

## We Are Young Deconstructed



Skip to:

[Audio/Video](#)

[At a Glance](#)

[Song Overview](#)

[Structural Analysis](#)

[Momentum/Tension/Intensity \(MTI\)](#)

[Lyrics & Harmonic Progression](#)

[The Music](#)

[The Vocal Melody](#)

[Primary Instrumentation, Tone & Mix](#)

[Compositional Assessment](#)

[Hit Factor Assessment](#)

[Why it's a Hit](#)

[Songwriter/Producer Take Aways](#)

Audio/Video [Back to Top](#)

---

At a Glance [Back to Top](#)

---

**Artist:** fun. featuring Janelle Monae

**Song/Album:** We Are Young / Some Nights

**Songwriters:** Antonoff, Dost, Means, Ruess

**Genre:** Rock

**Sub Genres:** Alternative, Pop

**Length:** 4:11

**Structure:** A-B-A-B-C-B (Plus pre-choruses)

**Tempo:** Mid (120 bpm)

**First Chorus:** 0:49 (20% into the song)

**Intro Length:** 0:09

**Outro Length:** n/a

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

**Electric vs. Acoustic:** Acoustic & Electric

**Primary Instrumentation:** Piano, Fuzz Bass

**Lyrical Theme:** Love/Relationships & \*Inspirational (See Lyric Section for Details)

**Title Occurrences:** The title occurs 6 times within the song, on the second line of each chorus.

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

Song Overview [Back to Top](#)

---

**Intimate/Grandiose, Retro/Modern, Artsy/Mainstream, Pop/Rock** – these are just some of the diverse terms that describe fun.'s mega cross-over hit – *We Are Young*.

Written by Antonoff, Dost, Means and Ruess, it was the first single released from their *Some Nights* album, and to-date has hit #1 on eight charts in five countries throughout the world, including the Billboard Hot 100, Pop Songs, Rock Songs, and Alternative Songs charts in the U.S.

So – just what made a song filled with so much diversity so effective and popular? Some of the core reasons that will be explored further in depth within the report include:

- Effective licensing (*Glee, Chevrolet Super Bowl Ad*) that led to widespread visibility taking the song (and the band) to a level that would have been difficult, if not impossible to achieve in such a quick time frame in today's music industry.
- TWO strong payoffs for the listener within the song – one in the chorus and one in the bridge. (THREE if you include the breakdown chorus that occurs after the bridge. It lends itself to an “audience participation sing-along” in a live setting.)
- Strong production and engineering values that fuse intimate/grandiose, retro/modern and Pop/Rock seamlessly under one roof.
- *We Are Young* comes across as being unique and original in relation to the songs topping TODAY'S charts, while also possessing a “familiar” sound that provides the listener with a comfort level that quickly engages them in the song (the Elton John, Queen, Ben Folds 5 influences.)
- A combination of “artsy” verses coupled with a straight-ahead, super infectious chorus and bridge that provide for a deep, engaging and memorable listening experience.
- Lyrics that utilize a plethora of imagery, action and emotion that engage the listener on a deep level within the story.
- Lyrical content that is open to interpretation in areas – most specifically within the chorus (i.e. can be construed as “hooking up” or “motivational” themed depending on how you look at it.)
- Janelle Monae's contribution in the bridge added increased depth to the song from both

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

a vocal and lyrical perspective (i.e. having Janelle convey the woman's desire "carry me home tonight" took the entertainment and engagement factor of the song to the next level.)

- Glaring sectional diversity and departure within the song (i.e. the nature of the verse vs. the chorus sections) that provide extreme variation but doesn't break the cohesive framework of the song.

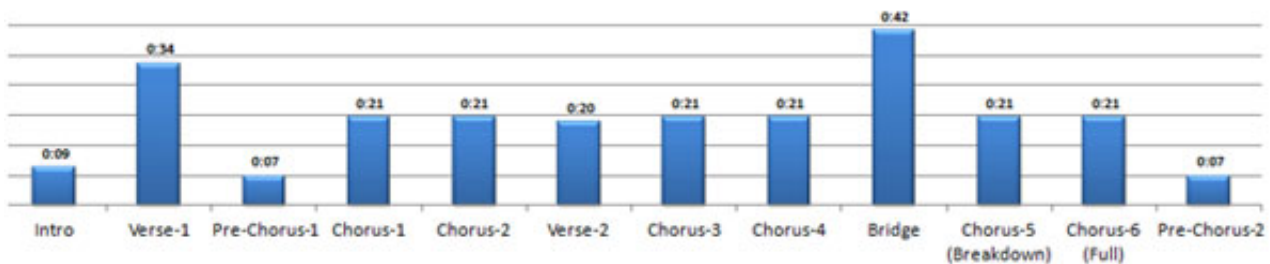
Structural Analysis [Back to Top](#)

---

### At-a-Glance

	Intro	Verse	Pre-Chorus	Chorus	Bridge
# Of Occurrences	1	2	2	6	1
Length by Section	0:09	0:34 / 0:20	0:07	0:21	0:42
Section % to Total Song	4%	22%	6%	51%	17%

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



As you can see in the graph above, the majority of sections within *We Are Young* are short to moderate in length, with the longest landing at **0:42** (the bridge) and the shortest landing at **0:07** (the pre-choruses.)

### Points to note:

- Verses 1 and 2 differ from one another both from a melodic and length standpoint. Verse 1 lands at **0:34** and Verse 2 lands at **0:21**.
- Each "full" chorus section is comprised of two individual **0:21** choruses that are identical in nature, with the exception being chorus #5 which is a breakdown. Together each "full" chorus lands at **0:42** – which is the same length as the bridge.
- The full bridge is also constructed out of two **0:21** segments, the first of which is Janelle

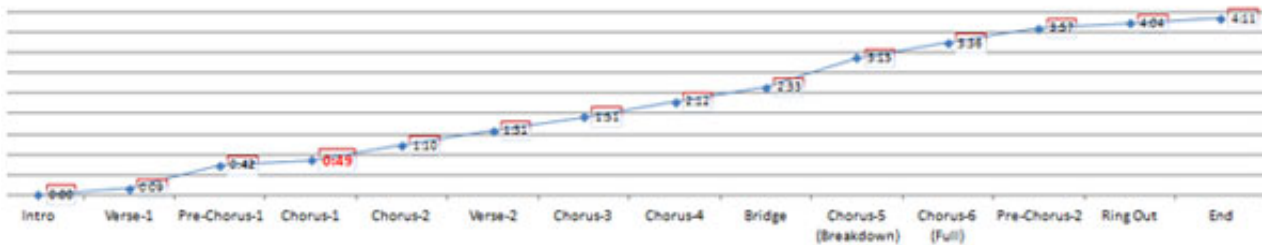
## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

