airy” explosion – mid/up in the mix when it hits) Hits at **12:00** and dissipates *l/r*
- **Drums** (Electronic – Kick – filters low to high along with the synth – mid/up in the mix) **12:00**
- **Lead Vocal** (Male – up-front in the mix – slight reverb) **12:00**

Key Points:

- Right off the bat the ultra-infectious **B-B-B-B-B-D-B-A-G-F synth progression** that defines the primary melody throughout the majority of the song is instantly established.
- The **Electro/Dance vibe** is instantly established as well, via the quarter-note kick, the

“airy” synth blast, and the low to high filter synth.

- Notice that the **song title** is also introduced in the intro as well (“*Opan Gangnam Style...Gangnam Style*”).
- The intro is the **perfect length** – short enough so that it doesn’t “overstay its welcome” where the listener’s attention might start to wander, and long enough so that the general vibe of the song is established, hooking the listener in and leaving them wanting more.

Combined, the 4 points detailed above make for a **very effective intro**. Not only does it **instantly engage** you in the song and hold your attention until the verse takes over, but it also acts as a “**unique identifier**” for the song as well – meaning the second you hear it, you know exactly what song it is. It stands out amongst all of the clutter that you hear on the airwaves.

Transition Point– Intro into Verse 1: The bright Em – F#m synth progression plus quick drum fill

Verse-1 (0:14 – 0:29)

Vocals & Primary Instrumentation Featured In The Mix:

- **Synths** (Primary melody – low and high pitched – fuzz overtone prevalent on the low-end – mid/up in the mix) **11:00 – 12:00** (bleeds l/r)
- **Synth** (Transitional synth at the tail end of the section – bright in nature – up front in the mix) **10:00 – 2:00**
- **Synth** (Bass – mid-level in the mix) **12:00**
- **Drums** (Electronic – Kick & Hats working in unison with one another –mid/up in the mix) **12:00**
- **Lead Vocal** (Male – processed in nature and multi-tracked – quick delay bleeds l/r) **12:00**

Here in the 1st verse the general nature of the intro continues, plus the addition of the lead vocal.

Key Points

- The first thing that you’ll notice is that the synth progression and kick drum quarter-note beat that defined the intro are still in effect in the 1st verse. The primary difference is that the filter has been removed and the sound is now “**full fidelity**” in nature.
- Notice that because we’re now at full fidelity that the overall MTI level has been kicked up over that which defined the intro. This is because the kick (plus corresponding hats)

and the lead synth are front and center along with the lead vocals. Bottom line – the **Electro/Dance nature of the song is in full effect.**

- Notice the **2 primary synth layers** that work in conjunction with one another in formulating the overall sound (i.e. the higher pitched synth and the low-end “fuzz” synth). Together, coupled with the “slurred nature” between notes, they provide the song with a modernistic club vibe.
- It's the **lead vocal** that really takes center stage, though. It's up-front in the mix, and the rap style delivery does a great job of acting as an additional **percussive instrument** in the mix (further accentuating the Dance vibe). Reference the Vocal Melody section of the report for additional details.

Transition Point– Verse 1 into Verse 2: The bright Em – F#m synth progression plus quick drum fill.

Verse-2 (0:29– 0:43)

Vocals & Primary Instrumentation Featured In The Mix:

- **Synths** (Primary melody – low and high pitched – fuzz overtone prevalent on the low-end – mid level in the mix) **12:00** (bleeds l/r)
- **Synths** (“Screaming” higher-register synth — up front in the mix) **11:00 – 12:00** (bleeds l/r)
- **Synth** (Bass – mid-level in the mix) **12:00**
- **Synth** (Transitional synth at the tail end of the section – bright in nature – mid/up in the mix) **10:00 – 2:00**
- **Drums** (Electronic – Kick, Hats & bright Snare. Hats are mid-level, Kick and Snare are up-front in the mix) **10:00 – 2:00** (primary up the middle)
- **Lead Vocal** (Male – processed in nature and multi-tracked – quick delay bleeds l/r) **12:00**

Things really start to cook in the 2nd verse, primarily due to the differing nature of the lead vocal coupled with the change-up in the nature of the backing music.

Key Points

- The first thing that you'll notice is that the overall **MTI level has been kicked up** over that which defined the 1st verse. This was primarily due to the change-up in the drums (specifically the addition of the snare into the mix coupled with the faster natured hat rhythm) and the “screaming” higher-register synth that adds increased intensity to the

overall sound.

- Notice that the **lead vocal** is still front and center, but the overall nature of the melody has been changed-up in relation to the 1st verse. More on this in the Vocal Melody section of the report.

It's the fusion of both points above which takes the **engagement factor for the listener** to the next level. The momentum builds, the intensity builds, and things get changed-up just enough so that they're kept hooked into the song, ready to be led into the pre-chorus that follows.

Transition Point– Verse 2 into Pre-Chorus 1: The bright Em – F#m synth progression plus quick drum fill.

Pre-Chorus-1 (0:43 – 1:07)

Vocals & Primary Instrumentation Featured In The Mix:

- **Synths** (Primary – same characteristics as the “transitional” synth – moderate reverb – mid/up in the mix) **12:00** (bleeds l/r)
- **Synth** (Low to high pitch “swell”) 12:00
- **Synth** (Effect – “Airy” explosion – low/mid level in the mix) Hits at **12:00** and dissipates l/r
- **Synth** (Effect – “Airy” synth swell – occurs toward the end “build” of the section – low to mid level in the mix) Primary at **12:00** but bleeds throughout
- **Drums** (Electronic – Kick & Claps working in unison with one another –mid level in the mix. Snare enters toward the end of the section – mid/up in the mix) **12:00**
- **Lead Vocal** (Male – processed in nature and multi-tracked – slight/moderate reverb bleeds l/r – up front in the mix) **12:00**
- **Secondary Vocal** (Male “hey” –multi-tracked – slight/moderate reverb – up front in the mix) **10:00 – 2:00**
- **Lead Harmony Vocal** (Male – at the tail end of the section –multi-tracked – slight/moderate reverb – mid level in the mix) **10:00 / 2:00**

Here in the pre-chorus things get completely changed-up from what was defining the intro and preceding two verse sections, ending in a crescendo that leaves the listener hanging for the “payoff” (i.e. chorus) that follows.

Key Points:

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- First, notice that the **lead synth pattern** that had been defining the preceding sections is gone. Instead, the bright synth that was used during the **transitions** continues on to define the section via the **G-A-B** (and **F#** at the end) progression.
- Notice that the **nature of the beat has changed** from that which was defining the preceding verse. The up-front snare and “fast” hats are gone, instead reverting back to the quarter-note kick coupled with claps that work in tandem with one another.
- Notice that the first part of the section (**0:43 – 0:51**) repeats only **half** the second time around, instead **launching into the build** that will culminate in the highest MTI level peak within the song.
- Notice that this is the only section that has more of a “**sung**” **vocal** as opposed to the monotone rap natured delivery that defines most other sections within the song (specifically the verses and part of the chorus).
- Notice how the synths engage in a brief “**warped meltdown**” a few times during the section, providing enhanced color and diversity to the overall sound.

The real benefit of the pre-chorus is the manner in which it **sets up the chorus**. Instead of following suit of what defined the first **0:08** of the section, it instead embarks on a build that takes the MTI level to a rousing peak, prepping the listener for the payoff that follows. This was achieved via the **vocal melody** (specifically the higher register in relation to the rest of the section coupled with the nature of the delivery), the low to high-pitched **synth swell** (increasing the tension and intensity), and the **sped up “stuttered” pace** at the tail end that encompasses the drums, synth and “morphing” processed vocals. Combined, all of these elements take the section to a **grand crescendo** – the peak of peaks within the entire song.

Transition Point – Pre-Chorus 1 into Chorus 1: The backing music “warps” to a full-stop, followed by the solo “*Opan Gangnam Style*” vocal which is then followed by the full chorus slamming in.

Chorus-1 (1:07 – 1:36)

Vocals & Primary Instrumentation Featured In The Mix:

Chorus 1-A

- **Synths** (Primary melody – residing mostly in the higher register – up front in the mix) **12:00**
- **Synths** (“Electric Buzzing” synths — mid-level in the mix) **10:00 – 2:00**
- **Synth** (Bass – mid-level in the mix) **12:00**
- **Synth** (Transitional synth at the tail end of the section – bright in nature – mid/up in the

mix) **10:00 – 2:00**

- **Drums** (Electronic – Kick, Hats & bright Snare. Hats are mid-level, Kick and Snare are up-front in the mix) **10:00 – 2:00** (primary up the middle)
- **Lead Vocal** (Male –processed – slight to moderate reverb – up-front in the mix) **12:00**
- **Secondary Vocal** (Male – “ahhhh” – moderate reverb – mid-level in the mix) **12:00**

Chorus 1-B

The backing music is essentially the same as chorus 1-A plus:

- **Additional Lead Vocal** (Male – “*hey, sexy lady*” – multi tracked and processed– slight to moderate reverb – up-front in the mix) **9:00 – 3:00**

Following the sonic peak of the preceding pre-chorus and the **0:02** of tension riddled silence, PSY breaks in with a solo “*Opan Gangnam Style*” vocal followed by exploding into the full Dance natured chorus for the balance of the section.

Key Points:

- Notice that the full chorus is essentially **broken into 2 halves**. The 1st half focuses on the **repetition of the title**, while the 2nd half introduces the “**Hey, sexy lady**” vocal into the mix. Both halves are broken up by the same bright synth **Em – F#m** progression plus quick drum fill that had been utilized to transition between other sections within the song (e.g. verse 1 and verse 2).
- Notice that the **backing music** that defines both halves of the chorus is essentially **identical** to one another. The diversity stems from the change-up in vocals as mentioned above.
- Speaking of the backing music, notice that the **lead synth pattern** that defined the intro and both verses is back in full effect. This time around, though, the higher pitch layer is front and center, providing the sound with a subtly more “intense/electric” vibe than other sections of the song (which works well considering that this is the key “payoff” within the song. It further accentuates the electro/Dance nature).
- Notice that the **up-front snare and faster paced hats return to the mix** during the section, which also further accentuate the Dance vibe (it’s essentially the same as it was during the 2nd verse).
- Notice the “**electric buzzing synths**” that have been added to the mix, providing increased color and diversity to the section as well as accentuating the electro Dance vibe along with the nature of the lead synth.

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Transition Point– Chorus 1 into Verse 3: The bright Em – F#m synth progression coupled with the stuttered “Eh, Eh, Eh...” vocals which mimic the progression plus quick drum fill.

