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(ELEMENT F2 ESSAY)

This essay is a demonstration of how I referenced three tracks from different genres of music and responded to them with the creation of original tracks with similar elements, instrumentation and production style. In the essay I will cover the reference tracks chosen, other tracks from the reference track's genres, and the response tracks I have written, explaining how my track is relevant to the references and my choices where I have decided not to use an element from these same reference tracks.

Track 1. Kate Bush – 'Sat In Your Lap'

Genre: Alternative Pop

The first track I chose to reference is 'Sat In Your Lap' by Kate Bush.

I chose this song as I admire the quirky-feel, which is prominent in Kate Bush's productions and it is something I find myself playing upon when producing too.

Instrumentation wise what stands out to me is the percussive elements, namely the toms which drive the rhythm, and the way which her vocal is sampled and used in a similar way to the way that the tom is used throughout the song.

Genre-wise, Kate Bush spans multiple different styles, 'Some say she is a pop artist' (Watsoo, 2022), but some people would argue she is 'rock-oriented'. According to the article by Watsoo on Roll On The Record, her style is 'best classified as alternative pop' (Watsoo, 2022).

Some similar songs within this style/genre of music would be:

Kate Bush – Suspended In Gaffa (quirky feel, vocal layering, piano sound)

ESKA – Gatekeeper (quirky melodies, percussion, vocal layering)

Laura Mvula – Angel (vocal layering, percussion)

Way Of Living – Response Track

This song's production style is influenced by Kate Bush's 'Sat In Your Lap'.

Instrumental elements I have used which are present in the reference track are piano, drums (heavy use of toms as in the reference song), lead and background vocals, bass guitar and synth sounds.

Some techniques I used in the production of this song were: Delay on the vocals heard in the introduction, link after the 1st chorus and the outro. I also used some delay on the percussive elements such as the toms and kick drum pattern, at a lower volume so it wasn't too busy in that lower frequency.

I chose to use one lead vocal in the verses and pre chorus, which is the case in 'Sat In Your Lap' and double it for the chorus, which again is the case with the reference song. This is because it gives quite an intimate focus on the vocals and lyrics of the song which are the main parts tying the song together.

Reverb was added to the vocal channels, with more for the backing vocals to give a fuller sound during the choruses and less on the main vocal, for a more focused sound for the lead vocals to be heard. Similarly to the reference track there is less reverb on the lead vocals.

Tremolo was used on the backing vocals heard in the intro, link and outro of the song. This adds texture to the production providing interest when the song begins. In the reference track, there is tremolo heard towards the end of the song, specifically at 03:00 minutes in on the brass instruments.

EQ: I used minimal EQ, an example is on the same vocal part mentioned above, this particular EQ was to boost the higher frequencies of the vocals and lowering the low frequency. This gave the impression of a 'telephone' voice sounding further away

in the track. I thought this was suitable for the introduction, link and outro as those are the more sparse parts of the song, with only vocals and piano, so it helped give an illusion of being in a different the song momentarily.

Panning was used for most of the elements, such as on the backing vocals, which created space for the lead vocals to be heard. It was used on the percussion too such as shakers, castanets and toms in the 2nd pre chorus and 2nd chorus, to give a surrounded sound from the drums, similar to that heard in the reference track where the toms come in at the beginning. This is heard in the Kate Bush song throughout, the toms, which start the song, the harmonies on the vocals, and the brass part around 03:02 in the song.

Automation: The piano's volume in the introduction gradually got louder just in time for the bass notes to come in. There was also some automation of volume for the vocals, such as when double the lead in the pre chorus and in the chorus, so that they were not too loud in the mix. I used some more volume on the percussion too as to avoid having several different channels, where there was some space in one for a short element I would adjust the volume with automation.

Although the reference track has more instrumentation than this track does, I layer in different percussive elements such as a drum kit, castanets, shakers, woodblock and timpani in different places so the rhythm drives the song such as in the reference track. The layering of the vocals is also a featured borrowed from the Kate Bush track, which gives depth to the song for the listener.