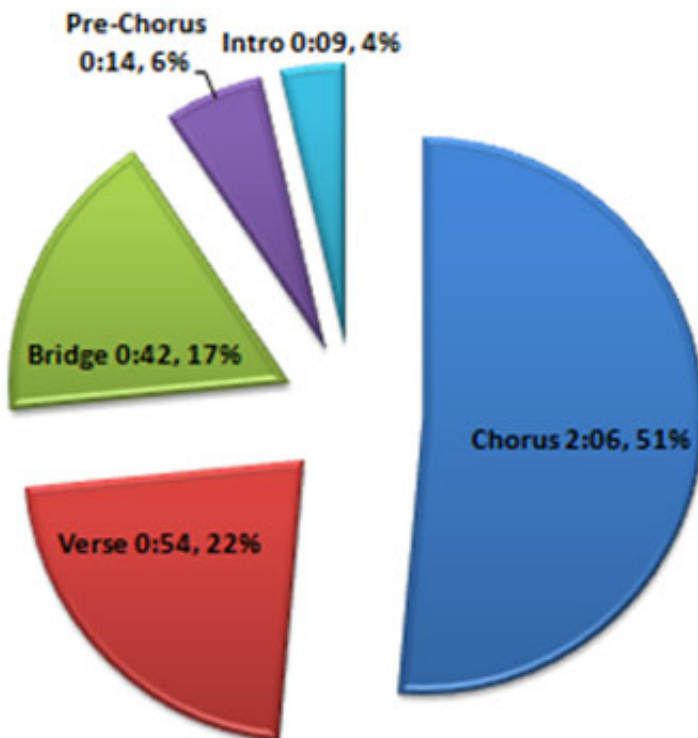
---

Monae's part and the second which is Nate's.

**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)



When a song possesses an exceptionally powerful and memorable hook (such as is the case with *We Are Young*), it's no surprise that the majority of time is going to be allocated to that particular section.

**51%** of *We Are Young* is solely devoted to the **chorus** (comprised of **six** individual **0:21** segments,) followed far behind by the two **verses** (encompassing **22%** of the song) and the **bridge** (comprising **17%** of the song's total composition.)

Speaking of the **bridge, 0:42 (17% of the song)** is a good chunk of time when compared to a

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

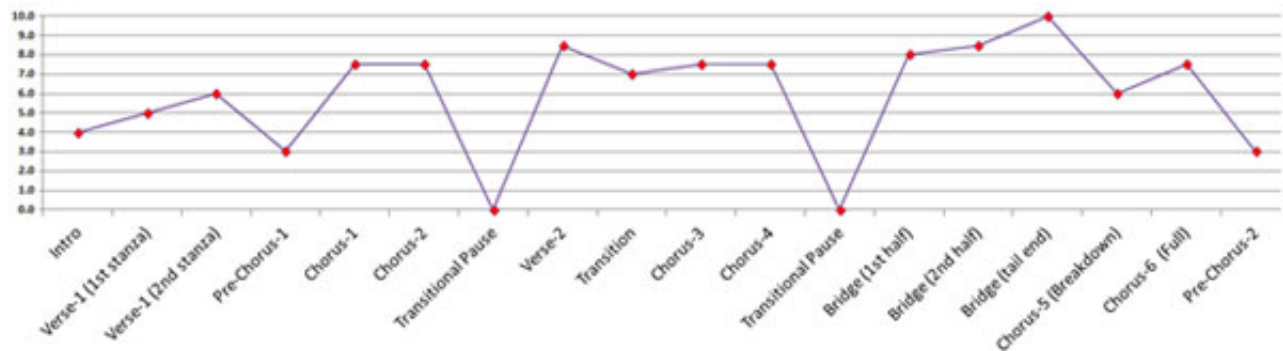
---

fair amount of other current hit Pop and Rock songs, which typically average about half that. It's well warranted, however, considering that it's split into two individual segments (one for Janelle and one for Nate) and provides the listener with another strong payoff in addition to the chorus.

Momentum / Tension / Intensity (MTI) [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)



Overall *We Are Young* makes good use of shifts in momentum, tension and intensity levels throughout the song, doing a great job of accentuating the diversity between sections and ultimately providing for an engaging listening experience.

### MTI Level by Section

#### Intro (0:01-0:09)

*We Are Young* kicks off in a sparse, moderate fashion, driven by an eighth-note acoustic floor tom beat.

**Transition Point – Intro to Verse 1:** Seamless (the lead vocal and piano enter over the existing floor tom beat from the intro)

#### Verse-1 (0:09-0:42)

The MTI level **increases slightly** over that of the preceding intro via the addition of the lead vocals and piano during the first stanza. The level is then further increased during the second stanza brought about by the increased drive of the drums (i.e. the snare is now in the mix,) the arpeggio based piano, and the increased tension brought about in the lead vocal delivery coupled with the lyrical content.

**Transition Point Verse-1 into Pre-Chorus:** Quick snare drum roll (note that it was part of the

existing drum pattern in the 2nd stanza of the 1st verse)

### Pre-Chorus-1 (0:42-0:49)

The MTI level is **brought down significantly** due to the drums being pulled from the mix coupled with the change up in the piano and vocal delivery. This “quiet” section does a fantastic job of both bringing the preceding verse to a conclusion as well as setting the listener up for the intense nature of the chorus that follows (providing it with more impact when it hits.)

**Transition Point – Pre-Chorus into Chorus 1:** The brief lull brought about by the preceding ring of the piano chord is then followed by the full chorus that follows.

### Chorus 1 & 2 (0:49-1:31)

The MTI level is **dramatically increased** from the preceding pre-chorus, brought about via the up-front electronic snare/floor tom combo coupled with the heavy fuzz bass and anthemic nature of the vocal delivery. The level is maintained throughout the section, with the intensity increasing a bit at the tail end of the second chorus via the addition of the background vocals on the lyrics “...*than the sun.*”

**Transition Point – Chorus 2 into Verse 2:** Brief pause followed by Nate’s loud intake of air.

### Verse-2 (1:31-1:51)

The second verse takes the MTI level of the song to its **second highest peak**, primarily brought about by the upfront drums (note that the electronic snare is still in there in addition to the floor tom,) fuzz bass, eighth note piano delivery (similar in nature to the preceding chorus,) and above all, the intense nature of Nate’s vocal delivery coupled with the background vocals.

**Transition Point – Verse 2 into Chorus 3:** The ring-over of instrumentation from the preceding verse (minus the drums) coupled with the ascending string build.

### Chorus 3 & 4 (1:51-2:33)

The third and fourth choruses have an MTI level that is a **bit below** that of the preceding verse section, and is on par with that which defined choruses 1 & 2.