Verse-3 (1:36 – 1:51)

The 3rd verse reverts back to the same nature that defined the 1st verse of the song, with the primary difference being the lyrical content.

Take notice, though, of how the **backing music differs** between the preceding chorus and verse (i.e. the snare and faster paced hats are pulled from the mix along with the “buzz” synth, and the higher-pitched lead synth isn’t front and center anymore). This change-up enables the song (and the listener) to “reset,” so to speak, and embark on the next round of builds that will culminate in the 2nd chorus.

Transition Point– Verse 3 into Verse 4: The bright Em – F#m progression plus quick drum fill.

Verse-4 (1:51 – 2:05)

The 4th verse reverts back to the same nature that defined the 2nd verse of the song, with the primary difference being the lyrical content.

Transition Point– Verse 4 into Pre-Chorus 2: The bright Em – F#m progression plus quick drum fill.

Pre-Chorus-2 (2:05 – 2:29)

The 2nd pre-chorus is exactly the same as the 1st pre-chorus.

Transition Point – Pre-Chorus 2 into Chorus 2: The backing music “warps” to a full-stop, followed by the solo “Opan Gangnam Style” vocal which is then followed by the chorus slamming in.

Chorus-2 (2:29 – 2:58)

The 2nd chorus is exactly the same as the 1st chorus.

Transition Point– Chorus 1 into Verse 3: The bright Em – F#m synth progression coupled with the stuttered “Eh, Eh, Eh...” vocals which mimic the progression plus quick drum fill.

Bridge (2:58 – 3:16)

Vocals & Primary Instrumentation Featured In The Mix:

- **Synths** (Primary melody – low and high pitch – transitions from low to high filter throughout the section plus level increase) **10:00 – 2:00** (primary at **12:00**)

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- **Synth** (Pulsing “Laser” synth enters half way through, speeding up and increasing in pitch as the section progresses. Mid-level in the mix) **11:00 – 12:00**
- **Synth** (Effect – “Airy” synth swell – occurs toward the end “build” of the section - low to mid level in the mix) Primary at **12:00** but bleeds throughout.
- **Synth** (Transitional synth at the tail end of the section – bright in nature – up front in the mix) **10:00 – 2:00**
- **Drums** (Electronic – Kick – filters low to high along with the synth – mid level in the mix) **12:00**
- **Lead Vocal** (Male – multi-tracked and processed – Up-front in the mix – reverb plus delay that pans l/r) **12:00**
- **Secondary Lead Vocal** (Male – multi-tracked – reverb and delay) Primary around **3:00** but bleeds throughout

The bridge (as all bridges should) provides diversity from all of the other sections within the song up until this point. Essentially what it's doing is reverting back to the nature of the intro plus a change-up in the lyrics and nature of the vocal delivery.

Key Points:

- First, notice that by reverting back to the music that defined the **intro** (i.e. low to high filter throughout the section, quarter-note kick) it brings the **MTI level back down** from that which defined the preceding sections of the song. The result is that the listener is given a “**breather**” from all the intensity, but at the same time the Dance beat/vibe is still in effect and **keeps the momentum going**.
- Notice how the intensity and tension **begin to build** during the second-half of the section, brought about via the addition of the “pulsing laser synth” and the filtered transition over to the treble end of the spectrum.
- Notice the manner in which the **intensity peaks** at the tail end of the section. First, the laser synth starts to go up in pitch coupled with the pulsing reaching a fevered pace. That plus the “airy” synth swell and the “*you know what I'm sayin*” vocal takes the MTI level to a height that is similar in nature to the peak that occurs at the tail end of the pre-chorus. This is then followed by the music “warping out” and an “*Opan Gangnam Style*” solo vocal. Notice that the vocal is almost **immediate** this time around – there's no pause (as was the case after the first two pre-choruses).

Transition Point – Bridge into Chorus 3: The bright Em – F#m synth progression coupled with the stuttered “*Eh, Eh, Eh...*” vocals which mimic the progression plus quick drum fill directly follows the “*Opan Gangnam Style*” solo vocal.

Chorus 3-B (3:16 – 3:31)

Reverts back to the exact nature that defined Chorus 1B and 2B (i.e. the “hey, sexy lady” part of the chorus).

End

Right after the stuttered “eh, eh, eh...” vocal / synth combo at the tail end of the chorus, the backing music abruptly warps out once again followed immediately by another “*Opan Gangnam Style*” solo vocal. Right after, a final “ahhh” vocal hits along with a **Bm** synth chord and an “airy” synth explosion that fizzles out for about **0:08**.

Overall, the manner in which *Gangnam Style* ends is just as intense as the song itself. It doesn't end with a whimper. It ends with a **huge exclamation point!**

Song Title & Lyrics [Back to Top](#)

SONG TITLE

When gauging the effectiveness of a song's title, there are a number of factors that you need to consider:

1. Is it unique?
2. Does it stand out?
3. Is it memorable?
4. Does it pique your interest enough to take a listen to the song?
5. How does it work within the lyrical framework of the song?

Is it unique?

Absolutely, and this goes both for PSY's native Korea as well as in the rest of the world. The title refers to a specific district of Seoul (i.e. Gangnam) and the “style” of the people who reside there. It's not generic in any way, shape or form. For those of you who live in the U.S., the equivalent would be “Rodeo Drive Style.”

Does it stand out?

Because of its unique nature as mentioned above, it easily stands out and is instantly recognizable amongst all of the other songs in mainstream – both in Korea and throughout the world.

Is it memorable?

Yes – for two reasons. First due to its unique nature and second because of the repetition of the title throughout the song (see the **Title Occurrence** section below for details).

Does it pique your interest to take a listen?

Yes. First, if you reside in Korea (and you know about the Gangnam District), you're going to be interested to see what a song like “*Gangnam Style*” is all about. Now, if you reside outside Korea and have no idea what Gangnam Style means, you may be inclined to at least take a

listen to find out.

Does it work within the lyrical framework of the song?

Yes. The entire premise of the story revolves around the title “*Gangnam Style*” (see the Lyrical Premise section below for details).

Title Occurrences:

Gangnam Style occurs **17** times within the song in **5** sections:

- **2** times in the **Intro**
- **5** times in **Chorus-1a**
- **1** time in **Chorus-1b**
- **5** times in **Chorus-2a**
- **1** time in **Chorus-2b**
- **1** time in the **Bridge**
- **2** times in **Chorus 3b**

LYRICAL PREMISE

Gangnam Style is a parody that revolves around PSY claiming that **he has “*Gangnam Style*”** (i.e. has high-class and belongs to the Gangnam “in” crowd), all the while he is anything but.

Considering that there have been many interpretations revolving around its definitive meaning, I thought it would be best to utilize a quote directly from PSY stemming from an August, 12, 2012 CNN interview:

*“People who are actually from Gangnam never proclaim that they are — it’s only the posers and wannabes that put on these airs and say that they are “*Gangnam Style*” — so this song is actually poking fun at those kinds of people who are trying so hard to be something that they’re not.”*

So even though “*Gangnam Style*” is about an actual place and sect of people, the overall premise of the story is **universal** in nature, which makes it easy for just about anyone to connect with. We all know people who pretend to be what they’re not.

Verses

There are 2 full verse “groupings” within the song. Verse 1 & 2 make up one full group, as do verses 3 & 4. Why do they make up a full group? It’s because they both directly relate to one another on a **lyrical level**:

Verse 1 & 3 (the first section of each group)

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These verse sections relate directly to a Gangnam **GIRL** (though not any specific girl). The overall premise is that it's a girl who knows how to "fit in" with every day society, appearing "prim, proper and normal," but at the same time knows how to let loose when the time is right. It's all about the perfect balance of the two.

Verse-1

Here on the first 2 lines PSY is referring to a girl and what she's like during the day:

- **Line 1:** *A girl who is warm and humanely during the day*
- **Line 2:** *A classy girl who knows how to enjoy the freedom of a cup of coffee*

On the third line, he lets us know that though she may be "nice" and "conservative" during the day, she has a **different side** that comes out at night:

- **Line 3:** *A girl whose heart gets hotter when the night comes*

Verse-3

Here in the third verse PSY continues with the premise that was established in verse-1, a girl who can perfectly fit into "normal" everyday society during the day but show her wild side at night.

- **Line 1:** *A girl who looks quiet but when she plays, she plays.*
- **Line 2:** He refers to a girl who "*puts her hair down when the right time comes.*" Notice how this jibes with the nature of line 1 above. She's "prim and proper" until it's time to party, where she releases her "wild" side.
- **Line 3:** This is a really clever, "inspirational" themed line: "*A girl who covers herself but is more sexy than a girl who bares it all.*"

Verse 2 & 4 (the second section in each group)

These verse sections relate directly to the GUY – specifically PSY who is making fun of himself as he plays the role of someone claiming to have Gangnam Style. What's really clever is that each of **his lines** directly relates to the corresponding line about the **GIRL** in the preceding verse section.

Let's intertwine verses 3 and 4 so you can get a clear picture as to how this is done:

Line 1

- Line 1-Verse 3: *A **girl** who looks quiet but plays when she plays*
- Line 1-Verse 4: *A **guy** who seems calm but plays when he plays*

Line 2

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- Line 2-Verse 3: A **girl** who puts her hair down when the right time comes
- Line 2-Verse 4: A **guy** who goes completely crazy when the right time comes

Line 3

- Line 3-Verse 3: A **girl** who covers herself but is more sexy than a girl who bares it all
- Line 3-Verse 4: A **guy** who has bulging ideas rather than muscles

Overall, you can tell that PSY is being completely pretentious – trying to win her over by comparing his attributes to hers and making himself out to be something that he's not (i.e. having Gangnam Style). You get the full sense as to how pretentious he's being in the Chorus, where he finally declares that he has (is) Gangnam Style. If you already have it, you shouldn't need to proclaim it.

Pre-Chorus

Directly following where PSY compares his attributes to hers in verses 2 and 4, thinking that he has Gangnam Style and as a result is in her "league," the pre-chorus finds him now **courting** the "beautiful," "lovable" lady:

- *Beautiful, lovable, yes you.*
- *Let's go until the end.*

Chorus

Here in the first half of the chorus (chorus-A) it's all about PSY straight-up proclaiming that he has (or is) Gangnam Style (i.e. fitting in with the nature of the Gangnam District). In the second half (chorus-B), he continues on, but this time calling out to address the "sexy lady" directly, letting her know that he is Gangnam Style (which is why he thinks she would want to be with him).

