

# Song Structures

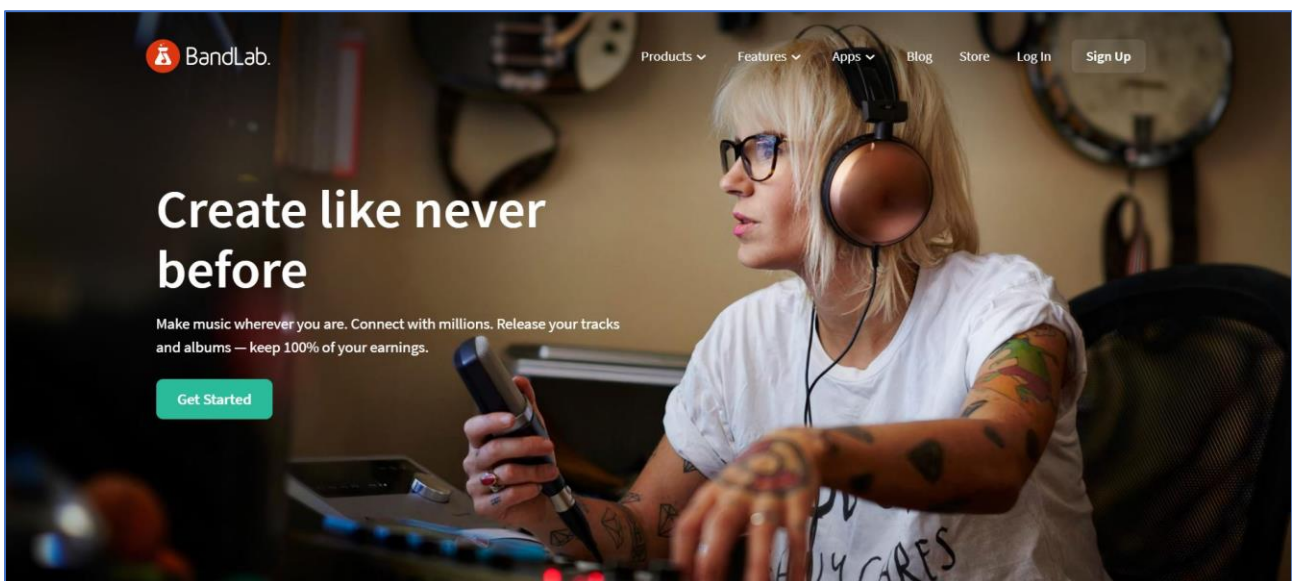
By Eddy Mentzel

***For this session you will need a laptop, tablet or phone which is connected to the internet. Headphone's are advisable but not essential.***

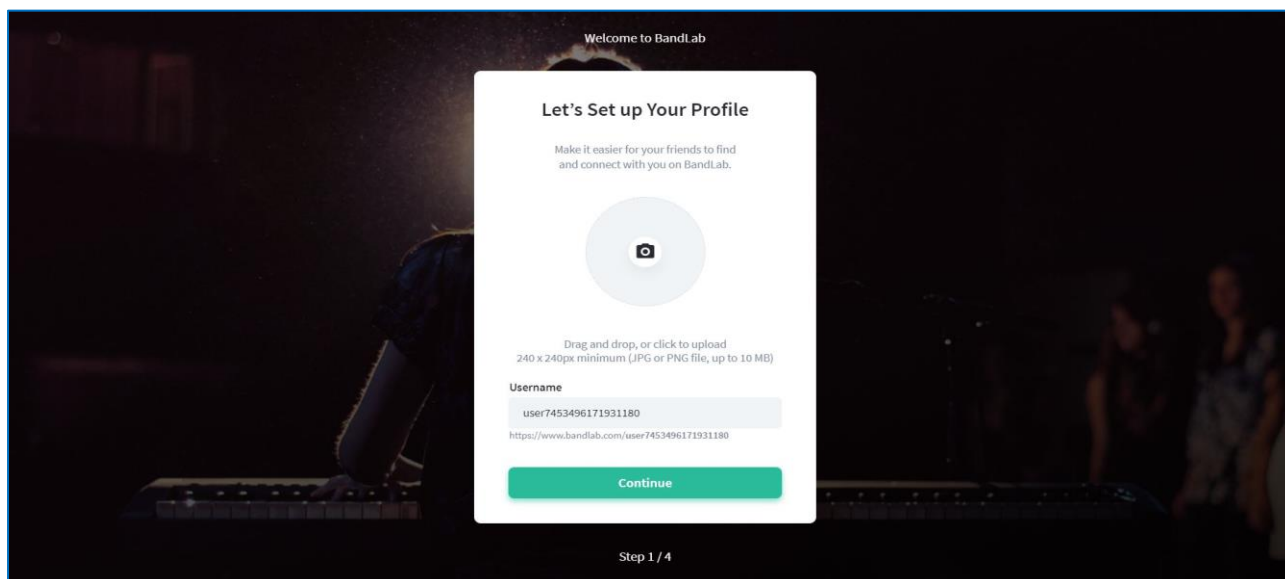
Listening to a piece of music can often feel like we are being taken on a journey. A well written piece of music can paint beautiful and vivid pictures with sounds, create other worlds we can visit in our minds and simply tell a great story. Just like any great story, a song, must have a beginning, a middle and an end. That way the listener can feel like they have travelled somewhere and, most importantly, had the incentive to continue to see it through to the end. Afterall, songwriters, just like movie makers, don't want their audience to turn off half way through. So, how do songwriters keep their listeners interested? You could write the most evocative chord sequence possible, but people will eventually get bored listening if you simply repeat it for 3 minutes. Even 'Around the World' by Daft Punk, a song made famous for its uncompromising repetition, has enough subtle changes and 'ear candy' to keep it interesting all the way to the end.