**Transition Point – Chorus 4 into the Bridge:** Brief pause followed by Janelle’s loud intake of air.

### Bridge (2:33-3:15)

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

Here the MTI level **increases a tad above** that of the preceding chorus, specifically due to the “march” nature of the drums coupled with the “na na” backing vocals. It increases a bit further during the second half of the section when the lead vocal duty shifts back to Nate, and ultimately reaches a crescendo at the tail end of the section via the drum levels reaching a sonic peak.

**Transition Point – Bridge into Chorus 5:** Changes on a dime right after the crescendo at the end of the preceding bridge section.

### Chorus 5 & 6 (3:15-3:57)

The “breakdown” nature of chorus 5 brings the MTI level that defined the preceding bridge (specifically the crescendo at the tail end of the section) **way down**, brought about by the changeover to the lead vocal and drums coupled with the synth pad. Note that the piano and heavy fuzz bass were pulled from the mix. This continues throughout the section until hitting the organ swell that ushers in full chorus 6, where the fuzz bass returns to the mix and the MTI level is brought **back up** to that which defined all of the other chorus sections of the song.

**Transition Point – Chorus 6 into Pre-Chorus 2:** Nate’s “So if by the time...” lyrics enter while the fuzz bass of the preceding chorus is still fading out.

### Pre-Chorus-2 (3:57-4:04)

The MTI level is brought **way down** via the reversion back to the solo vocal and piano that defined the first pre-chorus.

### End (4:04-4:10)

The final piano chord rings out for 0:06, coming to a final conclusion at 4:10.

Lyrics & Harmonic Progression [Back to Top](#)

---

### Song Title:

*We Are Young* appears **six times** within the song, once per chorus, encompassing the entire second line of the section (following the stand-alone first line/lyric – “*tonight.*”)

As a side note, they could just as easily have titled the song “**Carry Me Home Tonight,**” considering that the phrase both sums up the song from a lyrical perspective and repeats more than any other line within the song. “*Carry Me Home*” (plus “*Carry You Home*” in the pre-choruses) occurs:

- As the last line in both **pre-chorus** sections (with the first occurrence setting up the first

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

chorus.)

- As the last line in the **second verse** (once again setting up the chorus that follows.)
- During Monae's entire portion of the **bridge** (occurs on every line.)
- On two lines during Nate's portion of the **bridge**.

So – even though the line isn't technically part of the chorus (where the title of the song usually occurs,) it still provides the lead into the chorus plus the fact that it occurs **nine times within the song, in three individual sections**. Bottom line – it gets totally engrained in your head just as much, if not more than the song's actual title *We Are Young*.

### Lyrics / Harmonic Progression / Word & Syllable Count:

#### Key

(\*): Indicates a chord that occurs **before** the beginning of the line

**Blue Font On Lyric:** Indicates **where** the chord change takes place

**(Parenthesis):** Indicates a chord that **carries over** from the previous line

#### Verse 1

##### 1st Stanza

**F** (12 words / 14 syllables)

*Give me a second I, I need to get my story straight*

**Dm** (12 words / 16 syllables)

*My friend's are in the bathroom getting higher than the empire state*

**Gm** (10 words / 14 syllables)

*My lover she's waiting for me just across the bar*

**B-flat / C** (12 words / 16 syllables)

*My seat's been taken by some sunglasses asking about a scar, and*

##### 2nd Stanza

-  
**\*F** (9 words / 10 syllables)

*I know I gave it to you months ago*

**\*Dm** (6 words / 8 syllables)

*I know you're trying to forget*

**Gm** (14 words / 19 syllables)

*But between the drinks and subtle things, the holes in my apologies, you know*



## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

**\*B-flat / \*C** (7 words / 8 syllables)

*I'm trying hard to take it **back***

### Pre-Chorus

**Gm / Am / Dm / C / B-flat** (14 words / 16 syllables)

*So if by, the **time** the bar **closes**, and you **feel** like **falling down***

**C** (4 words / 5 syllables)

*I'll **carry**, you **home***

### Chorus

**F** (1 word / 1 syllable)

***Tonight***

**Dm** (3 words / 3 syllables)

*We are **young***

**B-flat** (7 words / 7 syllables)

*So let's set the world on **fire***

**F/C / C** (7 words / 8 syllables)

*We can burn brighter than the **sun***

### Verse 2

**F** (10 words / 10 syllables)

*Now I **know** that, I'm not, all that, you got*

**\*Dm** (7 words / 7 syllables)

*I guess that I, I just thought*

**Gm** (9 words / 11 syllables)

*Maybe we could find new ways to fall **apart***

**(Gm)** (10 words / 10 syllables)

*But our friends are back, so let's raise a cup*

**\*B-flat / C** (8 words / 10 syllables)

*Cause I found someone to **carry** me home*

### Bridge

**F / B-flat** (4 words / 6 syllables)

*Carry me home **tonight***

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

*(Nananananana)*

**F/A / C** (5 words / 7 syllables)

*Just **carry** me home tonight*

*(Nananananana)*

**F / B-flat** (4 words / 6 syllables)

*Carry me home **tonight***

*(Nananananana)*

**F/A / C** (5 words / 7 syllables)

*Just **carry** me home tonight*

*(Nananananana)*

**\*F** (6 words / 5 syllables)

*The moon is on my side*

**\*B-flat** (6 words / 7 syllables)

*I have no reason to run*

**\*F/A** (9 words / 12 syllables)

*So will someone come and carry me home tonight*

**\*F** (4 words / 7 syllables)

*The angels never arrived*

**\*B-flat** (6 words / 6 syllables)

*But I can hear the choir*

**\*F/A / C** (8 words / 10 syllables)

*So will someone come and **carry** me home*

### Imagery, Place & Time Based Lyrics & Phrases:

*(These lyrics "paint a picture" in your head and establish the time & place within the story)*

#### Verse 1

- *Bathroom*
- *Empire State*
- *Bar*
- *Seat*
- *Sunglasses*

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

- *Scar*
- *Months Ago*
- *Drinks*

### Pre-Chorus

- *Bar*
- *By the time the bar closes*
- *Home*

### Chorus

- *Tonight*
- *World*
- *Fire*
- *Sun*

### Verse 2

- *Cup*
- *Home*

### Bridge

- *Tonight*
- *Home*
- *Moon*

### **Emotional Based Lyrics and Phrases:**

*(These lyrics convey emotion – enabling you to connect with what the characters are feeling within the story)*

### Verse 1

- *I need to get my story straight*

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

- *My lover (in addition to a character – establishes emotion)*
- *Trying to forget*
- *Apologies*
- *I'm trying hard to take it back*

### Pre-Chorus

- *I'll carry you home (In addition to action – shows emotional "caring.")*

### Chorus

- *Tonight, we are young*
- *We can burn brighter than the sun*

### Verse 2

- *I'm not all that you got*
- *Find new ways to fall apart*
- *I found someone to carry me home tonight*