Bridge

In the bridge, PSY takes his pretentious, egoic nature to the next level. Basically what he's doing is outright proclaiming that he's better than all the other guys (another reason why he thinks she should be with him):

- *On top of the running man is the flying man*
- *Baby baby I'm a man who knows a thing or two (kind of a know-it-all)*

But, as mentioned before, if you need to say it, you probably aren't all that in the first place!

LYRICS

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

*Note: There have been numerous translations of *Gangnam Style*. That being said, most encompass the same general premise from line to line. From the research that we've conducted, this seems to be one of the most popular translations.

Oppa: Technically means "older brother." This is how PSY relates to himself within the story.

Intro

*Oppa is Gangnam style
Gangnam style*

Verse-1

*A girl who is warm and humanely during the day
A classy girl who knows how to enjoy the freedom of a cup of coffee
A girl whose heart gets hotter when the night comes
A girl with that kind of twist*

Verse-2

*I'm a guy
A guy who is as warm as you during the day
A guy who one-shots his coffee before it even cools down
A guy whose heart bursts when night comes
That kind of guy*

Pre-Chorus-1

*Beautiful, loveable
Yes you, hey, yes you, hey
Beautiful, loveable
Yes you, hey, yes you, hey
Now let's go until the end*

Chorus-1a

*Oppa is Gangnam style, Gangnam style
Oppa is Gangnam style, Gangnam style
Oppa is Gangnam style*

Chorus-1b

*Eh- Sexy Lady
Oppa is Gangnam style
Eh- Sexy Lady*

Verse-3

*A girl who looks quiet but plays when she plays
A girl who puts her hair down when the right time comes
A girl who covers herself but is more sexy than a girl who bares it all
A sensible girl like that*

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Verse-4

I'm a guy

A guy who seems calm but plays when he plays

A guy who goes completely crazy when the right time comes

A guy who has bulging ideas rather than muscles

That kind of guy

Pre-Chorus-2

Beautiful, loveable

Yes you, hey, yes you, hey

Beautiful, loveable

Yes you, hey, yes you, hey

Now let's go until the end

Chorus-2a

Oppa is Gangnam style, Gangnam style

Oppa is Gangnam style, Gangnam style

Oppa is Gangnam style

Chorus-2b

Eh- Sexy Lady

Oppa is Gangnam style

Eh- Sexy Lady

Bridge

On top of the running man is the flying man

Baby baby I'm a man who knows a thing or two

On top of the running man is the flying man

Baby baby I'm a man who knows a thing or two

You know what I'm saying

Oppa is Gangnam style

Chorus-3b

Eh- Sexy Lady, Oppa is Gangnam style

Eh- Sexy Lady oh oh oh oh

Oppa is Gangnam style

ROMANIZED

Intro

Opan Gangnam Style

Gangnam Style

Verse-1

Naje-neun tasaroun inkanjeo-gin yeoja

Keopi hanjanye yeoyureaneun pumkyeok i-nneun yeoja

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*Bami omyeon shimjangi tteugeowojineun yeoja
Keureon banjeon i-nneun yeoja*

Verse-2

*Naneun sana-i
Naje-neun neomankeum tasaroun geureon sana-i
Keopi shikgido jeone wonsyas taerineun sana-i
Bami omyeon shimjangi teojyeobeorineun sana-i
Keureon sana-i*

Pre-Chorus

*Areumdawo sarangseureowo
Keurae neo hey keurae baro neo hey
Areumdawo sarangseureowo
Keurae neo hey keurae baro neo hey
Chigeumbu-teo kal dekkaji kabol-kka*

Chorus-1a

*Oppan gang-namseutayil
Gang-namseutayil
Oppan gang-namseutayil
Gang-namseutayil
Oppan gang-namseutayil*

Chorus-1b

*Eh, sexy lady
Oppan gang-namseutayil
Eh, sexy lady*

Verse-3

*Jeongsu-khae boijiman nol ttaen noneun yeoja
Ittaeda shipeumyeon mukkeot-deon meori puneun yeoja
Karyeot-jiman wen-manhan nochulboda yahan yeoja
Keureon gamkakjeo-gin yeoja*

Verse-4

*Naneun sana-i
Jeomjanha boijiman nol ttaen noneun sana-i
Ttae-ga dwehmyeon wahnjeon michyeobeorineun sana-i
Keunyukboda sasangi ul-tungbul-tung-han sana-i
Keureon sana-i*

Pre-Chorus-2

*Areumdawo sarangseureowo
Keurae neo hey keurae baro neo hey
Areumdawo sarangseureowo*

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*Keurae neo hey keurae baro neo hey
Chigeumbu-teo kal dekkaji kabol-kka*

Chorus-2a

*Oppan gang-namseutayil
Gang-namseutayil
Oppan gang-namseutayil
Gang-namseutayil
Oppan gang-namseutayil*

Chorus-2b

*Eh, sexy lady
Oppan gang-namseutayil
Eh, sexy lady*

Bridge

*Ttwiineun nom keu wiie naneun nom
Baby baby Naneun mwol jom aneun nom
Ttwiineun nom keu wiie naneun nom
Baby baby Naneun mwol jom aneun nom
You know what i'm saying*

Chorus-2b

*Eh, sexy lady
Oppan gang-namseutayil
Eh, sexy lady
Oppan gang-namseutayil*

RHYMING LYRICS

The following lyrics “tie” phrases and lines together in certain sections of the song.

Verse 1

- Each line ends with the lyric “**yeoja.**”

Verse 2

- Each line ends with “**sana-i**”

Pre-Chorus

Each phrase ends in a rhyming manner:

- Areumdaw**o** / sarangseureow**o** / keurae **neo** / hey / keurae baro **neo** / hey

Chorus

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- Chorus-A: *Gangnam Style* is repeated
- Chorus-B: On the line “*hey, sexy lady*,” “**hey**” and the “**y**” in “**lady**” are sung in the same manner.

Bridge

- Each phrase on each line ends with “**nom.**”

ENGLISH LYRICS

Notice that even though *Gangnam Style* is sung in Korean, it utilizes English lyrics as well:

- *Hey, sexy lady* (Chorus-B)
- *You know what I'm sayin'?* (Bridge)

This combination of an artist's native language plus English has been becoming more and more prevalent in the mainstream, especially with **K-Pop** and **J-Pop** artists.

The Vocal Melody [Back to Top](#)

If *Gangnam Style* proves anything, it's the fact that **infectious melody trumps lyrics** when it comes to mainstream Dance/Pop. Why? Think about how many people that it's connected with throughout the world (hundreds and hundreds of millions). Now, out of all those people, think about how many speak Korean (NOT hundreds of millions). If people can't understand the lyrics, why (besides the video and dance) are they so engrossed in the song? Because the MELODY is ultra-infectious, memorable and fun.

Key Points

Vocal Style

- The vast majority of the song is conveyed via a **Rapped vocal delivery** that for the most part is monotone in nature. It's only in the pre-chorus, and part of the chorus where a sung vocal comes into effect.

Repetition

- **Cross-sectional repetition:** The general melodic nature of the verses, pre-choruses & choruses remain virtually the same in each section of the song.
- **Sectional repetition:** Each section of the song (save for verses 1 & 3) has a line or a part of a line that repeats in the same manner more than once. That being said, even the verses have a very similar styled delivery from one line to the next.
- “**Gangnam Style. Opan Gangnam Style:**” Each time these lyrics are repeated in the

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song (in the intro, chorus or bridge), they're conveyed in the exact same manner.

Simplicity

- Even though chances are (unless you speak Korean) that you don't understand the lyrics, I guarantee that you can remember and hum the melody in each section of the song quite easily. Why? It's **exceptionally simplistic in nature**. There aren't any vocal acrobatics going on at all. It very straight forward.

Timing & Segmenting

- Because of the monotone rapped nature that defines the majority of the song, it's the **manner in which certain lyrics and syllables are timed** that provides much needed diversity within sections and between sections as well.
- The pre-chorus, chorus and bridge make great use of **line segmentation** (i.e. the "phone number" method), making it much easier for the listener to digest and remember.

GRAPHICAL KEY

Blue Line: Lead Vocal Melody

Red Diamond: Rest

Black Diamond: Half & Dotted Half

Blue Diamond: Quarter & Dotted Quarter

Green Diamond: Eighth & Dotted Eighth

Yellow Diamond: Sixteenth Note

INTRO



The vocal melody in the intro consists of just two phrases, both of which are conveyed in a monotone spoken delivery.

- "Opan Gangnam style. Gangnam style."

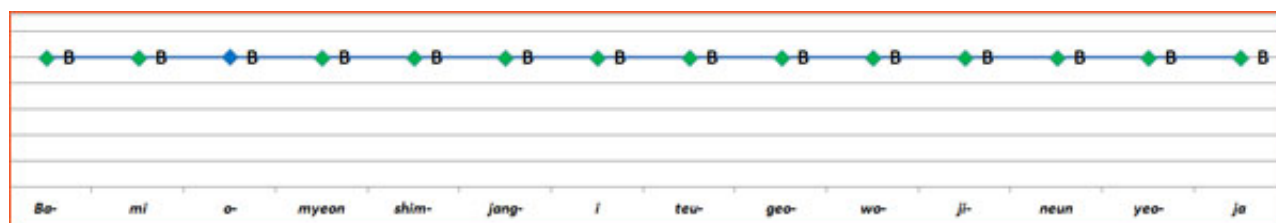
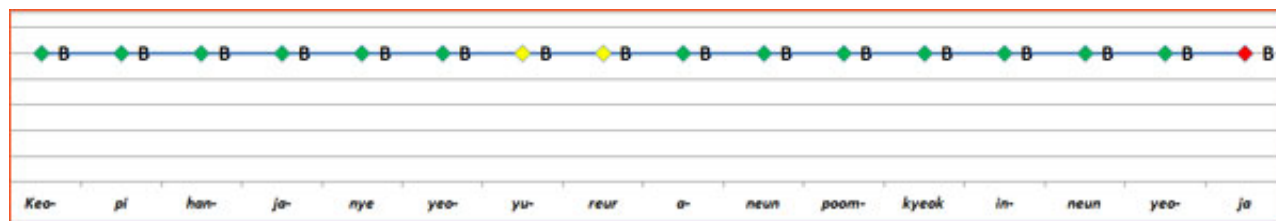
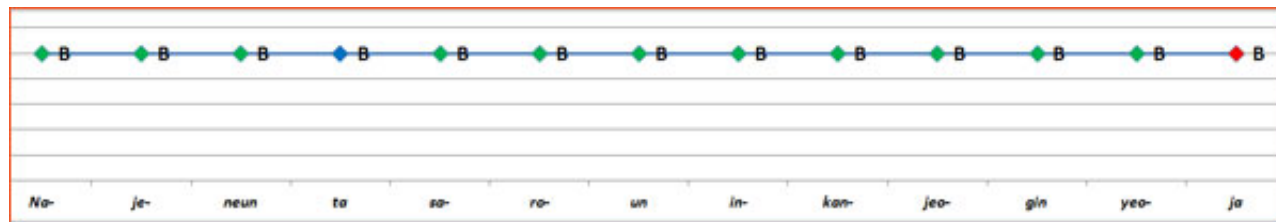
VERSE

Verse-1

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***Note:** Considering that verse 1 is essentially the same as verse 3 from a vocal melody standpoint, we'll use verse 1 for analysis in this section of the report.

