A Change Is Gonna Come (1964)
Sam Cooke

LISTEN FOR
• Socially conscious lyrics
• Heartfelt, ornamented vocal style
• Cinematic arrangement
• Studio polish

CREATION

Songwriters  Sam Cooke
Label  RCA Victor 8486
Musicians  Sam Cooke (voice), William Kurasch, Arnold Belnick, Ralph Schaeffer, Jack Pepper, Irving Lipschultz, Alexander Neiman, Ralph Schaeffer, Sidney Sharp, Darrel Terwilliger, Leonard Malarsky, Israel Baker, Tibor Zelig (violin), Harry Hyams (viola), Emmet Sargeant (cello), Chuck Badie (bass), Clifton White, Bobby Womack, René Hall, Norman Bartold (guitar) Harold Battiste (piano), William Hinshaw (French horn), John Ewing, David Wells, Louis Blackburn (trombone), Earl Palmer (drums), Emil Radocchia (timpani)
Producer  Sam Cooke, Hugo Peretti, Luigi Creatore
Engineer  David Hassinger
Recording  RCA Studio (Hollywood, CA); January 1964; stereo
Charts  Pop 31, R&B 9

MUSIC

Genre  Soul
Form  Simple verse with refrain
Key  B-flat major
Meter  4/4 for intro, then 12/8
**LISTENING GUIDE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Lyric Cue</th>
<th>Listen For</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:00</td>
<td>Intro (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Violins (L), cello (R) frame the stereo field with descending melodies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Trombones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Timpani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• French horn melodic tag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:16</td>
<td>Verse 1 (8)</td>
<td>“I was born”</td>
<td>• Voice (C); brass choir—French horn (L), trombones (R)—plays sustained chords; bass (R) drums (R), snare reverb “shadow” (L); strings out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s been a long”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:49</td>
<td>Verse 2 (8)</td>
<td>“It’s been too hard”</td>
<td>• String melodies (L and R) play counterpoint to voice; brass choir continues sustained chords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s been a long”</td>
<td>• Refrain; strings join brass in sustained-chord texture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:22</td>
<td>Verse 3 (8)</td>
<td>“I go to the movie”</td>
<td>• Brass plays rhythmic figure; strings play sporadic phrases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s been a long”</td>
<td>• Timpani (L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Refrain; brass texture as in Verse 1; strings out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:55</td>
<td>Bridge (8)</td>
<td>“Then I go to my”</td>
<td>• Brass anacrusis; tremolo strings; French horn answers vocal phrases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Timpani echoes anacrusis figure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Brass and timpani anacrusis leads to climactic chord change, highlighted by timpani roll and downward rushing strings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:29</td>
<td>Verse 4 (8)</td>
<td>“There’s been times”</td>
<td>• Brass rhythm from Verse 3; French horn melody.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refrain</td>
<td>“It’s been a long”</td>
<td>• Strings play sustained chords; brass out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:03</td>
<td>Tag</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Full ensemble holds final chord.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LYRICS

I was born by the river in a little tent
Oh and just like the river I’ve been running ev’r since
It’s been a long time, a long time coming
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

It’s been too hard living, but I’m afraid to die
‘Cause I don’t know what’s up there, beyond the sky
It’s been a long, a long time coming
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

I go to the movie and I go downtown
Somebody keep tellin’ me don’t hang around
It’s been a long, a long time coming
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

Then I go to my brother
And I say brother help me please
But he winds up knockin’ me back down on my knees, oh

There’s been times that I thought I couldn’t last for long
But now I think I’m able to carry on
It’s been a long, a long time coming
But I know a change is gonna come, oh yes it will

SOURCES

- Albin Zak III, Course Pak for A MUS-398 at the University of Albany.