### Bridge

- *The moon is on my side*
- *I have no reason to run*

### **Action Based Lyrics & Phrases:**

*(These lyrics get you into what the characters within the story have done, are doing or will do)*

### Verse 1

- *Getting higher than the Empire State*
- *She's waiting for me*
- *My seat's been taken*
- *Asking about a scar*
- *I gave it to you*

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

- *Trying to forget*
- *Trying hard to take it back*

### Pre-Chorus

- *Falling down*
- *I'll carry you home*

### Chorus

- *Let's set the world on fire*
- *Burn brighter than the sun (in addition to emotion)*

### Verse 2

- *Fall apart (in addition to emotion)*
- *Raise a cup*
- *Carry me home tonight*

### Bridge

- *Carry me home tonight*
- *Run*
- *I can hear the choir*

### **Character/Person Based Lyrics & Phrases (Including Pronouns):**

*(These lyrics show how all of the characters within the story are defined)*

#### Verse 1:

*Me, I, My, Friends, Lovers, She's, Sunglasses (infers a person,) You, You're, I'm*

#### Pre-Chorus

*You, I'll*

#### Chorus

*We, Let's*

#### Verse 2

*I, I'm, You, We, Our, Friends, Let's, Someone*

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

### Bridge

*Me, My, I, Someone, Angles, Choir*

### STORY FLOW:

*(Shows the "gist" of what's going on within each section of the song)*

### Verse 1

The **first stanza** instantly sets the scene and establishes what's going on within the story. The narrator and his friends are in a bar, his friends are getting high in the bathroom, the person he's hooking up with (or hoping to hook up with) is waiting for him across the bar, and someone took his seat and is asking about a scar.

The **second stanza** establishes the fact that something went wrong with a relationship that the narrator was involved in (his fault) and that he wants to undo what has been done.

### Pre-Chorus

Establishes the fact that he still cares for this person – hence the *"..and you feel like falling down, I'll carry you home."*

### Chorus

We can look at the meaning of the lyrics here in two ways. First, it can be applied to either his old relationship or someone new that he wants to **hook up with** in the bar. Basically, they're young, so "let's *set the world on fire and burn brighter than the sun*" meaning **let's go home and hook up**.

Second, it can be interpreted as an **inspirational "anthemic" theme**, meaning *"we are young,"* so let's "live life up."

### Verse 2

Here we dive back into the narrator's relationship with his old girlfriend. This is of course open to interpretation but it sounds like **he realizes** that she has "others" besides him, yet he still would consider getting back together even though it would probably still be as dysfunctional as the first time around (i.e. *"find new ways to fall apart."*)

On the fourth line, it sounds like that it either doesn't matter if they get back together or it's not a priority for him anymore, because his *"friends are back,"* and it looks like he found **someone new to hook up with** to take his mind off of things (i.e. *"CAUSE I found someone to carry me home."*)

### Bridge

The first section of the bridge has the woman in the story (conveyed by Janelle Monae) wanting to be "carried home tonight" (this can either be his old love that he was trying to get back with or someone new.) The second section (shifting back to Nate,) establishes that he's getting back his confidence (i.e. *"the moon is on my side"* and that he has *"no reason to run,"*) and that even though *"the angles never arrived"* (could be interpreted as his ex love,) he can still *"hear the choir,"* (could be all of the other woman in the bar, ) and he just wants one of them to **"carry**

*him home tonight.”*

### Additional Lyrical Points to Note:

- The only “true” rhyming lyrics that tie lines together occur in the first stanza of the first verse. Lines **1** and **2** are tied together by “*straight*” and “*state*,” while lines **3** and **4** are tied together by “*bar*” and “*scar*.”
- Notice in the second stanza of the first verse that the lyric “*know*” ties lines one two and three together (*I know, I know, You know*.)
- Notice that the lyric “*tonight*” both concludes the pre-chorus (“*I’ll carry you home TONIGHT*”) and kicks off the chorus (“*TONIGHT, we are young*”).
- Notice that in the first verse it’s about him and the love he lost, and that he is willing to carry HER home tonight (possibly to re-engage in the dysfunctional relationship or hook up.) In the second verse, it sounds like he doesn’t care anymore, because he found SOMEONE ELSE to carry HIM home (i.e. he’s in a bar and he found someone to hook up with to take his mind off of things.)

The Music [Back to Top](#)

---

### Intro

It doesn’t get much more straight forward and simplistic than this – an eighth note floor tom beat with accents on the first, fourth and seventh notes of the measure, repeating for four measures (a total of **0:09**.) The tom is acoustic in nature with some natural room reverb providing ambiance. Despite its “simplistic” nature, it gets the job done on the following levels:

- The solo floor tom beat acts as a unique “**identifier**” amongst most other songs in both the Rock and Pop genres. With the exceptions of Katy Perry’s *Part Of Me* and *The One That Got Away*, as well as Snoop and Wiz’s *Young Wild & Free*, there weren’t any other songs in the Pop Songs top 10 that kicked off with solo drums.
- It provides for a **seamless transition** into the first verse considering that the beat is the backbone of the first stanza of the section.

All in all, it’s obviously not the most interesting intro in the world, but it does instantly engage the listener and **serve the song**.

### Verse 1

The backing music that defines the **first stanza** of the first verse continues with the eighth note floor tom pattern that was established during the intro and now includes the **sparse acoustic piano** tied whole notes that follow an **F – Dm - Gm – B-flat – C** progression. All in all it provides a “classic” backdrop (think Queen, for example) that does a great job of supporting

and accentuating the “storytelling” themed lyrics.

The **second stanza** sees the overall momentum kicked up a notch due to the changeover to the **piano arpeggios** coupled with the **increased drive of the drums** via the addition of the snare into the mix. The music here does a great job of accentuating the tension that’s present in the lyrics, and provides a good contrast to the nature of the preceding stanza and pre-chorus that follows.

### Pre-Chorus

Defined by the **sole acoustic piano**, the music in the pre-chorus both accentuates the “heartfelt” nature of the lyrics and vocal delivery as well as providing a dip in the MTI level (momentum/tension/intensity) that enables the chorus that follows to pack more “punch” when it hits.

Additionally, it also brings the song to a “quiet” conclusion when it reenters at the very end of the song, putting the listener “back on the ground” after all of the intensity that defined the bridge and “heavy” natured chorus that preceded it.

### Chorus

The backing music that defines the chorus takes the song to a new and unexpected place (i.e. upon first listen I guarantee that the section hit you out of left field – you never saw it coming from what was defining the preceding 1st verse and pre-chorus.)

