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In this essay I shall be discussing three different genres and the particular characteristics that define them. The genres are Indie Folk, Dance Pop and Hip-Hop. I will go into detail about their structures, instrumentations and how my research into each genre has enabled me to create a song for each. I wrote each song with my co-writer Steve Knight as well as Ollie Malin for the Hip Hop track.

Indie Folk

Indie folk is a collection of three main genres: Folk music, Indie rock and Country music. It is the hybrid of folk guitar melodies with complicated contemporary instrumentation. Inspired by massive acts such as Bob Dylan and Radiohead, the genre has been made famous by acts such as The Decemberists, Vance Joy and Bon Iver. The genre lends itself to experimentation, especially in regards to the production used throughout. Other characteristics of the genre include multi-voiced harmonies, shown in the reference track used: Hey, Ma - Bon Iver.

Like in most popular music there are two main structures used within this genre. 1) The standard verse, pre chorus, chorus structure. 2) The ABAB structure.

For the track recorded we used the ABAB structure when writing the song, myself and my co-writer Steve Knight found that the song flowed well like this. The reference track 'Hey Ma' is a good example of this particular form of structure. It takes the song straight to the Hook which as we know is the key element for most songs.

The instrumentation used in Indie Folk is key to the specific sound of the genre. Each instrument is chosen carefully for the track to add the right style. When starting to produce the track - The One as I took inspiration from 'Hey Ma' I wanted to get the balance of the synths right. The main synth used throughout was created on a Nord Electro 5 HP using a preset called 'G2 Ecochoir'. Then layered on top of that was an electric piano, with several effects placed on it Crystalizer by Sound Toys and Stereo Spreader of Logic's FX.

Most Indie Folk songs will contain a guitar that leads the track. This may be an acoustic or electric guitar. Since it stems from Folk and Indie music there is no surprise that it is the most commonly used instrument in the genre.

The guitar was recorded via DI through a Universal Apollo Twin interface. Then in Logic I placed a compressor on the channel - CLA-2A and ran it through the CLA Guitar plugin, slightly affecting the high end and the delay. This gave the guitar an ambient sound without sounding too processed and meant that it could be placed well on top of the synths.

A feature of the reference track that we used during our song was the big falsetto chorus, common in a lot of Folk Indie songs as it creates a dynamic and melodic build in the chorus. When recording the harmonies and backing vocals for the chorus I took inspiration from a particular effect that Bon Iver uses, which is to add a heavy amount of pitch correction to the backing vocals. This autotune effect creates a unique sound almost as an instrument itself and helps the backing vocals to remain tight.

I created this by using the Pitch Correction FX on Logic Pro X, setting the key of the song and the particular scale (Major Scale). Then I turned the response time to it's fastest, 0.00ms, so it acts instantly.



The experimentation of the production in this genre allows for the experimentation of sound effects. In Bon Iver's reference track a vocal sample pitched up an octave is placed throughout the track almost in call and response with the lead vocal. I emulated this in the track I created by recording a vocal line, slicing it up and placing it into the EXS24 Sampler where I found a melody and rhythm that I felt suited the track. I then placed it through Sound Toys Little Alter boy which allows you to adjust the formant and pitch of the sample to the desired amount.

Like many other aspects of this particular genre there isn't a set drum rhythm or 'beat' that drives through each song. However drum rhythms are crafted to emphasise the complexity of the song. The specific drum samples I used were from Splice (Shock) and placed into NI Battery and programmed from there.

As it's a genre that has many sub genres in there isn't one set bpm for the genre unlike others such as EDM predominantly being at 127 bpm. This means that the bpm is wide open for the whole genre. The bpm of the song we created is 75, which is slightly faster than Hey Ma which is at 72.

I'm happy with the track created for this genre 'The One' as I feel that it ties in all the main elements of Indie Folk and artistically I was able to create a song that I am proud of.