Line Reference:

Line 1: *Naje-neun tasaroun inkanjeo-gin yeoja*

Line 2: *Keopi hanjanye yeoyureur aneun pumkyeok i-nneun yeoja*

Line 3: *Bami omyeon shimjangi tteugeowojineun yeoja*

Line 4: *Keureon banjeon i-nneun yeoja*

Vocal Range:

The entire verse is **rapped with a monotone style delivery** throughout the majority of the section.

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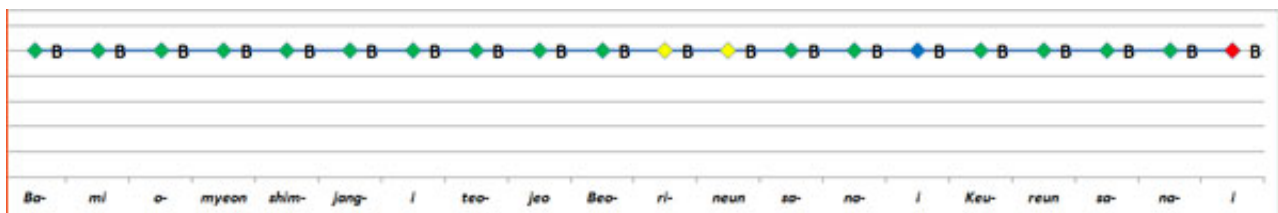
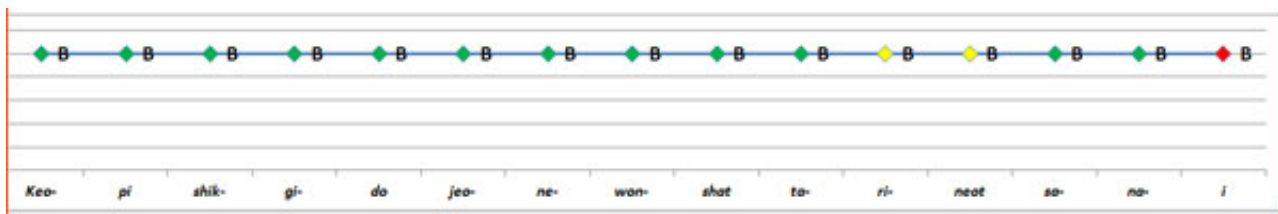
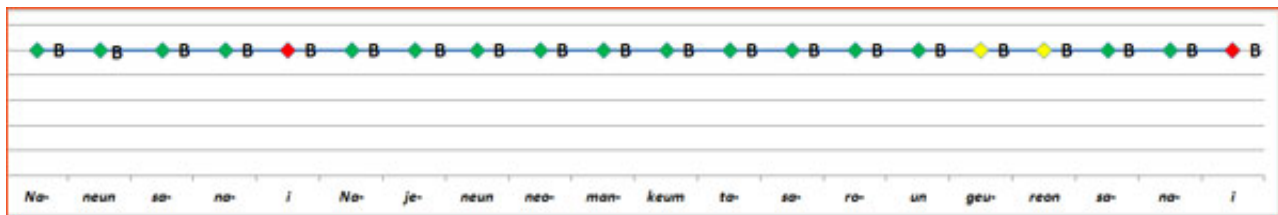
Timing & Line Differentiation

Considering the primarily **eighth-note** rapped nature of the vocal melody, line to line differentiation primarily stems from timing value changes on certain lyrics and syllables. The differences are more subtle on lines 1, 2 & 3, and more pronounced on line 4.

- **Line 1:** The syllable “*ta*” possesses a **quarter-note** value.
- **Line 2:** The syllables “*yu-reur*” each possess a **sixteenth-note** value.
- **Line 3:** The syllable “*a*” possesses a **quarter-note** value.
- **Line 4:** The syllables “*ban-jeon*” are **eighth-notes** that are directly followed by **eighth-rests**. It’s the nature of this line that provides the greatest diversity before launching into the verse-2.

Additionally, notice that the last syllable on each line possesses an **eighth-note** value followed by an **eighth rest** (except on line 3, where there is no rest).

Verse-2



***Note:** Considering that verse 2 is essentially the same as verse 4 from a vocal melody standpoint, we’ll use verse 2 for analysis in this section of the report.

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Line Reference:

Line 1: *Naneun sana-i. Naje-neun neomankeum tasaroun geureon sana-i*

Line 2: *Keopi shikgido jeone wonsyas taerineun sana-i*

Line 3: *Bami omyeon shimjangi teojujeorineun sana-i. Keureon sana-i*

Vocal Range

As with the first verse, the second verse is primarily **rapped with a monotone style delivery**.

Differentiation

Considering that there are two rapped verse sections that occur back to back (both of which primarily utilize an **eighth-note** delivery), the second verse provides diversity over the first primarily by changing up the timing at the end of one specific lyric– “*sana-i*.”

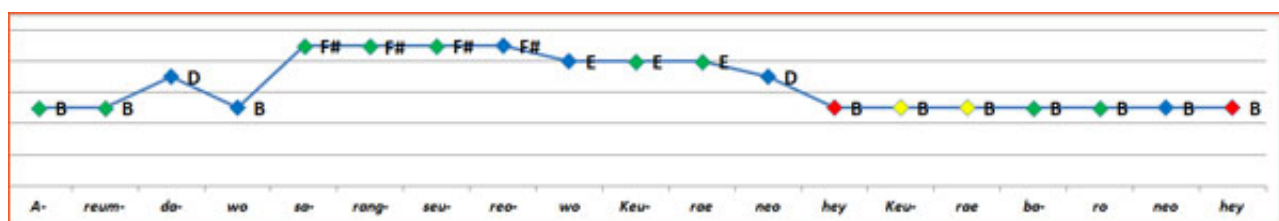
In the first verse, the last syllable on each line possessed an **eighth-note** value followed by an **eighth-rest**. In the second verse, the “*i*” in “*sana-i*” possesses a **quarter-note** value followed by an **eighth-rest**. This extension coupled with the repetitive “*sana-i*” from one line to the next provides the section with diversity over the first verse.

Segmenting & Repetition

There are two distinct segments within the second verse that repeat in pretty much the same fashion (utilizing the same timing) throughout the section: “**Sana-i**” is one, and the **balance of the line** is the other. By “segmenting” these phrases, it makes it much easier to follow and remember, even if you can’t understand the lyrics.

- *Naneun sana-i / Naje-neun neomankeum tasaroun / geureon sana-i*
- *Keopi shikgido jeone wonsyas / taerineun sana-i*
- *Bami omyeon shimjangi / teojujeorineun sana-i / Keureon sana-i*

PRE-CHORUS



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Line Reference

Line-1: *Areumdawo sarangseureowo Keurae neo hey keurae baro neo hey*

Line-2: *Areumdawo sarangseureowo Keurae neo hey keurae baro neo hey*

Line-3: *Jigeumbu-teo kal dekkaji kabol-kka*

Vocal Range

High: F#

Low: B

As previously mentioned, here in the pre-chorus is the only time within the song (minus the “hey, sexy lady” part of the chorus) where the rap natured vocal is switched out for a **sung vocal**. This variation (along with the change-up in the backing music from the preceding section) was essential to both provide differentiation from all of the other rapped sections (preventing that style of vocal delivery from becoming overly monotonous) as well as to help bring the section to a climax, setting up the payoff in the chorus that follows.

Repetition

Notice that close to two-thirds of lines 1 and 2 follow the **same exact melodic progression** (and lyrics, for that matter). It's this line to line repetition that helps to get the melody engrained in your head.

Similar, Yet Different

Notice the last-third of lines 1 and 2 are also similar in nature (i.e. “hey”), but differ in the following ways:

- Instead of dropping down to **D** on the lyric “neo” before the first “hey” as was done on line 1, line 2 instead climbs to an **F#**, which is in effect the start of the peak/crescendo

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that will carry through the rest of the section.

- Notice that the last-third of line 1 is conveyed in a monotone **B** delivery. This is also the case on the second line as well, except for the fact that his register climbs up to and resides in **F#** (besides the background “hey’s” which are in the key of **B**).

Prepping the Payoff

Keeping in line with the “excitement” that was generated on the second line by the vocal delivery residing in **F#** as mentioned above, the last line of the section continues on in the same manner (minus the “hey’s”), utilizing an all **eighth-note** delivery up until the tail end where the last syllable is “stretched out” and “processed” along with the backing music to take the section to its rousing peak before releasing into the transitional pause and chorus that follows.

Segmenting

Notice how lines 1 and 2 are **divided into multiple segments** that make it both easier for the listener to digest and remember (i.e. the “phone number” method).

Areumdawo / sarangseureowo / keurae neo / hey / keurae baro neo / hey

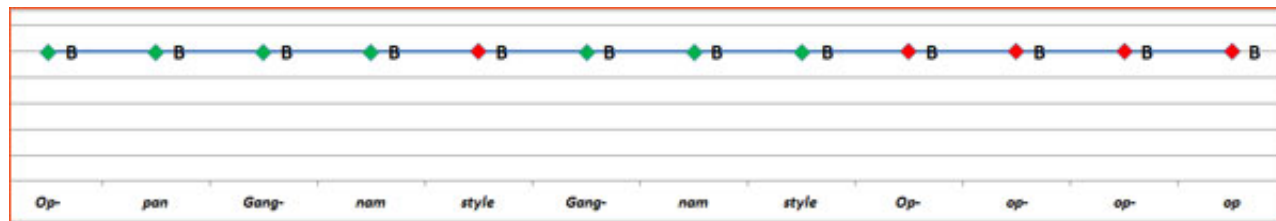
- **Segment 1** (areumdawo) consists of **2 eighth-notes** followed by **2 quarter-notes** to conclude the segment.
- **Segment 2** (sarangseureowo) consists of **3 eighth-notes** followed by **2 quarter-notes** to conclude the segment. The primary difference between segment 1 and segment 2 is that segment 2 is in a higher register.
- **Segment 3** (keurae neo) consists of **2 eighth-notes** followed by a **quarter-note**. This is then followed by the first “hey,” which is an eighth-note followed by an **eighth-rest**.
- **Segment 4** (keurae baro neo) consists of **2 sixteenth notes** followed by **2 eighth notes** and a **quarter-note** to conclude the segment. As with segment 3, it’s directly followed by a “hey,” possessing an **eighth-note** value followed by a **quarter-rest** this time around.