- The section is driven by the ACOUSTIC tom and kick coupled with the ELECTRONIC snare, providing the section both a **retro and modern vibe**.
- Take note of the **drum pattern** that’s defining the section. It lends itself perfectly to the anthemic nature of the lyrics.
- The acoustic piano follows an eighth note **F – D – B – C** progression, providing the section with a classic **Elton John / Queen type vibe**.
- The thick **fuzz bass** is the **key ingredient** that takes the section, and the song, to the next level. It possesses both a retro and modern vibe, and it’s what gives the section its power and color. Without it, the section, and song for that matter, wouldn’t have had nearly as much impact.
- All of the elements mentioned above **jibe perfectly together** in creating this smoldering, huge anthemic chorus, perfectly accentuating Nate’s vocal delivery and the nature of the lyrics.
- \*Note that the 5th chorus that follows the sonic build at the tail end of the bridge is a **breakdown chorus** defined by the synth pad and organ coupled with the acoustic tom / electronic snare combo. Note that the fuzz bass and piano are NOT present in the mix.



## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

This provides the listener with a “break” from all of the intensity that was occurring in the preceding chorus and bridge and also does a great job of setting up the “full” 6th chorus that follows (i.e. it has more punch when it hits following the breakdown.) Additionally, this breakdown chorus is also tailor made for a **live setting** as well. It's extremely easy to picture this as the “audience participation” segment during the song.

### Verse 2

In complete contrast to the piano/drum driven first verse, the music that defines the second verse takes the MTI level of the song to its peak, driven by the acoustic tom / electric snare combo (basically the same as the preceding chorus,) plus fuzz bass and synth pads. As with all of the other sections of the song, the music here does a great job of supporting and accentuating the nature of the lyrics and Nate's more intense vocal delivery.

### Bridge

During the first half (**Janelle Monae's portion**) of the bridge, the backing music is primarily dominated by drums and bass (with the bass being far back in the mix.) The drums possess a “march” type of vibe, and work well in conjunction with the “na na na's” as well as Janelle's “*Carry me home tonight*” delivery.

During the second half (**Nate's portion**) of the bridge, the backing music starts to get more intense, mirroring Nate's growing intensity evident in his vocal delivery. This is brought about by the fuzz bass slowly starting to be brought up further in the mix, coupled with the synth pad and ultimately with the growing intensity of the drums which peak at the tail end, providing greater contrast for the breakdown chorus that follows.

The Vocal Melody [Back to Top](#)

---

One of the strongest aspects of *We Are Young* is the variation of the vocal melody throughout the song – utilizing both **repetition** (in the pre-chorus and chorus sections) and **diversity** (in both verse sections) to provide the listener with a deep, engaging and most of all memorable listening experience.

### Diversity (Verse Sections):

*We Are Young* goes against the grain of “conventional” hit songwriting in the sense that each verse section (both stanzas in verse 1 and all of verse 2) are completely different in nature from one another. Normally the vocal melody within a song will have similar, if not the exact same characteristics from verse 1 to verse 2. It's usually slight changes in the backing music that will add diversity and heighten the engagement factor for the listener. *We Are Young* differs on both fronts.

So – with barely any repetition, why is each verse so easy to remember? It's due to the effective phrasing that Nate uses WITHIN each specific section to convey the story to the listener in an engaging and memorable manner.

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

### Repetition: (Chorus)

Considering the melodic diversity present within the verses, the chorus comes to the rescue acting as the “glue” and “anchor” that holds the framework of the song together from a melodic standpoint. The vocal melody is virtually identical in each of the six individual sections that occur throughout the song. **See the chorus vocal melody graph below for specifics.**

### Repetition: (Pre-Chorus)

Another “anchor” that helps to hold the song together is the repetition of the vocal melody across both occurrences of the pre-chorus: *“So if by the time the bar closes and you feel like falling down, I’ll carry you home...”* It both provides the **lead-in** to chorus #1 coming out of the preceding verse as well as **concluding** the song after the final chorus.

As a side note -it’s interesting that the second occurrence of the pre-chorus DOES NOT occur where you would typically expect to see it – right before a chorus.

### Repetition: Bridge

Even though the bridge only occurs once within the song, it utilizes vocal melody repetition in both Janelle and Nates parts in the following ways:

- The “Na Na Na...” melody remains constant throughout both Janelle’s and Nate’s portion of the bridge, providing the entire section with a cohesive, repetitive and memorable nature.
- Janelle’s *“Carry me home tonight, Just carry me home tonight”* during the first part of the bridge is virtually identical from a melodic standpoint throughout the section with the primary differences being the addition of the lyric *“just”* on the second and fourth lines, and the lyric *“tonight”* ending on a **D** on lines 1 & 3 and then dropping to a **C** on lines 2 & 4.
- Nate’s vocal melody during his portion of the bridge possesses a similar nature in both stanza’s, with the primary exception being that he gets more “animated” in the second and as a result his vocals start to go up in register. The overall “glue” between both stanzas is the similar manner in which he sings the last line – *“So will someone come and carry me home.”*

\*The Vocal Melody Graphs below depict the two most memorable and engaging parts within *We Are Young*: **The Chorus** and the “Na Na Na” part of the **Bridge**.

### Key:

**Red Dotted Line:** Shows the chord progressions in relation to the vocal melody

**Blue Line:** Vocal Melody

**Red Diamond:** Notes longer than a quarter plus rests

**Blue Diamond:** Quarter note

**Green Diamond:** Eighth note

**Black Diamond:** Sixteenth note

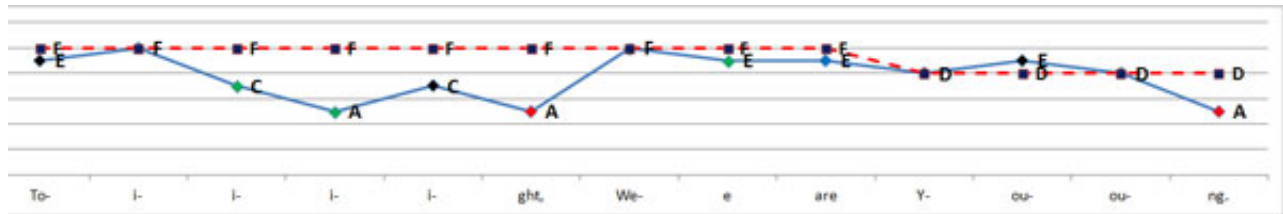
## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

