

In this paper, I categorize sounds used in a given track into three groups, or *instrumentational categories*: a) *core sounds*, which articulate structural aspects of pitch and rhythm of the song, b) *melody sounds*, which are the voice and any instrument replacing the voice, or c) *novelty sounds*, used primarily for coloristic effects. This paper focuses on 1980s popular music, specifically, on the use of the factory presets of the Yamaha DX7, the most widely-used synthesizer of the 1980s; my categorization therefore was determined by analysis of many 1980s singles. The results of this process suggest that within mainstream 1980s pop, certain Yamaha DX7 presets were consistently paired with a specific instrumentational category. Furthermore, a correlation arises between the timbral characteristics of these presets and their instrumentational category: the *core* and *melody* DX7 presets share unmarked timbral properties, weaving into the groove's fabric, rather than demanding attention. *Novelty* timbres are intrinsically difficult to generalize, but tend to feature marked timbral characteristics.

Instances of subversion of timbral norms enables the analyst to locate musical meaning created through the manipulation of timbres. An example of this may be found in the closing cumulative chorus of "Do They Know It's Christmas?" by Band Aid (1984), wherein the *novelty* sound TUBULAR BELLS becomes a *melody* sound. Though TUB BELLS is typically too noisy to function as a *melody* sound, this chorus's communal mantra works especially well with a synthesis of two opposed textural functions.

By showing a methodology to account for the vital role of timbre in this music's narrative, my study demonstrates the utility of timbre analysis in music analysis at large.