CHORUS

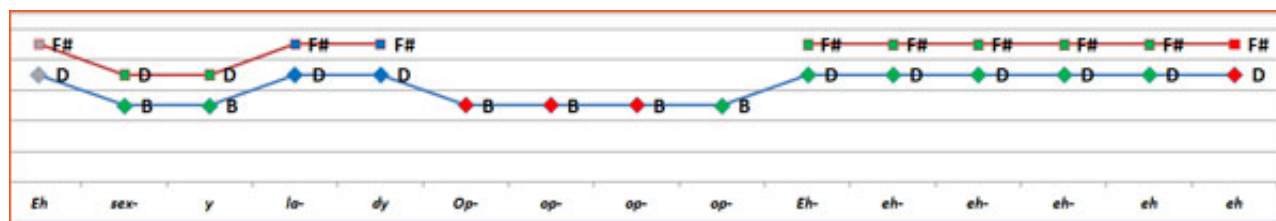
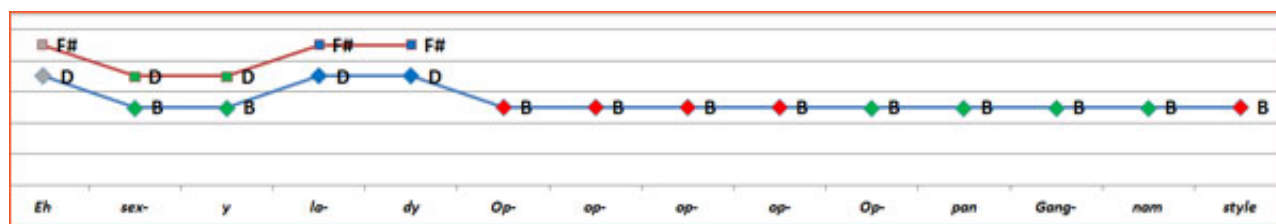
Chorus-A

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Chorus-B



Line Reference

Chorus-A

Op-an gangnam style. Gangnam style
Op-an gangnam style. Gangnam style
Op-an gangnam style

Chorus-B

Eh, sexy lady
Op-an gangnam style
Eh, sexy lady

Vocal Range

Chorus-A

Monotone spoken delivery (same as the intro)

Chorus-B

High (Lead): D
Low (Lead): B
High (Harmony): F#

Low (Harmony): D

CHORUS-A

The first half of the full chorus (chorus-A) consists of **three individual segments**. The first two revert back to the nature of the intro, while the third changes things up, providing diversity.

Segment-1

- *Open Gangnam Style* (conveyed utilizing an all **eighth-note** spoken delivery)

Segment-2

- *Gangnam Style* (also conveyed utilizing an all **eighth-note** spoken delivery)

Segment-3

- Here's where things get changed up. Segment-3 consists of the repetitive "op," which is repeated **4 times**. Each "op" consists of an **eighth-note** value, but notice that each one is followed by a **rest** (a **quarter-rest** after the first "op," and **eighth-rests** after the others). It's the third segment that takes the engagement value of the section to the next level by providing diversity and color.

CHORUS-B

The second half of the chorus (chorus-B), takes things in a different direction by introducing a **new vocal element** into the mix while also utilizing elements from the **preceding chorus-A section**.

New Element: "Hey, sexy lady"

This element provides the overall section with a twist, taking the engagement factor to the next level.

- The first thing that you'll notice is the prolonged "hey" at the onset of the section, which possesses a **whole-note/quarter-note tie duration**. This is a complete change from the **eighth-note** style delivery that defined the preceding chorus-A section.
- Next, notice that aside from the pre-chorus that chorus-B is really the only section within the song that deviates from the monotone style rapped vocal delivery, achieved via the lead/harmony vocals (**F#/D – D/B – F#/D – B**). This does a great job of putting some much needed diversity and flavor into the section.
- Notice the nature of the "Hey, sexy lady" vocal. It has less in common with K-Pop or

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Western Pop and more in common with a **Latin flavored vibe**.

- Notice that the “*hey, sexy lady*” phrase kicks off both lines in the **exact same manner**. Again, it’s the repetition which helps to get the melody completely engrained in your head.

Old Element: “Op, Op, Op, Op, Opan Gangnam Style”

On the first line, directly following the “*hey, sexy lady*” phrase, the line reverts back to the **4** “*op*’s” (followed by **rests**) that was indicative of the preceding chorus-A section. This is directly followed by the **eighth-note** delivery “*Opan Gangnam Style*” phrase at the end of the line. What this does is bring the chorus back full-circle, perfectly concluding the section.

The Vocal Mimic

On the second line of the section, instead of going back into “*Opan Gangnam Style*” following the **4** “*ops*” as was the case on the first line, it goes into a “**stuttered**” **eighth-note** value “*eh, eh, eh, eh, eh, eh*” that mimics the nature of the **transitional synth** that had been utilized through much of the song (i.e. the bright synth that follows the **Em...F#m** progression).

BRIDGE

Line Reference

Line 1: *Twiineun nom keu wiie naneun nom Baby baby naneun mwol jom aneun nom*

Line 2: *Twiineun nom keu wiie naneun nom Baby baby naneun mwol jom aneun nom*

Vocal Range

Rapped monotone styled delivery

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Directly following the chorus, the nature of the vocal melody once again gets changed-up, this time by reverting back to a full rap oriented delivery.

Line Segmentation:

Notice how each full line is broken into three segments, making it easier to remember as a whole (i.e. the “**phone number**” method once again):

- **Segment-1:** *Ttwiineun nom* (followed by a **half-rest**)
- **Segment-2:** *keu wiie naneun nom* (followed by an **eighth-rest**)
- **Segment-3:** *Baby baby naneun mwol jom aneun nom*

Repetition

- First, the most glaringly obvious fact is that the **same line is repeated twice** in the section in the exact same manner (including lyrics).
- The lyric “*nom*” appears **3** times on each line in the same manifestation (a **quarter-note** value followed by a **rest**). Not only does it segment the individual phrases as mentioned above, but it also serves as an “anchor” in the section as well.

Note Values

The vast majority of the line is sung via an **eighth-note** delivery. **Quarter-notes** are utilized only a few times as depicted in the graphs above.

Top 10 Assessment [Back to Top](#)

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

All Songs

Compares **Gangnam Style** to the **21 songs** that landed in the Billboard Pop Songs top 10 during **Q3-2012**.

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CATEGORY	Gangnam Style	Q3-2012 Top 10 Pop Songs	Comparison
Form	A-A-B-B-A-A-B-B-C-B	A-B-A-B-C-B (43% of Songs)	*See Below
Song Length	3:39	3:40 (Average)	-0:01
Intro Length	0:14	0:09 (Average)	+0:05
Songs That Contain an Intro	Yes	86% Of Songs	In-Line
Outro Length	n/a	0:18 (Average)	n/a
Songs That Contain an Outro	No	38% Of Songs	In-Line
Time Where 1 st Chorus Hits	1:07	0:40 (Average)	+0:27
% Into Song Where 1 st Chorus Hits	31%	19% (Average)	+12%
Tempo	126 bpm	108 bpm (Average)	+18 bpm
Acoustic vs. Electric	Electric	Electric (71% of Songs)	In-Line
Primary Instrumentation	Synth	Combination (52% of Songs)	Not-In Line
Primary Vocal Gender	Male	Female (43% of Songs)	Not-In Line
Pre-Chorus	Yes	86% Of Songs	In-Line
Solo	No	0% Of Song	In-Line
Bridge	Yes	95% Of Songs	In-Line
Lyrical Theme	Cultural/Relationships/Parody	Love/Relationships (67% of Songs)	Partially In-Line
Primary Sub-Genre Influence	*Dance, Hip Hop/Rap	Mix/Fusion (62% of Songs)	*In-Line

All of the compositional characteristics and attributes present in *Gangnam Style* are in line with Q3-2012 top 10 Pop hits EXCEPT:

- *Gangnam Style* generally follows an A-B-A-B-C-B **form** except for the fact that it doubles up on the verse and chorus.
- Its **intro** is 0:05 longer than the average.

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- The **first chorus** hits 0:27 (12%) farther into the song than the average top 10 Pop hit. This is due to the double verse plus 0:24 pre-chorus.
- *Gangnam Style* is **18 bpm faster** than the average top 10 hit Pop song.
- The Synth is the sole **primary instrument** featured in the mix, where the majority of top 10 Pop songs feature a combination of primary instrumentation in the mix (i.e. Synth + Guitar).
- *Gangnam Style* is sung by a Male **lead vocalist** where a small majority of Pop hits are sung with a Female lead.
- *Gangnam Style* features a Cultural/Relationship/Parody **lyrical theme** where the majority of Pop hits feature a Love/Relationship theme.
- Even though *Gangnam Style* features a combination of **Dance and Hip Hop/Rap** influences, it is still primarily **Dance** in nature.

Dance Songs

Compares *Gangnam Style* specifically to the **Dance songs** that landed in the Billboard Pop Songs top 10 during **Q3-2012**.

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CATEGORY	Gangnam Style	Q3-2012 Top 10 Dance/Pop Songs	Comparison
Form	A-A-B-B-A-A-B-B-C-B	Mixed	n/a
Song Length	3:39	3:52 (Average)	-0:13
Intro Length	0:14	0:10 (Average)	+0:04
Songs That Contain an Intro	Yes	80% Of Songs	In-Line
Outro Length	n/a	n/a	n/a
Songs That Contain an Outro	No	0% Of Songs	In-Line
Time Where 1 st Chorus Hits	1:07	0:57 (Average)	+0:10
% Into Song Where 1 st Chorus Hits	31%	25% (Average)	+6%
Tempo	126 bpm	127 bpm (Average)	-1 bpm
Acoustic vs. Electric	Electric	Electric (100% of Songs)	In-Line
Primary Instrumentation	Synth	Synth (60% of Songs)	In-Line
Primary Vocal Gender	Male	Female (60% of Songs)	Not-In Line
Pre-Chorus	Yes	80% Of Songs	In-Line
Solo	No	0% Of Songs	In-Line
Bridge	Yes	80% Of Songs	In-Line
Lyrical Theme	Cultural/Relationships/Parody	Hooking Up (40% of Songs)	Not In-Line

In addition to comparing *Gangnam Style* to all of the top 10 hit Pop songs during the quarter (which includes all of the various sub-genres), it pays to see how the song compares specifically to the **Dance natured songs** that landed in the Billboard Pop songs top 10 during Q3-2012.