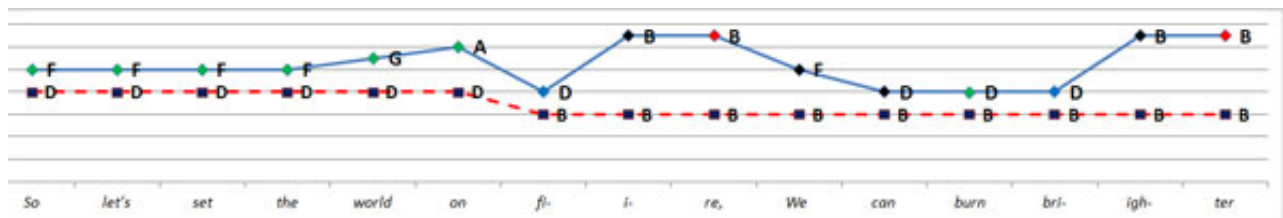
---

### Chorus:

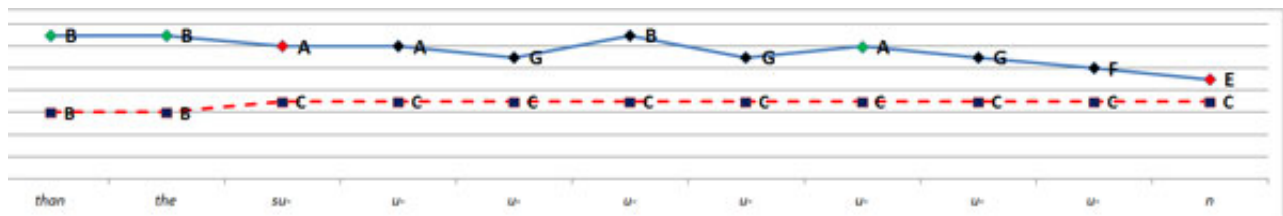
#### Lines 1 & 2



#### Lines 3 & 4



#### Line 4 (Continued)



### Key Points:

- The vocal melody that defines the chorus is much more **simplistic and straight forward** in nature than the preceding verse sections.
- Notice that the chorus isn't as "**word heavy**" as the verse sections – making it easier for the listener to get engaged and REMEMBER.
- Take note of the prolonged nature of the lyric "*Tonight*." It's an ultra-important lyric in that it both **concludes** the preceding pre-chorus and 2nd verse section as well as **kicks off** the chorus. It's stretched out over an **E-G-C-A-C-A** progression, which provides the lyric with a lot more emphasis in relation to other lyrics within the section.

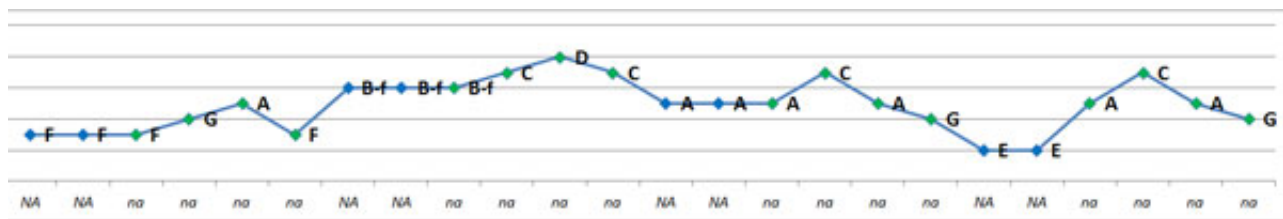
## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

- Note the vocal melody similarities on the lines “so let’s set the world on fire” and “we can bur brighter.” Both basically follow a monotone delivery until hitting the jump from **D** to **B** on the last lyric of each line – “fire” and “brighter.” This both provides increased emphasis on those two lyrics (i.e. it makes sense to go up in register on “fire” and “brighter” – wouldn’t have sounded right to go down) as well as heightening the overall emotion and anthemic nature of the section.
- Lastly, notice how the lyric “sun” seems to be stretched out forever – ending the section on a grandiose level.

### Bridge:



In addition to Nate and Janelle’s ultra-memorable melodies in the bridge, what gives the section its real character is the background “Na Na Na” vocals. Utilizing a combination of ascending and descending progressions coupled with quarter and eighth note delivery, it provides a consistent backdrop for both Janelle and Nate, taking the memorability factor to the next level while not completely overshadowing the lead vocals.

Primary Instrumentation / Tone / Mix [Back to Top](#)

INTRO	Tone/Comments	Pan
Drums	Floor Tom – acoustic - slight /moderate natural room reverb. Up front in the mix.	12:00

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success

<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

VERSE	Tone/Comments	Pan
Lead Vocal (Verse 1)	Male – Up front in the mix – slight/moderate room reverb (same sounding space as the tom).	11:00-12:00
Drums (Verse 1)	Acoustic Floor Tom during the first stanza of the first verse, acoustic Snare enters during the second stanza. Mid/up in the mix.	12:00
Piano (Verse 1)	Acoustic Piano – bleeds throughout the mix – primary placement between 12:00 and 2:00. Mid/up in the mix.	9:00-3:00
Lead Vocal (Verse 2)	Multi-tracked male - interspersed with female lead vocals as well. Primary at 12:00 but bleeds throughout the mix.	12:00
Drums (Verse 2)	Combination of acoustic drums (Floor Tom) and electronic drums (Snare.) The toms are mid level in the mix, electronic snare is up front.	11:00-12:00
Piano (Verse 2)	Same as in verse 1 except low to mid level in the mix.	9:00-3:00
Synth (Verse 2)	Pad - Low level in the mix.	9:00-3:00
Strings (Verse 2)	Pad - Low level in the mix.	9:00-3:00
Bass (Verse 2)	Heavily distorted fuzz bass – mid/up front in the mix when it hits.	11:00-12:00

PRE-CHORUS	Tone/Comments	Pan
Lead Vocal	Male – Up front in the mix.	11:00-12:00
Piano	Acoustic Piano – encompasses the entire sonic landscape. Mid/up in the mix.	9:00-3:00

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success

<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

CHORUS	Tone/Comments	Pan
Lead Vocal	Male – Up front in the mix – multi-tracked. Bleeds throughout the mix with the primary at 12:00.	12:00
Background Vocals	Enters into the mix at the tail end of the section on the lyrics “than the sun.” Mid level in the mix.	10:00-2:00
Drums	Combination of acoustic drums (Floor Tom) and electronic drums (Snare.) The toms are mid level in the mix, electronic snare is up front.	11:00-12:00
Piano	Acoustic – mid level in the mix. Bleeds throughout the mix, with the primary landing at 10:00/2:00.	10:00 – 2:00
Bass	Heavily distorted fuzz bass – mid/up in the mix.	11:00-12:00
Synth (Following the Bridge)	Pad – low/mid level in the mix. Pans throughout. Organ sounding synth swells at the tail end ushering in the fuzz bass chorus that follows.	9:00-3:00