Track 2. Moses Boyd ft Poppy Ajudha – 'Shades Of You'
Genre: Jazz Electronic

This song has balance of both acoustic (drum kit, vocals) and electronic elements (bass, effected brass, synth plucked strings and pad with chords, percussion and other effects).

The genre is a blend of Neo-Soul/Jazz, with some electronic style too. The darker elements of the song such as the chord progression and the effected brass, the trombone, lend themselves to modern jazz, as well as the intricacy of the way the drum kit was played by Moses Boyd. As a drummer and producer he has been noted for how he mixes 'live jazz drumming with synthesised sounds' (Hutchinson, K. 2018).

Other songs in this genre of music would be:

Hiatus Kaiyote – Mobius Streak (blend of both electronic and acoustic elements, synth layers, drum elements)

Hiatus Kaiyote ft Arthur Verocai – Get Sun (percussion again, expansive production, layers of instruments)

Denai Moore – Let It Happen (electronic elements)

Take Care – Response Track

I start this song with cajon bass and snare sounds. I affected them both with a little bit of distortion and compression, just to get a slightly warmer and bouncy sound.

Shortly after the vocal drone, which comes in the beginning, a synthetic sounding brass instrument is heard then introducing a Sub Bass, mimicking the two elements in the Moses Boyd track. This works as it reinforces the electronic and jazz element of the song.

To add more acoustic sounding percussive elements I imitated the drum pattern with my voice, layered it a few times and panned them. I added some compression and used a Bass Amp effect to boost the lows and reinforce the drums frequency range.

I added synth strings in a high pitch to lift the song, which also provided balance as the vocals are in a lower pitch as well as the other instruments heard.

During the chorus, I layer more versions of the bass melody in different synth instruments, one with more distortion to give a gritty sound to the track, similar to how the trombone on the reference track is used. I increase the attack of the trombone sounding bass during the chorus to assist in clearly marking the transition of sections.

Minimal vocal harmonies and layers in general are used in this song, which also reflects the reference track. I layer the lead vocal throughout the verse and chorus, but only one harmony, a higher one is heard. This was chosen as the majority of the instrumentation resides in the lower frequencies, with the gritty bass sound being what I want to be the strong focus throughout the song. Minimal vocal layering makes enough space for this to be the case. Minimal amount of reverb is also added to the vocals, as I wanted them to be fully present, against the synth string sound, which has a longer release time.

I use automation at the end of the song, which fades out the volume of all elements. I saw this fitting for the style of song and it is also present in intro of the Moses Boyd reference song, and at the ending of this song as well.

A Fuzz-Wah effect is added to the trumpets, which come in from the second verse, muting the sharpness of the tone which adds texture without taking the focus away from the other elements of the song.

Track 3. Bjork – Bachlorette
Genre: Avant-Garde

This song is not easy to categorize but various work refers to Bjork's style as 'avant-garde' (Turitzin M. 2009).

Some examples of songs, which fit well underneath this category of music are:

Bjork - Army Of Me

Serpentwithfeet – Mourning Song

Moses Sumney - Quarrel

I Cannot Blame Him – Response Track

For this song I used reverb on the church bell, on the celeste organ and on the vocals, which were all doubled for a surround sound effect. I also used some reverb on the strings, and played with the release length, making it longer to imitate a real string section. This is in response to the string section featured on the reference track by Bjork, to make it sound more realistic. For the pizzicato strings which are heard just before the second chorus and once in the second chorus, I increased the attack to make them even sharper.

I chose to use the bells and celeste organ as opposed to the harp sounds on the reference track as this suited the song better, and added more depth, which works well with the string section.

I added some echo effects to 1 channel of the vocals to fill in the space and add ambience, also to reinforce the end of the lyrical phrases it was featured on.

I used EQ on the drums to lessen the lower frequencies, because the song was busy with the celeste and string section I wanted to be the main focus of the song, whereas the percussion helps drive the rhythm without taking too much of the focus for the listener.

Bibliography

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'Some say she is a pop artist, while others claim her music is more rock-oriented. There are those who argue that Kate's work draws from many different genres, making it difficult to classify under any one particular category. We think that Kate Bush's music can be best classified as alternative pop.'