Dance Pop

Dance pop is a music genre that originated in the 1980s. The music is predominately uptempo and made for nightclubs but has also become suitable for mainstream radio. The songs usually follow a simple structure with an emphasis on the tunes being catchy with strong melodies. The reference track I have chosen to base my own work on is, We Could Go Back - Jonas Blue.

The go to structure for this genre is the standard verse, pre chorus, chorus and I emulated this in the song that I created. The majority of Dance Pop songs are 3:30 or less in length due to this being the cut off time for radio play.

In terms of the instruments used a standard feature of this genre is a piano playing basic triads and following simple chord structures, such as the one used in the track I created which follows the pattern IV I V.

There are many different drum rhythms that are associated with the Dance Pop genre one main one is the Afro beat. This is the rhythm used in the reference track 'We could go back' and it was brought into the mainstream in 2015 by Justin Bieber's track with Skrillex 'Sorry'. The rhythm has been used within Dancehall music for decades due to it's bouncing nature making listeners want to dance along. Other genre specific drum sounds such as the finger snap are used to replace snare drums, primarily played on the off beat.

There are numerous bass sounds used in Dance pop, in the 80's and 90's it was the big synth bass that filled the low end. In the current mainstream the 808 Bass is the go to choice for producers. Since it's invention in the 1980's the Roland TR-808 drum machine has changed the music industry. The bass drum sound generated through this stood out mostly due to its powerful presence and that it can be tuned to whatever note it's required to play. It was predominately used in hip hop music then transferring to trap music as it gain mainstream traction, thus paving it's way into pop music.

The tempo of Dance pop music ranges from 90 bpm to 120 bpm. The tempo for the track I created is 100 bpm. Making it on the fast side of a mid tempo Dance Pop track, I find that when you have afrobeat drums that it is important to keep the tempo of the song slightly slower as the natural bounce of the rhythm makes the song seem faster than it actually is.

A key feature of Dance pop are risers which are usually placed before the Chorus or the hook to 'build the tension' they can also be used before the end of the chorus, usually the second, to build into the middle 8 or breakdown.

One effect that adds ear candy that I want to go into detail about is a cut up vocal sample, from splice (again shock) called MDSN_LXCTY_melody_child. I chopped up each section of this loop and then placed it into the EXS24 Sampler on Logic so that I could play around with the different keys on the keyboard to find a melody that stuck. Once I was happy with the melody I EQ'd it by cutting the low end out at around 1KHz and added Valhalla Vintage Verb with a mix of around 50% to fill out the sound so it fit in nicely and almost became a synth pad. This was added in the first pre Chorus and continued into the Chorus. This is a feature that Producers such as Kygo incorporate into most of their songs, take his recent track - Not Ok feat Chelsea Cutler, he uses a similar vocal pad effect in the Choruses of this song.



Standard of most pop music and true to Dance pop is the use of harmonies in the Choruses. These are usually just a third above the main melody, keeping with the simplicity of certain areas of the genre.

The demo vocals on this track were recorded by myself using a Shure SM7B. The vocal chain consists of compression through the CLA-2A, I EQ'd the track with a slight cut around 75Hz and a slight boost at 760Hz, this makes the high end of the vocal stand out common in most pop music. All I did after that was to place Valhalla Vintage Verb reverb on the channel. The plan is to get a female vocalist to sing on the track as it was originally written to suit a female vocal range.

The track I created for this genre 'The One' would stand well in the charts if hit were to be released by an artist such as Jonas Blue as each genre specific element is covered within the song.

Hip Hop

Hip hop started as a cultural movement in the 1970s. Musically there are three key elements that define it as a genre: Rapping (MCing), DJing (Scratching) and stylised rhythmic music. Nothing is as recognisably linked to the genre as Turntables. Seen by many as the 'guitar of hip hop', the scratching sound of moving the record backwards and forwards created by the Disk Jockeys who play them is a sound that no other instrument can make so helps define the genre.

The structure of the songs in this genre is pretty regular, they almost all contain an intro, verse; usually 16 bars, followed by a Chorus; sung as a chant by the artist rapping, or sung by another artist who features on the track. Hip hop has been a regular feature in the mainstream charts over the last 30 years, it has inspired many new sub genres such as trap and Grime.