BRIDGE	Tone/Comments	Pan
Lead Vocals	Female (Janelle Monae) during the first half – mid level in the mix. Male (Nate) during the second half – mid/up in the mix. Pans throughout with the primary placement between 11:00 and 12:00.	11:00-12:00
Background Vocals	(Na Na’s) – Mid level in the mix – multiple voices going at once. Lower register panned left, higher register (and level) panned right.	9:00-3:00
Drums	Combination of acoustic drums (Floor Tom) and electronic drums (snare.) Mid/Up in the mix	11:00-12:00
Bass	Fuzz Bass – low in the mix during the start of the section, increases in level as the section progresses.	11:00-12:00
Synth	Pad – the level grows as the section progresses. Bleeds throughout the mix with the primary at 12:00.	12:00

Compositional Assessment [Back to Top](#)

---

### Benchmark Analysis

Compares **We Are Young** to the 21 songs that entered the Billboard Pop Songs top 10 during Q1-2012

---

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success

<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

CATEGORY	We Are Young	Q1-2012 Top 10 Pop Songs	Comparison
Form	A-B-A-B-C-B	A-B-A-B-C-B (57% of Songs)	*In-Line
Song Length	4:11	3:44	+0:27
Intro Length	0:09	0:09	Equal
Outro Length	n/a	0:16	n/a
Songs That Contain an Intro	Yes	86% Of Songs	In-Line
Songs That Contain an Outro	No	33% Of Songs	In-Line
Time Where 1 <sup>st</sup> Chorus Hits	0:49 Into The Song	0:36 Into The Song	+0:13
% Into Song Where 1 <sup>st</sup> Chorus Hits	20% Into The Song	16% Into The Song	+4%
Tempo	Mid 120 bpm	Mid/Up	Not In-Line
Acoustic vs. Electric	Acoustic / Electric Combo	Electric (76% of Songs)	Not In-Line
Primary Instrumentation	Piano, Fuzz Bass	Mix (67% Of Songs)	In-Line
Primary Vocal Gender	Duet (Primarily Male)	Female (43%) Male (43%)	Not In-Line
Pre-Chorus	Yes	48% Of Songs	In-Line
Solo	No	0% Of Songs	In-Line
Bridge	Yes	81% Of Songs	In-Line
Lyrical Theme	Love/Relationships or *Inspirational	Love / Relationships (57% of Songs)	In-Line
Primary Sub-Genre Influence	Alternative	Mix of Influences (57% of Songs)	Not In-Line

Considering that *We Are Young* possesses both **Pop** and **Rock** qualities and hit #1 on both the Billboard Pop and Rock Songs charts, it pays to take a look at how the compositional characteristics of the song stack up against the 21 top 10 hit Pop songs from Q1-2012 to see what the similarities and differences are.

Overall, *We Are Young* is in-line with today's Pop hits except:

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

- *We Are Young* is **0:27 longer** than the average top 10 Pop hit.
- The **form (A-B-A-B-C-B)** is in line with top 10 Pop hits except for the fact that each chorus is a double and it reverts back to the pre-chorus to end the song.
- The **first chorus** occurs **0:13 (4%)** farther into the song than the average top 10 Pop hit.
- *We Are Young's* **tempo** is mid compared to the mid/up nature of the average top 10 Pop hit.
- *We Are Young* possesses a combination of **acoustic** and **electric instrumentation** where the majority of top 10 Pop hits are purely electric in nature.
- *We Are Young* is a **duet** (due to Monae's contribution in the bridge,) while lead vocal duties are split equally between solo men and woman in top 10 Pop hits.
- Even though the overall **lyrical theme** of *We Are Young* is **Love/Relationship** in nature, the chorus can also be looked at from an **Inspirational** perspective as discussed in the lyric section of the report.
- *We Are Young* is primarily **Alternative** in nature while the majority of top 10 Pop hits possess a **mixture** of primary **sub-genre influences**.

### Structure and Flow: 8.5/10

*(Does the song flow in a cohesive manner and keep the listener engaged?)*

As mentioned earlier in the report, *We Are Young* basically follows an **A-B-A-B-C-B** (verse-chorus-verse-chorus-bridge-chorus) form except for the fact that each chorus is a double, and the pre-chorus plays a prominent role in both setting up the first chorus and in concluding the song.

Considering how different in nature some of the sections are from one another, the overall flow of the song and transition between sections work surprisingly well. For example:

- Shifting over to the "sparse" pre-chorus after the first verse did a great job of both bringing that specific segment of the song to a conclusion while setting up the chorus for a powerful entry when it hit.
- The second verse is a lot closer in nature to the chorus than the first verse (specifically due to the continuation of the floor tom and electronic snare plus fuzz bass,) so the transition in and out of it was a lot more seamless this time around, and didn't necessarily warrant another pre-chorus setting things up (as was the case following the first verse.)
- The transitional pause that occurs right before the bridge gives the listener a quick second to take a breath from the intense nature of the preceding chorus before being



## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

slammed with the the bridge that follows.

### Production: 9.5/10

*(How does the production stand up in maximizing the songs impact?)*

Overall *We Are Young* is brilliantly produced and engineered, perfectly fusing retro with modern, rock with pop, and intimate with grandiose to create a “perfect storm” of a song. Highlights include:

- The utilization of varied instrumentation that together creates an engaging sonic landscape, including acoustic piano, acoustic floor tom, electronic “modern” snare, synths, strings, and fuzz bass.
- The manner how each individual section of the song is brought to life and jibes with the lyrical content. The first verse, for example, has a very warm, intimate, humanistic vibe that perfectly brings the “storytelling” nature of the lyrics to life, while the huge sound in the chorus hammers home the anthemic nature of the lyrics.
- Above all, the overall production perfectly ties together a song that possesses a lot of diversity between sections, making for a cohesive, engaging listening experience.

### Waveform:



With the exception of the intro, first verse and both pre-choruses, *We Are Young* is exceptionally compressed with the levels pushed to the max for maximum sonic impact.

### Lyrics: 9/10

*(Are the lyrics strong, fresh and original? Do they serve the song and jibe with the vibe of the music?)*

The lyrics utilize copious amounts of imagery, action and emotion to convey a love/relationship themed story in a unique and engaging manner that holds the listener’s attention throughout the song. Another great attribute to note is the fact that the lyrics are vague just enough in

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

places where they leave themselves open to interpretation by the listener, making for a deeper listening experience. For example, take the chorus. As mentioned earlier, you can look at it in one of two ways:

- You can look at it from a **“hooking up”** point of view, where *“set the world on fire”* and *“we can burn brighter than the sun”* have a sexual connotation. This potential interpretation makes sense following the final lyrics of the pre-chorus (and second verse,) *“carry me (or you) home...”*
- It could also be considered **“inspirational,”** without the sexual connotation – meaning we’re young, so let’s live it up while we still can.