This week we are going to be experimenting with basic **song structures**; the simple methods, which songwriters and music producers use, to help their music build and drop. If we divide the length of a piece of music into smaller sections, such as 'Verse', 'Chorus' and 'Bridge', we can begin to arrange their position in the song and in what order they will play. We can also decide how these parts are going to differ; what sounds may be added or taken away to make it different from the last part. To practice this, we are going to create a short loop of music, then develop a song structure to give it a beginning, middle and end.

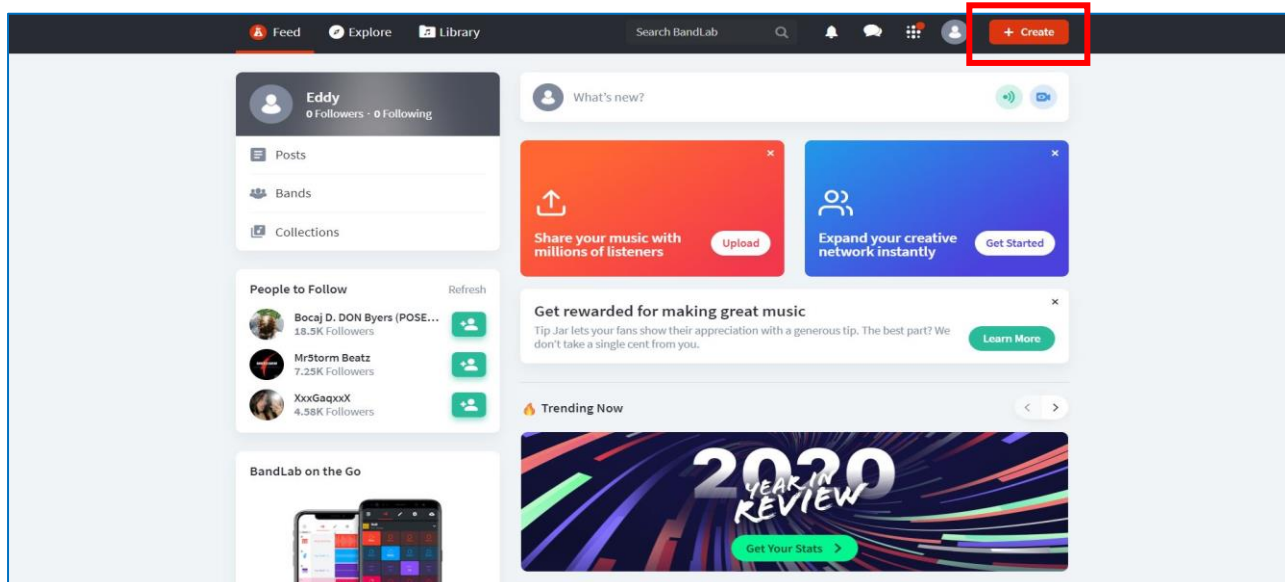
**To do:** Open <https://www.bandlab.com/> in your browser on your phone, tablet or laptop. If you have problems using the link search for '**Bandlab**' on Google. You will be taken to a site that looks like this.