- The majority of the Dance natured songs that landed in the Pop songs top 10 differed in nature from one another when it came to **form**. Only one possessed an A-B-A-B-C-B form, which is close to being in line with *Gangnam Style* (Titanium).
- *Gangnam Style* is **0:13 shorter** than the average top 10 Dance song.

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- Its **intro** is 0:04 longer than the average top 10 Dance song.
- Its **first chorus** hits 0:10 (6%) farther into the song than the average. Note that this is also due to the fact that *Gangnam Style* has 2 back to back verses plus a 0:24 pre-chorus.
- The majority of top 10 Dance songs are sung by a female **lead vocalist** where *Gangnam Style* is sung by a male lead.
- The majority of Dance songs possess a Hooking Up **lyrical theme**, while *Gangnam Style* features a Cultural / Relationship / Parody theme.

All in all, the core essence of *Gangnam Style* is a very “**Westernized**” in nature (despite it being sung in Korean and performed by a Korean artist). Not only does it have a lot in common with the “Western” songs that top the charts in the U.S., but it seems that PSY used LMFAO’s *Sexy & I Know It* as a blueprint for the song (and video for that matter). More on that in the **Sexy & I Know It / Gangnam Style Comparison** section that follows later in the report.

A&R Hit Factor Assessment [Back to Top](#)

Artist / Genre Factor

How will Gangnam Style affect PSY’s future as an artist and the K-Pop genre?

Gangnam Style is going to wind up being both a blessing and a curse for PSY. It’s a blessing in the sense that this one song enabled him to attain success and fame beyond his wildest dreams both in his native Korea as well as throughout the world. It’s a curse in the sense of “where do you go from here???”

- PSY (or anyone for that matter) can’t replicate a song, a video and a dance like *Gangnam Style* and expect the same massive results. It’s been tried throughout the history of popular music and almost always fails (e.g. the Trashmen tried it with various versions of *Surfin’ Bird*, the Troggs with *Wild Thing*, and especially Los Del Rio with *Macarena*, which had the song AND the dance to live up to).
- PSY can try to go in a completely different direction (say by releasing a heartfelt ballad), but is that what people really want from PSY? Will people accept him in the same manner?
- PSY can try to collaborate with other superstar artists (both K-Pop and artists throughout the world) to keep his name in the limelight, but this will only be a viable option until his 15 minutes of *Gangnam Style* fame are up (and it’s getting to that point). After that, most A list artists (specifically outside Korea) will probably not want work with him (sad but true – the industry is all about milking it for all it’s worth).

Unfortunately for PSY, massive, viral hits like this without the backing of a solid, successful,

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proven previous body of work (outside of Korea) usually relegates an artist and the corresponding song to the “one-hit wonder” category. The song didn't build upon a previously established solid foundation. As a result, *Gangnam Style* will forever be PSY, and PSY will forever be *Gangnam Style*. There's no escaping it.

What PSY needs to do (which is probably already doing) is milk the song for all it's worth. After that, only time will tell. I do think that he will have continued success in Korea (unless there is a substantial backlash amongst fans for making the K-Pop scene global – similar to what happened when Seattle Grunge went mainstream, but I doubt it), but as for the world stage, and especially in the West, more than likely he will be a one-hit wonder.

Regardless of what happens to PSY's career as an artist, he will forever be known as an honorary ambassador of K-Pop, the person who brought us *Gangnam Style* and broke down the barriers for other K-Pop artists to succeed on a world stage.

Originality Factor

Does Gangnam Style push genre boundaries and possess a unique nature or have you heard it all before? Does it stand out in the Pop mainstream?

Yes and no. In Korea, *Gangnam Style* came across as original and unique in relation to other K-Pop songs in the sense that aside from the song being sung in Korean and PSY being a Korean artist, the song is very western in nature (i.e. LMFAO – *Sexy & I Know It*). That coupled with the unique lyrical theme (i.e. relating specifically to Gangnam) enabled it to stand out amongst others in the K-Pop mainstream.

In the U.S., it was the opposite. Even though there was nothing overtly original or unique about the overall nature of the song in relation to the U.S. mainstream (i.e. we've heard it before in *Sexy & I Know It*), it did stand out from the pack in the sense that it was sung in Korean and was performed by a Korean artist.

As for the rest of the world, it was a combination of both factors above that enabled it to come across in a unique manner, standing out amongst the artists and songs that currently top the world charts.

Think about this, though. Could *Gangnam Style* have achieved the same massive success if it was performed by a U.S. based artist and was sung in English? I think you would have to agree that it would have been highly unlikely. Why? It's already been done (once again – “*Sexy & I Know It*”) and would have been viewed as an unoriginal “rip off,” pure and simple (despite how good the song might be).

One last thought on originality – keep in mind that it was also PSY's personality, unique look and character that enabled the song to stand out amongst the mainstream Pop pack. He's not one of your “run of the mill” sexy superstars. He's 100% PSY!

Social Factors

Were there any social aspects surrounding the release of the song or within the song itself that

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helped to increase its visibility, reach and success potential?

More than anything, it was the hysterical, Gangnam Poser mocking nature of the video coupled with its corresponding “horse” dance that launched PSY and *Gangnam Style* into international superstardom.

As with most viral video sensations, it all began with people picking up on it, blogging about it, followed by stars tweeting about it to their millions of fans (e.g. T-Pain, Britney and Katy amongst a host of others), which is then followed by social proof taking over (i.e. “well, if he or she likes it, then it must be great and I like it too!” “Let me be the first to tell all my friends about it!”).

Besides the video, there was also the ultra-important third factor – the *Macarena* factor. PSY came up with an infectious “horse” dance that was easy for just about anyone to learn (I’m taking myself out of the equation, though). Once the A-list artists, TV personalities, politicians and others picked up on it (with some asking PSY to either teach or perform the dance alongside them), it was all over. The virus was in full-effect. Also – don’t forget all of the parodies that then ensued, further blasting the song, the video, the dance and PSY into the stratosphere.

The Demographic Reach Factor

Is this a song that’s pigeonholed in one gender/age bracket or does it have mass reach?

It was the *Gangnam Style* phenomenon (the song + the video + the dance) that enabled the song to traverse just about every demographic that you can think of, just in the way the *Macarena* did back in the 90’s. Men, woman, children, old, young, domestic, international, it doesn’t matter. It resonated amongst all.

The “Holly Sh*t – You Gotta Hear This NOW” Factor

Is this a song where someone would instantly call up their friend and say “drop what you’re doing – you gotta listen to this – NOW!!!”

Absolutely, but we need to swap out the word “song” and “listen” for “video” and “watch.” Without the video, no one probably would have picked up on the song (at least outside Korea).

The “Multiple Listen” Factor

Is Gangnam Style engaging enough to warrant repeat listens?

It all comes down to in what environment the song is being listened to. For most people this is not a song that you’re going to sit around at home listening to over and over again while wearing hi-fi headphones. BUT, if you’re out in a club, a bar, at a game or anything of the like, whenever *Gangnam Style* comes on it’s going to get things moving. It creates an air of excitement and partying that everyone can get into.

That being said, as with all viral sensations (and non-viral for that matter), there is a point where the law of diminishing returns sets in. Over exposure can kill a song (how many more times can

you listen to “*Stairway To Heaven?*” Does the “*Macarena*” still have the same effect on you?) This, unfortunately, will be the ultimate fate for *Gangnam Style*.

The “Human Emotion” Factor

Does Gangnam Style exude a vibe that enables the listener to connect on a deep, emotional, HUMAN level?

It all depends on how you look at it. There are the people who will say that it's shallow and frivolous, devoid of any deep human emotion. Those are also the people who compare mainstream Pop songs to songs like “*Imagine*” by John Lennon. It's apples and oranges. Both are equally effective in the emotion that they bring out in people.

Gangnam Style, pure and simple, MAKES PEOPLE FEEL GOOD. It makes them laugh. It makes them smile. It makes them dance. It's made almost a billion people forget about the rat race and the heaviness of everyday life for 3:39.

Memorability Factor

How easy is it to remember Gangnam Style's lyrics & melody? Is each section of the song equally as memorable?

Lyrics aside (for all the non-Korean speaking people in the world), *Gangnam Style* is exceptionally memorable in each section of the song due to a combination of 3 factors: Simplicity, Repetition and effective Segmenting. As previously mentioned, you might not remember the words, but you'll definitely remember the melody and be able to hum along to it.

Longevity Factor – Artist

Will Gangnam Style become a staple of PSY's repertoire and catalog?

Not to say that PSY won't come up with any other great material during his career, but I think that goes without saying that *Gangnam Style* is probably going to be as good as it gets. PSY will always be associated with *Gangnam Style*, and it will no doubt be the core highlight in his lifelong body of work (though if he's able to top this I'll be REALLY impressed!)

Longevity Factor – Song

Does Gangnam Style have what it takes to stand the test of time and rank amongst the all-time greats?

I think it goes without saying that *Gangnam Style* will forever live on as one of the biggest viral sensations of all time. There will be others, but PSY has secured his place, along with the song, video and dance in Pop history.

Conclusion [Back to Top](#)

Now that we have thoroughly explored PSY's *Gangnam Style*, let's review some of the core attributes that helped to make this song a global hit:

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- Frequent **sectional turnover** aided in keeping the listener engaged throughout the song.
- Massive amounts of **repetition** gets the song completely engrained in the listener's head.
- The simplistic, infectious nature of the **vocal melody** makes it both easy to hum and remember, despite it being sung in a different language.
- The repetitious, infectious, memorable **lead synth melody** is kept fresh throughout the song by changing up its tonal characteristics from section to section.
- The **pre-chorus build / transitional pause** takes the listener on a sonic, tension filled ride that releases into the chorus (payoff) that follows.
- The combination of **rapped and sung sections** provides the song with diversity, heightening the engagement factor for the listener.
- The **lyrics** are both specific and universal in nature, enabling the song to stand out from the pack yet possess mass appeal.
- The manner in which the **story** is constructed is both clever and engaging (i.e. one verse is about the girl and one verse is about PSY and how he compares to her).
- Its "**familiar**" nature (thanks to *Sexy & I Know It*) made it easier for the song to connect outside of Korea (especially in the West), while the fact that it's sung in Korean and performed by a K-Pop artist enabled it to stand out from the pack.
- An infectious **Video** and corresponding **Horse Dance** that perfectly jibed with and accentuated the overall nature of the song.
- **PSY** himself was also a key factor in the success of the song, video and dance due to his unique look, personality and vibe.
- Last, and certainly not least, it's the way that the song, the video and the dance makes the listener **FEEL** that enables it to connect on such a wide scale, across all cultures.