### **Vocal Delivery: 9/10 (Nate), 8/10 (Janelle)**

*(Does the tonality and phrasing of the vocals maximize the songs impact?)*

**Nate’s** vocals perfectly suit the song from both a tonal and phrasing/delivery standpoint. From a tonal perspective, he possesses a pure, and yes, YOUNG sounding voice, which perfectly jibes with the nature of the lyrics. From a phrasing/delivery standpoint, he does a fantastic job of engaging the listener with emotion as well as utilizing effective articulation to accentuate specific lyrics throughout the song.

In regard to **Janelle Monae’s** performance, her vocals suit the nature of the bridge – nothing more, nothing less. That being said, she’s got a great voice, and if given the leeway she could have helped to take the section to another level.

Hit Factor Assessment [Back to Top](#)

---

### **Memorability: 9/10**

*(How easy is it to remember this song after you hear it once?)*

Overall, *We Are Young* is quite memorable on all fronts, but mostly due to the anthemic nature of the chorus and the bridge. They’re simplistic, infectious, and as a result get totally engrained in your head.

### **Originality: 9.5/10 (current Pop/Rock genre), 4/10 (historical)**

*(Does this song have its own unique vibe when compared to other songs/artists in the genre?)*

When it comes to originality, it all depends on how you look at it. From a Pop/Rock standpoint in 2012, yes, it does come across quite original and unique. There’s really nothing else out there that sounds quite like it. Additionally, Nate has a very unique vocal style which provides the song with a strong unique identity compared to everything else that’s hitting the airwaves.

That being said, from a historical perspective there is very little that’s original about *We Are Young*. It comes across as a fusion of Ben Folds 5, Elton John, Billy Joel and Queen. Not that it’s a negative thing – providing the listener with “familiarity” is a sure-fire way to get them engaged and hooked into the song more than if you’re charting completely new ground.

## Hit Songs Deconstructed

Deconstructing Today's Hits for Songwriting Success  
<http://reports.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>

---

### Payoff: 9.5/10

*(Does the song provide the listener with a strong payoff (i.e. a hot chorus)?)*

*We Are Young* possesses TWO strong payoffs for the listener. First, obviously, is the grandiose, infectious, anthemic chorus. It achieves this on three key levels – sonically (it's powerful,) lyrically (it's inspirational or sexual – however you want to look at it,) and melodically (infectious and memorable.)

The other payoff resides in the infectious and memorable bridge, which in its own right is just as much as a payoff as all of the choruses. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the breakdown chorus that follows the bridge will serve as a third payoff in a live “audience participation sing-along” setting.

### Longevity: 10/10 (Artist), 6/10 (Overall genre)

*(Does this song have what it takes to stand the test of time? Will it become a staple of the artist's repertoire?)*

*We Are Young* is a very strong song for all the reasons mentioned within this report, and will no doubt be a core highlight in fun.'s catalog and live shows for the duration of their career. That being said, like so many other very good songs of the day, there's really nothing “spectacular” and “timeless” about it that will enable it to stand alongside the “best of the best.” I would imagine, however, that it will have some sustained life in licensing and time period compilations.

Why It's a Hit [Back to Top](#)

---

There were a couple of primary factors that worked together in launching *We Are Young* to the top of the charts:

1. **Licensing & Glee:** It just goes to show you that treating your song like a “product” (I can hear a lot of you songwriters gagging right now – but keep reading,) is paramount to fostering success within TODAY'S MUSIC “INDUSTRY.” Their label was smart enough to offer the track to be covered on the hugely popular TV show *Glee*, and as a result the song rose to the top on iTunes as well as charted right outside the top 10 on the Billboard Hot 100. **Keep in mind that the initial success of the song didn't even feature the band!** What this did was get the song and band noticed on a wide scale. As a result of the success on *Glee*, the song was also picked up and featured in a Chevrolet ad during Super Bowl XLVI. That was the final catalyst that the band and song needed to get noticed by the masses and ultimately hit the top of the charts.
2. **The Song:** Of course, your song isn't going to make it into a Super Bowl commercial or attain a *Glee* cover unless it's very strong, and *We Are Young* definitely is. As mentioned throughout this report, it possesses a plethora of key elements that worked perfectly together in creating an infectious, evocative, memorable song with cross genre influence.

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

---

Below are some of the key attributes that helped to propel *We Are Young* to the top of the charts. Incorporating these proven techniques in your own songwriting and producing will undeniably help to take your craft to the next level:

- **License your music!** One of, if not THE most effective way to promote your act and songs these days is to secure licensing deals. Having your song appear in a major TV show, film or ad campaign will give you instant visibility that would take you an immensely longer amount of time to achieve by touring the club circuit or promoting on your site. This is especially true if you don't have a major label or publisher promoting you. fun.'s licensing of *We Are Young* to *Glee* as well as Chevrolet during the Super Bowl launched the song and band into super stardom that would have been almost impossible to reach on that level without. Those who see the light with this will be the ones who have the greatest chances of finding success with their music. The old way of doing things is over...
- Providing your song with a **"familiar" essence** will aid in the engagement factor for your audience. This was another one of the core strengths that defined *We Are Young*. There are strong elements that call on Queen, Bowie and Elton John that the listener can instantly identify with, resulting in a "comfort" level that hooks them into the song much faster and on a deeper level. Be careful, however, to make sure that you balance your influences with your own **unique creativity**. Too much "familiarity" can lead to you being labeled as a "rip off," and wind up having the opposite effect.
- If the lyrics warrant it, turning your song into a **duet** will provide it with increased depth as well as increasing the entertainment and engagement factor for the listener. It doesn't necessarily need to be throughout the entire song – it can be in just one section as was the case in *We Are Young*. Additionally, choosing the right person to do a duet with can also help you **cross over into other markets** that are outside your norm. fun.'s collaboration with Janelle Monae perfectly suited the song with her contribution in the Bridge, and also widened the bands reach into the Pop market as well.
- Always remember to **make each section of your song count**. What I mean by this is that sometimes songwriters will write an amazing chorus, but then "go through the motions" during the rest of the song. *We Are Young* is strong on ALL FRONTS. There isn't any weak element within the song, and as a result the listener is always kept engaged at an optimum level.
- Provide your song with **melodic balance** – especially from a vocal standpoint. If your verse sections possess an "artsy" vibe as is the case within *We Are Young*, make sure your chorus (and bridge for that matter) are more straight-forward and simplistic. Too much "artsy" can cause the listener to get lost within the song, and as a result you won't hold their attention. However, if you balance it with a killer straight-ahead chorus that they won't forget, you've got a winner.
- Make sure to utilize copious amounts of **imagery, action** and **emotion** in your lyrics to fully envelop the listener within the story. This was one of the strongest attributes of *We*

*Are Young.*