



7 Creative Ways to End a Song



When you're writing, the end of the song is naturally the last thing you think about. You can end cold or you can fade out, but there are numerous other ways to bring your song to a close, such as dissolution, subtraction, cadences, and the false beginning. After all, the last moments of your song are the freshest memory your listeners will have.

Here are seven creative ways to close out your song, with a few examples for inspiration. And please pardon us if the list is a bit Pink Floyd-centric. In our defense, they've recorded a lot of material, and their catalog serves as a clinic in distinctive endings.

1. Dissolution

If you have strong improvisers in your group, you can dissolve the song instead of ending it. The structure of the song gradually comes unglued as the players stray further from their written parts, playing with rhythm as things get deconstructed. This sort of thing is fun to do live, because a carefully arranged song will have a section that's never played the same way twice. Living Colour (a band full of strong improvisers) did it well at the end of "Information Overload."

2. The false beginning

False ends are a neat trick - just wait for the applause, then hit 'em up with that last big chorus. But there's also the false beginning. Play the first couple of notes of an earlier section, then drop it. This technique works best when one more time through that verse or chorus would be too much. But it's good to tease the audience with it.

3. Cadences

A cadence is a series of chords that resolve, usually to the root chord. They provide a conclusion that's highly satisfying to the ears, especially when it's a very melodic number with lots of chords or when it's a big, epic piece. Sunny Day Real Estate specializes in epics, and this one ends on a nice cadence.

4. Subtraction

This is another great way to mirror the introduction of a song at the ending. A song might begin by starting with a beat, then adding one instrument at a time as the song builds. You can do the same thing in reverse when the song concludes, letting one instrument after another sit out until only the beat (or another instrumental part) remains.

5. The loop

"Isn't this where we came in?" That's the question that the unidentified speaker asks over a strain of melody as you flip from side two of Pink Floyd's *The Wall* back to side one. You can connect the end of a record back to the beginning as a way to establish circularity. You can also do the same thing with an individual song, creating a seamless loop when the song is on repeat.

6. Just don't end the song



Instead, start right into the next song. Good live bands often have a couple of numbers that just work when placed back to back. Therefore, the first one doesn't end: the second song simply begins. Of course, this trick works on recordings, too. You'll just have to find a moment to stop for the edited single. This technique is most famously used on almost the whole second side of Dark Side of the Moon.

7. Go a cappella

Chances are, you've got a song with some great vocal harmony between band members. While your rhythm section is blasting away, that harmony is tucked away in the background. Why not turn it loose at the end of song? Have your instruments sit out while you croon one round of that chorus. People love a good harmony and are always left wanting more. Just ask Stephen Tyler.

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