One key feature of Hip Hop is the use of drum loops to be the basis of a 'beat'. Over the years there have been many different ways of obtaining or creating these beats, with the outcome

always being the same; that it is the main element of the track for the other elements to be layered on top. Initially the loops were created through the use of sampling where the producers would chop up sections of drums from other songs and repeat that 4 bar or 8 bar, thus creating a loop. Once samplers such as the Roland TR-808 drum machine was created it all changed as producers had more freedom over their drum loops as they were allowed to create them from scratch. The drum sounds from the 808 drum machine and other samplers pioneered the way drum production is done today. We now use VSTs such as NI Battery, as mentioned previously, or Drum Machine Designer on Logic pro X. For the track I created - Sacanagem, I used an Akai MPC1000 to generate the drum loop. I then recorded it into Logic and chopped up the track to create the different sections of the song and to add specific stops in for effect. The use of drum samplers and VSTs are very common in beat production today but the 'old fashioned' way of creating beats is still very much used by producers where now they can go onto sites such as splice (again again shock), find a drum loop and start a track like that, thus meaning there is no one set way of creating drum beats in Hip Hop. Another feature I added was a crackling vinyl effect over the drum track created on the MPC1000 using a vinyl crack sample, another well known feature of Hip Hop music heard on many tracks, such as A Tribe Called Quest - Electric Relaxation.

Hip hop is a genre that allows musicians to jam their ideas and incorporate different genres into it, in our case it was Jazz music portrayed in the keyboard part. A Wurlitzer Classic Electric piano was chosen for its Rhodes like sound fitting into the genre. In the channel I added a slight phase shifter - Sound Toys PhaseMistress and tape saturation with the J37, Waves.



For the bass on the track I DI'd a Fender Jazz bass into Logic and jammed over the top of the chords. A common feature of Hip hop is live bass as it adds to the groove and vibe of the music both reference tracks that I have mentioned use live bass within them. The main aim producing live bass on a track well is to make sure it sits well against the bass drum allowing it to bring through its own rhythms and making sure both instruments don't cancel each other out in the low end of the track. This is achieved by EQ and Compression. On the track I used a CLA-2A compressor to boost the sound of the bass and with the EQ I gave it a slight cut 20Hz to leave all the bottom end for the bass drum to fill.

Hip Hop follows a standard range of tempo, always between 75 bpm and 100 bpm. The bpm of the track created is set at 96.5 so its on the upper end of the average beats per minute for the genre.

When recording the raps on the track I set up a condenser mic in the studio, a Rode NT1, and got both of the vocalists to stand around it. I did this to help create the vibe of the vocal tracks, to allow the rappers to bounce ideas off each other. Hip Hop lyricists are known as story tellers allowing them to rap freely and go as far into detail with their lyrics as they please, another key element of the genre. This is how we went about writing the track, it's a story of when Steve and Ollie were in Brazil and how they met a musician named Marcelo who booked a recording studio only for the lads to forget about it.

This track I am particularly proud of and I feel it sits well in the Hip Hop genre because I feel that every part of it is stylistically correct. Within the first few sections of hearing it you know that its a Hip Hop track.

Conclusion

When approaching the task to create tracks from three different genres I wanted to attempt three completely different genres to allow myself to learn about different types of music and challenge myself to create songs in these genres. I feel that the songs that I chose as reference tracks are great examples for their genres and helped me to create songs that I also feel suit the genres that I based them on.

The only issue that I faced when going about recording process for these tracks was the time in which it took to finish the tracks. I usually like to create and finish tracks quickly but due to the assignment needing me to delve into genres that I had never written before it slowed down my creative process, having said this I feel that it has made me a better producer as I have learnt things in other genres that I wouldn't have necessarily have covered previously.

I do admit that there were restrictions that I faced when trying to create the songs to a similar level of the reference tracks but these tracks were created by world renowned producers and mixed by the best mixing engineers so for a first draft I can't be too displeased with them.

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