Bottom Line:

PSY showed the world the massive, viral success that can be attained when all the chips fall into place. Is *Gangnam Style* a very strong, infectious song? Absolutely. Is it earth-shatteringly amazing to a point where it could have achieved all this success on its own? No. But couple the song with the equally infectious video, dance & PSY's unique nature and what you wind up with is a **single entity** that achieved what the individual components could never have achieved on their own. THAT'S the *Gangnam Style* **phenomenon**.

Hit Songs Deconstructed

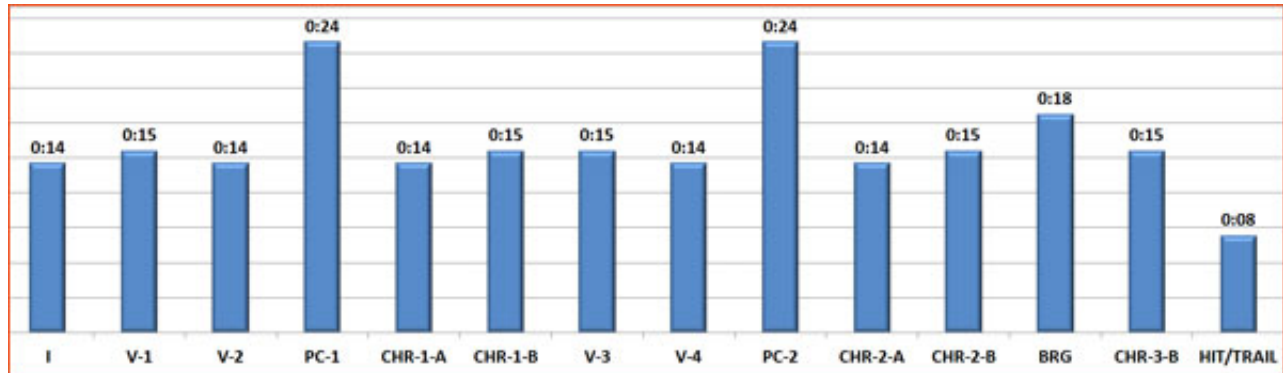
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The "Sexy & I Know It" Comparison [Back to Top](#)

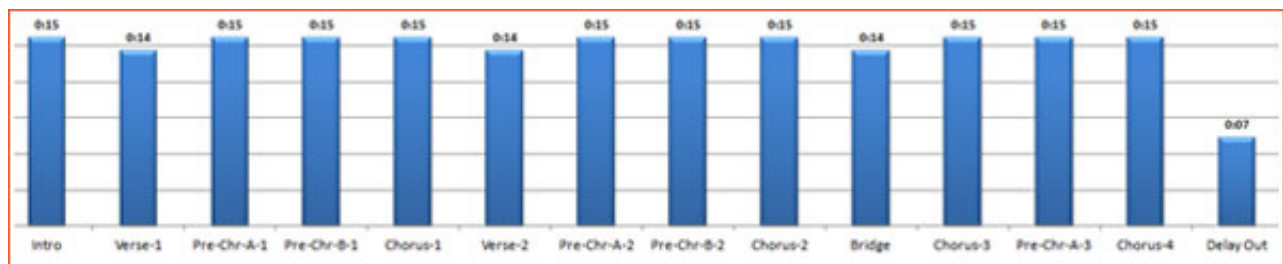
As previously mentioned, *Gangnam Style* has A LOT in common with LMFAO's *Sexy & I Know It*. Here's a look at some of the key similarities between the two songs.

SECTIONAL

Gangnam Style



Sexy & I Know It



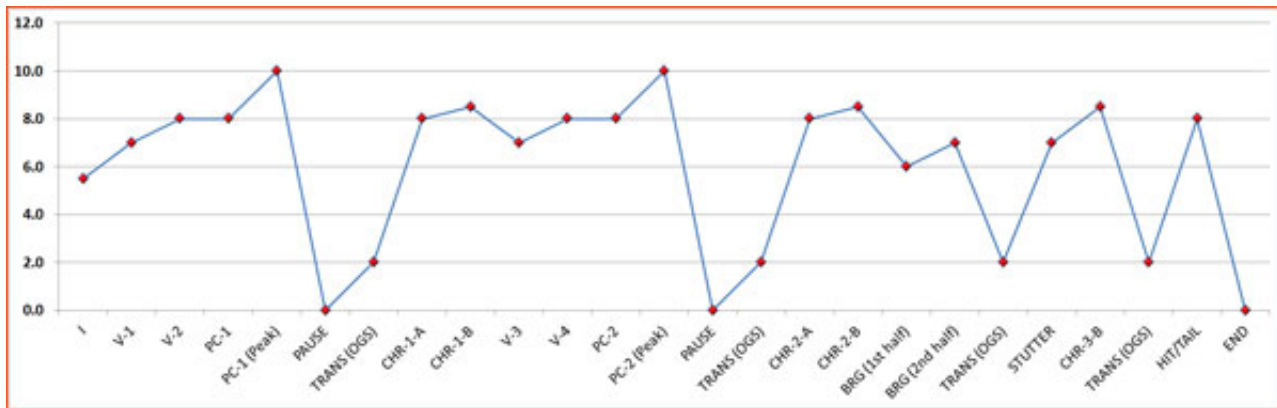
- Both *Gangnam Style* and *Sexy & I Know It* each contain **13 individual sections** within their framework.
- Both songs contain virtually **identical section lengths** (landing at **0:14** or **0:15** plus the **0:07/0:08** ring-out at the end), with the one exception being the pre-chorus (*Gangnam* has one **0:24** pre-chorus while *Sexy* has two back-to-back **0:15** pre-choruses).
- Both songs allocate almost the **same amount of time to the chorus** (*Gangnam Style*: **33%**, *Sexy & I Know It*: **30%**).
- Both songs **double up on certain sections**. *Gangnam Style* features **2** back to back verses which are then followed by a pre-chorus. *Sexy & I Know It* features **1** verse section followed by **2** back to back pre-choruses which provide the build leading into the chorus.

Hit Songs Deconstructed

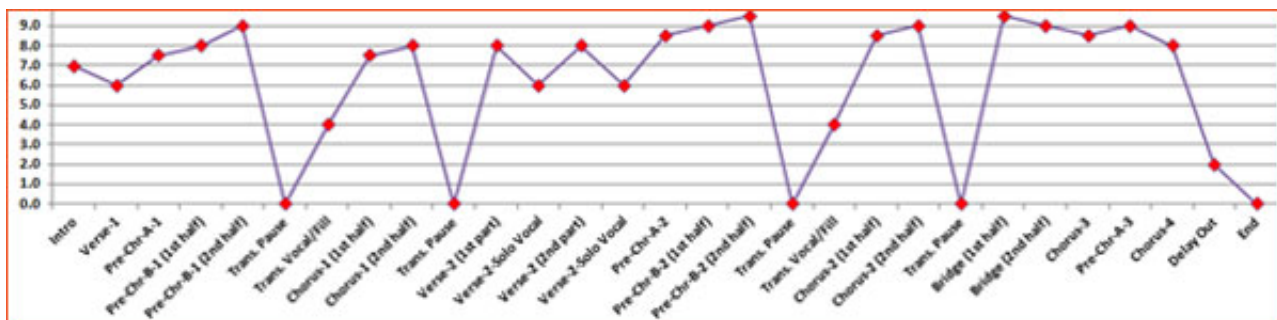
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MTI (MOMENTUM, TENSION, INTENSITY)

Gangnam Style



Sexy & I Know It



As you can see in the MTI charts above, both songs follow **virtually the same MTI level progression** from the first verse all the way through the second chorus.

- In both songs, the MTI level **increases** from the verse through the pre-chorus.
- Both songs have an MTI level **peak** in the pre-chorus (though Sexy also features a peak in the bridge)
- Both songs have a “**transitional pause**” directly following the build in the pre-chorus which brings the MTI level all the way down.
- Both songs follow the pause with a spoken solo (song title) vocal followed by the full chorus slamming in which brings the MTI level all the way back up.

THE PRE-CHORUS / CHORUS SIMILARITY

- After reaching an MTI level crescendo in the pre-chorus followed by a transitional pause and solo spoken title vocal as mentioned above, both songs hit with the full **Dance**

natured chorus, defined by the **primary synth melody** coupled with **repetition of the song title**.

REPETITION

Both songs utilize copious amounts of repetition, including:

- **Cross-sectional repetition:** “Like” sections within the song repeat in almost the exact same manner (i.e. chorus to chorus, pre-chorus to pre-chorus, and even verse to verse (where the only real differentiating factor is the lyrics).
- **Sectional repetition:** Both songs have lines or phrases that repeat in the same or close to the same manner in specific sections (i.e. the “*girl, look at that body*” pre-chorus in *Sexy & I Know It* and the “*sana-i*” second and fourth verse sections in *Gangnam Style*).
- **Lead Synth Pattern:** In both songs the primary lead synth pattern occurs in just about every section of the song (minus the pre-chorus in *Gangnam Style*).

MUSIC (SYNTH)

- Both songs revolve around an ultra-infectious, **repetitive synth pattern**.
- Both songs differentiate the lead synth pattern from section to section by changing-up its **tonal characteristics**.
- Both songs initially **kick off with the lead synth pattern** instrumental. *Gangnam* differs in the sense that it adds the song title into the mix during the second half of the intro.

VOCALS & LYRICS

- Both songs feature primarily **Rapped lead vocals** conveyed in a monotone style delivery. *Gangnam Style* differs only in the pre-chorus (and second-half of the chorus), where the vocal melody is sung more than rapped.
- As previously mentioned both songs feature the **title occurring right after the “transitional pause”** and right before the full chorus slams in.
- Both Chorus-A in *Gangnam Style* and the full chorus in *Sexy & I Know It* feature only the **title lyric in the entire section**. *Gangnam Style* then deviates by adding the “*hey, sexy lady*” part into the mix during Chorus-B.
- Both songs feature a **comical/parody lyrical theme** with the premise centered around pretending to be something that you’re not. *Gangnam Style* has PSY proclaiming that he is “*Gangnam Style*,” while Redfoo proclaims that he’s “*sexy and he knows it*.”

