

Sacrifice – Elton John

Below, is a description of the song, ‘*Sacrifice*’ by the Elton John. Listen to the music on You-Tube, trying to follow the description given below. Does what you hear match what you read? If not, try again!

Is there anything about ‘*Sacrifice*’ which you find surprising or interesting? Or, if you think that the song is not very interesting, what could have been done to it to make it so?

Elton John’s song ‘*Sacrifice*’ (1989 from ‘*Sleeping with the past*’) uses three keyboard players, bass guitar and drums. Elton John sings the lead part and there are some backing vocals. It uses a verse-chorus (*strophic*) structure – the table below works in the family of chords around C major (but the recording has been made a little higher in pitch)

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|--------------------|---|---|
| Intro: 8 bars | Chords C-Em-F-F (twice) | |
| Verse 1: 16 bars | Chords C-F-Dm-G (twice) Am-F-G-G (twice) | It’s a human sign.... Into the boundary.... |
| Pre-Chorus: 8 bars | Chords C-F-Dm-G (twice) | Cold, cold heart.... |
| Chorus: 14 bars | C-C-F-F-G-G-C-C C-C-Dm/C-Dm/C-Em-F-G | And it’s no sacrifice... But it’s no sacrifice |
| Link: 4 bars | Same – but no repeats | |
| Verse 2: 16 bars | Same music but new lyrics | Mutual misunderstanding after the fact.... |
| Pre-chorus: 8 bars | Repeat – same lyrics | Cold, cold heart.... |
| Chorus: 14 bars | Repeat – same lyrics | And it’s no sacrifice... |
| Link: 4 bars | Slightly varied at the end – but essentially the same | |
| Instrumental bars | Instrumental – based on first 8 bars of the verse | |
| Pre-chorus: 8 bars | Repeat – same lyrics | Cold, cold heart.... |
| Chorus: 14 bars | Repeat – same lyrics | And it’s no sacrifice... |
| Outro: Fade | Last four bars of chorus – repeated to fade | |

Three main features:

The tune of the verse and pre-chorus is based on just 2 short melodic fragments (*motifs*). In contrast, the chorus tunes are more varied and build into a proper musical phrase.

The chorus uses a change in the chord/harmonic rhythm: Up ‘till here there was basically one chord per bar – now there is one chord for every 2 bars. This gives a feeling of greater calmness. However the pace of chords quickens up towards the end of the phrase (*the cadence*). An interesting effect in bars 9-12 in the creation of a *dissonance* (jarring, uncomfortable sound) when the note C – which is OK with C major chord, is held over and played with a Dm chord.

The range of timbres on the keyboards is noteworthy – most of the sounds don’t really attack the note at the start (like pianos do).