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MA Commercial Music Production

3 Commercial Tracks

1ST TRACK K-POP

The K-POP is one of the fastest-growing markets with increasing big revenue every year. It's the combination of style and genres influenced from around the world such a pop, dance, hip hop and many more. The Korean Pop music's making the mark on US charts and in Europe and they started sung in English. There is not a defined tempo for the K-POP scene, each song is the mixture of different influences so can be varied but most songs are uptempo.

The song which I picked to be referenced is the song from songwriting camp from the K-POP brief. Its a Boss Bitch by Doja Cat American singer and rapper with the electro-pop vibe. The track is in 126bpm with the aggressive style. The instrumentation is mixed from different genres. There are synthesisers and drum machines. The sections are fast changing with the dynamic and feeling of the fast-paced song. I will try to keep the listener hooked in and will keep trying different things such as an extract thing in pre-chorus - take out some parts of the instruments. The arrangement in this track doesn't stop until the mid8. It is a song which is different than most of Korean Pop defined music but has similar influences and this is why I think this song been treated as the K-POP.

The language isn't the barrier anymore, there are many more new songs recorded in English. As the first thing which I wanted to do is to layer the arrangement and structure with a simple beat and the hook to have an idea of the movement. This leads me to pass the track to the songwriters and I have been able to start producing the loops and proper beat with electro influences. I wanted to create some crazy sections, I mean some unusual hook in the beat or around it. The hi-hats are influenced by the trap. I wanted to create a few different layers of hi-hats, depending on sections. When I got a first vocal, I started sketching the track. I have pitched up the chorus part to add the craziness to the track. The backing vocals are subtle and layer in specified sections. I think our version of K-POP is pretty close to the referenced track, just the vibe of the track is more gentle but still with a fast-paced arrangement and many influences from different genres.

I did use the selection of virtual synthesisers and samples from Maschine.

For future production of the K-POP, I will try to go more happy way like a BTS and other boybands. I think this is what we missed in our production but still, we were stuck to the brief. We created something new and we didn't want to copy the track and instrumentation totally. This track was, particularly in that style and for future attempts of a new K-POP song I will consider the different style or mood. Our vocalist went that way of a little bit sad vocal. I think it sounds great, just the vibe isn't 100% right. This is another thing that the producer didn't supervise the recordings of the vocal. I found this really annoying. Sometimes we are forced because of the situation or one go situation of tracking vocals and nothing I can't do to change this. The vocalist sent me already recorded vocal and I could just accept it. The communication is the key, and in this case, they didn't want to cooperate fully. My messages were ignored. This is another thing to consider if the artists are committed to the project. Usually the most talented are the laziness one, might that was a case.

2ND TRACK - House Track

From my research, I decided to pick the track which suits be the best as the artist and producer. I am coming from the electronic music world and I want to balance between the niche and commercial musicians and I choose song made from the collaboration of David Guetta & Black Coffe called the Drive.

David Guetta is well-know in the dance music world for his hits and he usually sells in millions his songs. The Black Coffee tend to stay in the underground scene and this collaboration is very interesting.

The track is in 118 bpm. its common tempo for house music which occurs between 118 - 130 bpm in several different sub-genres. The characteristic which defines the house music are: beat machines, synthesisers and 4/4 beat signature. Those are the main one which are constantly in use from the early '80s to those days.

The track content is subtle with the glorious vocal over top from Delilah Montagu. I choose this track to by my reference and give me the idea of the movement and the arrangement. The chords are simple in the background leading song through. The foundation is the beat which is very solid with the characteristic top kick and additional shakers to give the dynamic to the song. The percussion in this track is made from several different loops and the snare doesn't play the regular pattern to the 4/4 beat. It's placed differently in varies rhythms. I can hear the Black Coffe's on the percussion, he is constantly using Afro-house influenced sounds and rhythms in his productions and in the lives shows. The light and wide percussion fit and sit on the track very well. The lead instrument are the keys with the tropical vibe makes the track easy to listen and dive in. The bass play has sustained notes and is layers with the pad in some sections. For my project, I will focus on the arrangement the most to have that correct structure. It is in simple order, such as intro, verse 1, chorus, post-chorus, verse 2, chorus, post-chorus. I would like to keep the simplicity and complex in the track within changing the bmp and the sonic character of the song. The referenced example is light, great for the chill ride in the car. I want to stick to that vibe of driving with slightly increased pace and a little bit heavier beat in night scenery. I want to create a deep house track which will be very close to the reference track but with a different selection of the sounds.

I did follow the arrangement of the track, and I wrote the song in A minor with a simple melody line. The drums are programmed in Maschine with 4/4 beat signature and with the various loops. I didn't have the opportunity to record percussion-like in the reference track which has unique rhythmic sections with a human touch, I think they were recorded live and programmed additional in some sections. My lead instrument which is a synthesiser (the bells)has two variants of the main melody to keep the dynamic changing in the song. There were tropical vibes on a lead instrument, I used the bells from the synth which I think sits nicely together with the sustained bass. I layered also the pad which highlights the coming section.