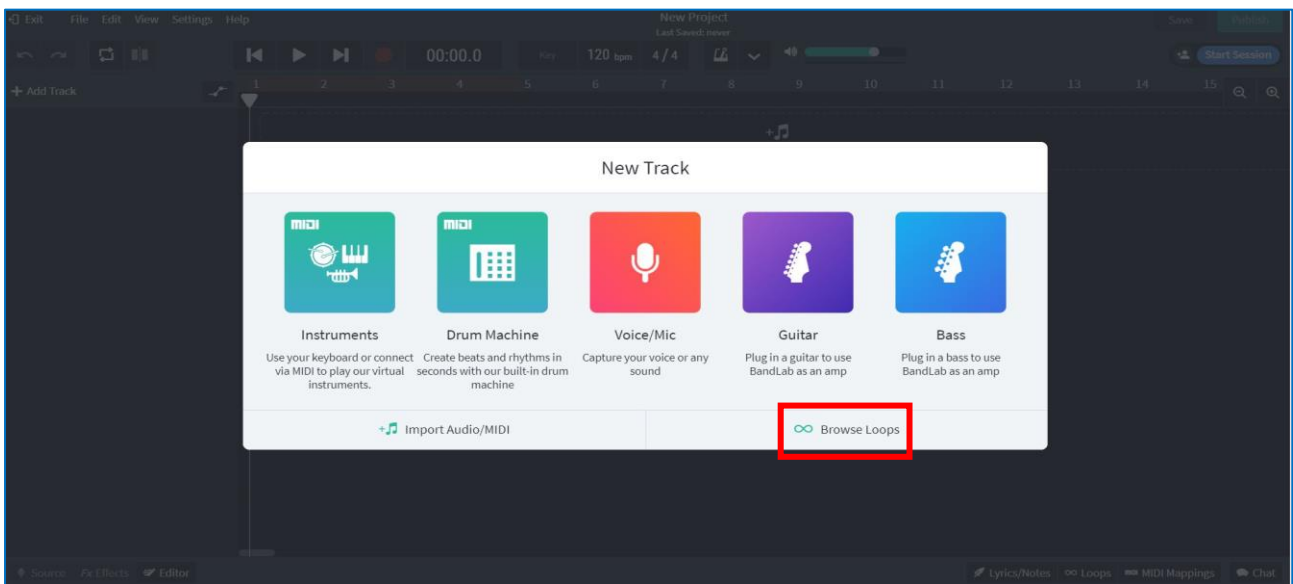
This is a great free website, that provides loop-based composition and recording software. If this is your first time visiting the website you will need to create a login using your email address. This can be done by clicking **'Sign Up'** in the top, right hand corner of your screen. You will be then be asked to input a name, email address and password. Once you have done this you will be taken to screen that look like the one below.



**To do:** Input a 'Username', ensuring you do not use any capital letters, and click 'Continue'. You will then be asked to select whether you are an 'Artist', 'Social Musician' or 'Fan'. There are descriptions of each to assist you in making the correct selection. Next you will need to choose from a selection of musical terms to describe yourself, followed by your preferred music genres. Once you have completed these four steps your account will be set up and you will be ready to go.