BELLS & WHISTLES

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- Both songs feature an **“ahhh” burst background vocal** in the song. *Sexy & I Know It* features it during the first Pre-Chorus directly following *“girl, look at that body.”* *Gangnam Style* features it twice in the Chorus directly following the lyrics *“Gangnam Style.”*
- Both songs feature **sped-up drums** toward the end of the pre-chorus, working in conjunction with other elements in taking the MTI level to its peak.
- Both songs feature an **“airy” synth swell** that occurs toward the end of the pre-chorus as well, helping to take the overall tension level to a climax.

ENDING

- Both songs feature the **title at the tail end of the song** which is then followed by a **0:07** to **0:08 ring-out**.

VIBE

- Both songs are **fun, up-tempo** and **feel-good** in nature.

VIDEO

- Both songs have corresponding “out there” music videos that are completely hysterical in nature, perfectly jibing with and accentuating the nature of the lyrics. The videos were also key factors in the massive success of both songs. Currently, *Sexy & I Know It* is at around **250,000,000+** views while *Gangnam Style* is inching ever closer to the billion mark (currently at **830,000,000+**).

DANCE

- Both songs feature feature a **prominent dance** in the video, though obviously PSY's “Horse Dance” trumped LMFAO's “Wiggle” as far as success is concerned (the “Wiggle” might have been a bit to risqué to traverse all demographics in the way that the “Horse Dance” was able to!)

To get a truly complete picture as to how similar these two songs are, you need to listen and watch them back to back:

Gangnam Style

Sexy & I Know It

Songwriter / Producer Take Aways [Back to Top](#)

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These are some of the factors that contributed to the success of *Gangnam Style* that you can easily apply to your own songwriting to help make your songs more **engaging, infectious and memorable**.

The Crescendo / Transitional Pause

A great way to provide your chorus (payoff) with more **impact** when it hits is to build the momentum, tension and intensity levels to a rousing peak in the pre-chorus followed by a dramatic pause that leaves the listener hanging. Then slam in with the full chorus to relieve that tension.

Effective Title

Utilizing a **non-generic title** is a great way to get your song noticed and pique interest for a listener. Just make sure that it embodies what the overall premise of the storyline is about so that it all ties together. This was precisely the case with *Gangnam Style*.

Engaging Storyline

An effective way to construct your storyline is to combine **opposite themes** in a back to back manner. For example, in *Gangnam Style* Verses 1 & 3 related to the GIRL'S attributes. Verses 2 & 4 related to PSY comparing HIMSELF to her attributes. There are so many variations that you can do with this (i.e. he said/she said, good/bad, etc...).

The Specific/Universal Lyric Combo

To enable your lyrics to stand out yet have mass appeal, try **combining specific places, events, etc...with a universal lyrical theme**. This was the overall premise of *Gangnam Style* (i.e. relating to the nature of people in the Gangnam district coupled with a "people pretending to be what they're not" universal theme). **WARNING** – the more specific you get, the less universal your song is going to be (keep this in mind especially for licensing opportunities).

Vocal Diversity (Rapped vs. Sung)

A great way to keep your song fresh and engaging is to **vary the vocal style** throughout the song. For the most part, *Gangnam Style* utilizes a rapped vocal delivery in every section EXCEPT in the pre-chorus and the "*hey, sexy lady*" part of the chorus, which are both sung. Listen also to a lot of current Western Hip Hop artists as well. There you'll see primarily rapped verses coupled with an R&B or straight-up Pop chorus.

Repetition

The primary key to fostering memorability is to utilize **copious amounts of repetition** within your song (i.e. in the vocal melody, backing music, etc...). **BEWARE**, though. Too much repetition without some sort of differentiation (i.e. changing the tonal characteristics of certain instruments, adding/subtracting elements from the mix) can and will have an adverse effect on your song.

Segmenting (i.e. the Phone # method)

Another great way to foster memorability is to **segment vocal lines** within your song. Think about it as trying to remember a phone number. It's much easier to remember 212-555-2222 as opposed to 21255511212.

Think Outside The Box

Gangnam Style is a good song. It's not good enough on its own, however, to warrant the massive success that it's had. It had a little help (isn't that an understatement) from the corresponding Video and Horse Dance. That's not to say that every song you write should have a video and a dance, but you should always be thinking of **creative ways to help maximize the song's exposure**. If it wasn't for that video and dance, you wouldn't be reading this report in the first place!

SONG TITLE

When gauging the effectiveness of a song's title, there are a number of factors that you need to consider:

1. Is it unique?
2. Does it stand out?
3. Is it memorable?
4. Does it pique your interest enough to take a listen to the song?
5. How does it work within the lyrical framework of the song?

Is it unique?

Absolutely, and this goes for both PSY's native Korea as well as in the rest of the world. The title refers to a specific district of Seoul (i.e. Gangnam) and the "style" of the people who reside there. It's not generic in any way, shape or form. For those of you who live in the U.S., the equivalent would be "Rodeo Drive Style."

Does it stand out?

Because of its unique nature as mentioned above, it easily stands out and is instantly recognizable amongst all of the other songs in mainstream – both in Korea and throughout the world.

Is it memorable?

Yes – for two reasons. First due to its unique nature and second because of the repetition of the title throughout the song (see the Title Occurrence section below for details).

Does it pique your interest to take a listen?

Yes. First, if you reside in Korea (and you know about the Gangnam District), you're going to be interested to see what a song like "Gangnam Style" is all about. Now, if you reside outside Korea and have no idea what Gangnam Style means, you may be inclined to at least take a listen to find out.

Does it work within the lyrical framework of the song?

Yes. The entire premise of the story revolves around the title "Gangnam Style" (see the Lyrical Premise section below for details).

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Title Occurrences:

Gangnam Style occurs **17** times within the song in **5** sections:

- 2 times in the Intro
- 5 times in Chorus-1a
- 1 time in Chorus-1b
- 5 times in Chorus-2a
- 1 time in Chorus-2b
- 1 time in the Bridge
- 2 times in Chorus 3b

LYRICAL PREMISE

The overall premise of Gangnam Style revolves around PSY claiming that he has “Gangnam Style” (i.e. has high-class and belongs to the Gangnam “in” crowd) while all the while he is anything but.

Considering that there have been many interpretations revolving around its true meaning, I thought it would be best to utilize a quote directly from PSY stemming from an August, 12, 2012 CNN interview.

“People who are actually from Gangnam never proclaim that they are — it’s only the posers and wannabes that put on these airs and say that they are “Gangnam Style” — so this song is actually poking fun at those kinds of people who are trying so hard to be something that they’re not.”

So even though “Gangnam Style” is about an actual place and sect of people, the overall premise of the story is universal in nature, which makes it easy for just about anyone to connect with. We all know people who pretend to be who they’re not.

VERSES

There are 2 full verse “groupings” within the song. Verse 1 & 2 make up one full group, as do verses 3 & 4. Why do they make up a full group? It’s because they both directly relate to one another on a lyrical level:

Verse 1 & 3 (the first section of each group)

These verse sections relate directly to a Gangnam GIRL (though not any specific girl). The overall premise is that it’s a girl who knows how to “fit in” with every day society, appearing “prim, proper and normal,” but at the same time knows how to let loose when the time is right. It’s all about the perfect balance of the two.

Verse-1

Here on the first 2 lines PSY is referring to a girl and what she’s like during the day:

- Line 1: A girl who is warm and humanely during the day

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- Line 2: A classy girl who knows how to enjoy the freedom of a cup of coffee

On the third line, he lets us know that though she may be “nice” and “conservative” during the day, she has a wild side that comes out at night:

- Line 3: A girl whose heart gets hotter when the night comes

Verse-3

Here in the third verse PSY continues with the premise that was established in verse-1, a girl who can perfectly fit into “normal” every day society during the day but show her wild side at night.

- Line 1: A girl who looks quiet but when she plays, she plays.
- Line 2: He refers to a girl who “puts her hair down when the right time comes.” Notice how this jibes with the nature of line 1 above. She’s “prim and proper” until it’s time to party, where she releases her “wild” side.
- Line 3: This is a really clever, “inspirational” themed line: “A girl who covers herself but is more sexy than a girl who bares it all.”

Verse 2 & 4 (the second section in each group)

These verse sections relate directly to the GUY – specifically PSY who is making fun of himself as he plays the role of someone claiming to have Gangnam Style. What’s really clever is that each of his lines directly relates to the corresponding line about the GIRL in the preceding verse section.

Let’s intertwine verses 3 and 4 so you can get a clear picture as to how this is done:

Line 1-Verse 3: A girl who looks quiet but plays when she plays

Line 1-Verse 4: A guy who seems calm but plays when he plays

Line 2-Verse 3: A girl who puts her hair down when the right time comes

Line 2-Verse 4: A guy who goes completely crazy when the right time comes

Line 3-Verse 3: A girl who covers herself but is more sexy than a girl who bares it all

Line 3-Verse 4: A guy who has bulging ideas rather than muscles

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Overall, you can tell that PSY is being completely pretentious – trying to win her over by comparing his attributes to hers and making himself out to be something that he's not (i.e. having Gangnam Style). You get the full sense as to how pretentious he's being in the Chorus, where he finally declares that he has (is) Gangnam Style. If you already have it, you shouldn't need to proclaim it.

PRE-CHORUS

Directly following where PSY compares his attributes to hers in verses 2 and 4, thinking that he has Gangnam Style and as a result is in her "league," the pre-chorus finds him now courting the "beautiful," "lovable" lady:

- Beautiful, lovable, yes you.
- Let's go until the end.

CHORUS

Here in the first half of the chorus (chorus-A) it's all about PSY proclaiming that he has (or is) Gangnam Style (i.e. fitting in with the nature of the Gangnam District). In the second half (chorus-B), he continues on, but this time calling out to address the "sexy lady" directly, letting her know that he is Gangnam Style (which is why she should be with him as mentioned in the pre-chorus).

BRIDGE

In the bridge, PSY takes his pretentious, egoic nature to the next level. Basically what he's doing is outright proclaiming that he's better than all the other guys (another reason why he thinks she should be with him):

- On top of the running man is the flying man
- Baby baby I'm a man who knows a thing or two (kind of a know-it-all)

But, as mentioned before, if you need to say it, you probably aren't all that in the first place!