.The structure of the track is smooth. I wanted to add something extra and I created the silent gap before the second verse enters. This gives the tension and releases feeling and it makes a track more interesting. One of the technics which I have applied was to fill out space with the pad.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUCZHsuJyFk>

To find a perfect match for the vocal seems to be harder then I thought. I did try to work with two songwriters, everything was online and the attempts weren't good enough. In 1st case, the edits of tracks and recordings of new vocals, 2 weeks later ruined the track. The singer got tired of the

track and she did give up to record properly last parts and as the outcome the track had vocals which didn't work together, the tonal character of the attempts were different from each other and I didn't like it anymore. She didn't want to meet in real in the studio to work on an idea together and when I said that some of the section are not nice she got furious and the vibe of whole projected decreased on value. Also, the restrictions of another Lockdown didn't help at all to write a nice track. That was the first time wrote for someone and the effect is an unfinished song. Another attempt was in the vibe of Radiohead band so mood totally out of the brief and the singer haven't another idea for the vocals. I was trying to tell what I am looking for but not always is how we want. so I decide to keep working with the instrumental and be ready for the right person.

I think that my record could be played on the radio if I get proper vocalist on board. It's pretty close to the referenced track and is done in my style. There are aspects which I could improve for next time such as the drums. In referenced track there are amazing, In my next productions, I will keep the focus on playing rhythms by hands and record live percussive elements this will bring life to my songs. The same with the live instruments. I need to have more human playing then by locked in the box.

I did use several tips from Guetta production interviews, one of them was Half time which interestingly manipulates the audio loops. I used it for specific background layers in the intro and the later part of the song. I wanted also to keep the balance of commercial sounding track and niche music. This is what they did but with better effect. Their track is more polite and balanced with nice-sounding percussion and sounds in overall and the vocalist did a great job.

3RD TRACK - Hip-hop

For the last song, I picked the track of Kanye West - Stronger, Its sampled main hook from Daft Punk - Harder, Faster, Better, Stronger. The idea of that sample brought to the track interesting dynamics and fresh character. it is like a perfect collab and great use of sampling technic of Kanye West team. The hip hop was growing during the years, from the sampling area and mpcs to most advanced sample and infusion of different genres. The following example has influences from electronic music. The following song was from those inventions such a Swizz Beats sampled the technologic for Busta Rhymes - Touch It and those songs were creating something new which could be hard to work with. Its interesting like those guys picked same, the Daft Punk band to sample from. The stronger has passed through several mixing engineers and the effect wasn't fully satisfied Kanye's team. They decide to ask for the help of Timbaland to re-write the drums. His aid to the track brought the Stronger on the top of the charts. Comparing to the Busta's song, Stronger is more advanced regarding the arrangement and sonic effect.

I wanted to create something similar, to sample well know the artist and put it to own production. I sampled the Post Malone the Psycho track. I took a loop from the intro to have less music around it which I don't need.

The arrangement of the Stronger is fast-paced with changing sections and I will stick to a similar structure with additional sounds of electronic music. The track is hard to define, a tempo is 104 bmp and for sure it's in a hip hop range but with pop music accent. I will stay around the same tempo to keep similar dynamic. The loop from Post Malone track is in Ab major so I decide to stay in the same key of the song.

For the beat, I used a mixture of the sounds from genres such as hip hop and electronic music. I wanted to stay to that vibe of implementing different sound from each style. I did experiment with the Psycho loop to achieve unexpected sound hook. That was the first time when I sampled from the original song and effect could be a little bit better, but I learnt the process for future projects. I am not sure If did the right choice of Psycho. It works for me to that level of worth trying. In the stronger track the attempts of sampling lead to the collaboration of those artists, they just cleared the sample and received a clean version from Daft Punk. I do believe that Kanye West did the smart choice of sampling well know an artist with the nice hook if you do it right the main artist will bring you up. It's the same situation as with the remixes.

The whole project was running smoothly just the time which is crucial and sometimes I had to challenge with. I am satisfied with the picked referenced tracks may be the planning and the execution of the tasks could be improved in future productions. Some of the things didn't work well and I learnt how to work with the vocalist even if the attempts are not fully successful done. From a producer point of view, the thing to get into the subject close enough is something to learn during the time. It was the first time, that I was writing to the brief and I am happy from achieved results. The house track I think is the closest version from all three tracks. It's a little bit different with a faster tempo and changed instruments but with the same vibe which can be noticeable through the song.

I learn how to do proper structure and arrangement, the transitions are the things which I have to be a focus on. Especially in K-POP genre, here things are going out of control sometimes, I meant they are a mixture of different vibes and this sounding weird sometimes, but its a unique selling point even for Western market too. I meant the sounding influences from several genres can sound crazy in fast tempo, but it is defined as the Korean Pop music. Their whole market is structure differently than western music, the bands, are trained to dance, perform and sign from, it is a big act on the stage. This can be noticeable on the records the dynamics of loops and nice well-done transitions.

The stronger was a good idea to pick as the reference track, but the execution wasn't that great. I could find it better cut but I stopped on this one. Sometimes you have to decide when to stop and that was that moment. Next time I will find 3 different loops of the songs and I choose a one. I am not gonna be forced to stay at the one only. That was the weakest song from the whole project. I am glad that I could learn how to structure the song properly, just the time, I wish to have more and to be fully satisfied with the work commitment.

The mix and mastering are done in a fast way. I was trying to do my best but I believe that I could miss something. The most attention I put to the house track because I think is the best one even without the vocals. I used the technic of tension and release in the tracks such as putting gaps in between the sections and also filtering the songs before the chorus enter. I experienced the previous songs writing attempts and they were 70% successful and I do believe the right vocalist will satisfy me fully and also I think that I can improve my work too. The biggest problem was to not meet on real, we couldn't fully collaborate our visions and when I said something about that I don't like some parts of recordings, she made it a problem from it. So misunderstanding affected on the unfinished project from my point of view. Of course, the pandemic didn't stop us to try but the effect could be much better.

2705 words

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