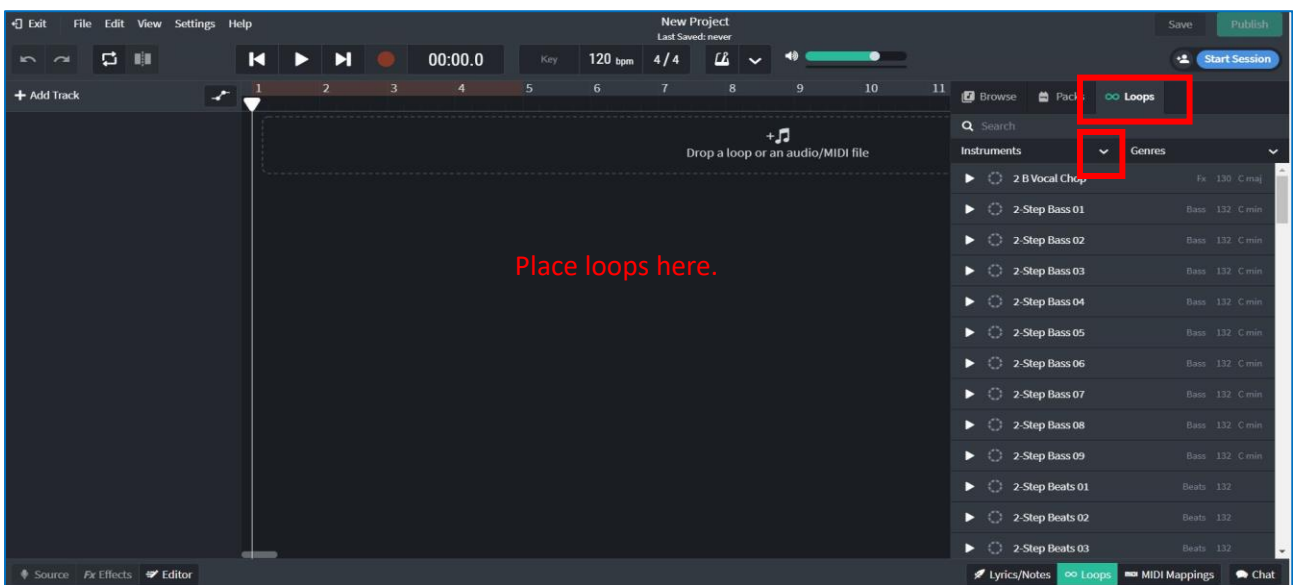


**To do:** Click on **'Create'** at the top, right of the page. You will then be taken to the 'Bandlabs' software, as shown in the following image.



For this session we do not need to use all of the functions available; we only need some simple controls. We will cover more of these functions in future sessions however.

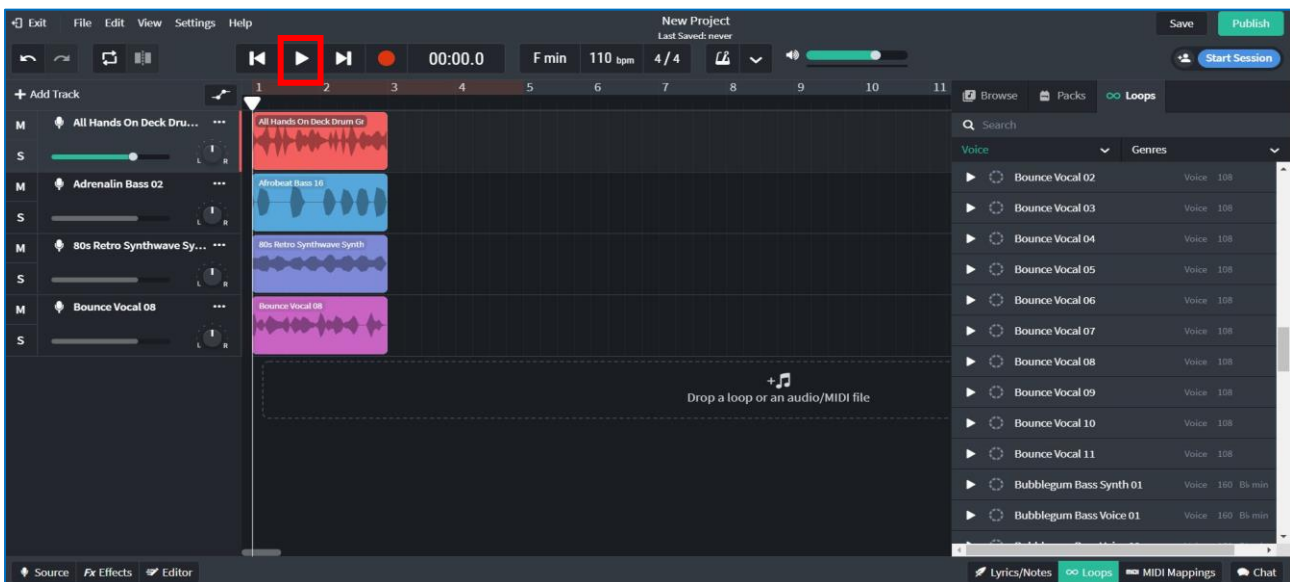
**To do:** Click on the **'Browse Loops'** icon, as highlighted in red on the image above. This will open up the bank of loops which are available to use.



We are going to use 4 different categories of instrument; **Drums, Bass, Synth and Vocals**.

**To do:** Select **'Loops'**, as highlighted in red on the image above, then click the tick next to **'Instruments'** to filter your search results to a specific category. *You can audition loops by clicking the triangle to the left of the sound.* Choose one loop from the **drums, bass, synth and vocals** categories (4 different loops in total). These loops can be added to our composition by dragging them to the left and placing them anywhere in the dark grey space.

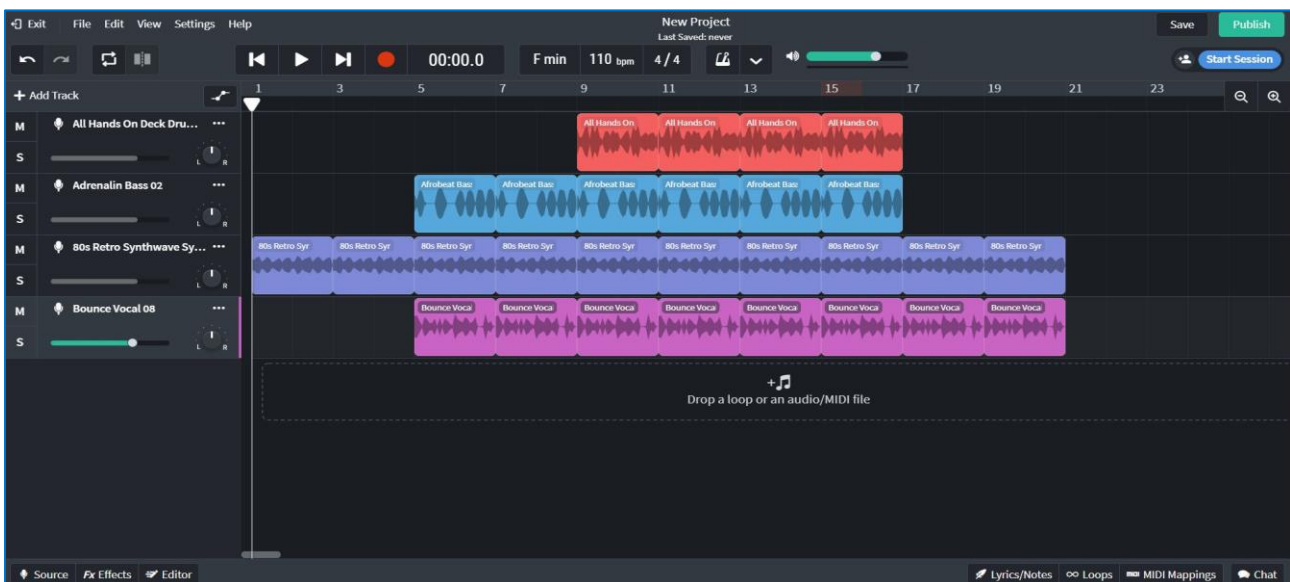
**Important:** I recommend using the **'Snap to Grid'** option to ensure easier placement of your loops. This can be done by clicking on **'View'**, at the top of the page, then clicking **'Snap to Grid'**. You will see a tick appear next to this option, once you have completed this, to confirm your selection.



After adding your 4 loops you will have a simple composition that looks similar to the image above, *depending on which loops you have chosen*. You can **play all 4 loops** at once by, firstly ensuring they are all lined up to start at the same time and then, **pressing the play button** on the top left.

**A quick tip:** You can make your loops shorter by clicking on the end of the loop and dragging it to the left. You can also create longer sections of your loops by duplicating them, this is done by right clicking on the loop, selecting copy and then right clicking again and selecting paste.

Playing all 4 loops together may sound great but after a while it is going to become monotonous, so let's start adding some structure to the composition.



**To do:** Decide which loop you would like to begin your song with and move your other loops across to the right so that they start at a different time. Try staggering the start of each loop like in my example above and then choose the order the sounds will come in and out by adjusting the start and end times.

**A quick tip:** use the numbered bars at the top to help you decide your loop position. Try bringing your sounds in and out after 4, 8 or 16 bars.

Even though we are using the same 4 loops our composition sounds much more interesting. This is because the song is now changing and progressing, or '**building**' and '**dropping**'. Listeners will anticipate this and stay engaged for much longer to hear what happens next.

**To do:** Try adding some more loops from the instrument categories. Consider the placement of each sound and experiment with the combinations of loops playing together. Whatever sounds you add be sure to create a clear beginning, middle and end to your composition.

**And finally:** a good song structure is one of the simplest methods to make your music engaging and fun to listen to. Some songwriters follow traditional structures with their music (verse - chorus - verse), whilst others experiment to create something more unique (intro - chorus - verse - epic ukulele solo – chorus - acapella outro). Whichever you choose, be sure to carefully consider the structure of your music so that people will want to listen right to the very end.