

Element 2 – Essay

song 1 (Reference)

'You Are Not Alone' - Emeli Sande: https://youtu.be/u_o1USRT81Y

Instrumentation

Piano, string pad, Hammond organ, drums, bass, synthesiser, gospel choir style backing vocal, lead vocals.

Arrangement

Verse 1, Verse 2, Chorus, Verse 3, Verse 4, Chorus, Bridge, Chorus, Outro

Mix (EQ and level balances)

Characteristically Gospel/RnB in its roots. The rhythm is strong and bass mostly bass lead. Instruments in gospel usually includes, bass guitar, rhythm guitar, percussion/claps/tambourine, Hammond organ, piano, strings, and horns. Throughout the piano appears quite dominant in setting the mood and tone of the track. The bass and drums in terms of balance present a good foundation carrying the groove, and accentuating rise and fall dynamics of the track.

Tempo

The song hovers around 86BPM and very much has a live feel. The timing is not rigid and at intervals quite unnoticeably drift in-between the beat, adding to the overall gospel/RnB feel, pronouncing the uplifting and inspirational emotion to the track.

Time signature: 4/4

Musical key signature and mode

Song written in key of D major and sits within the Lydian mode.

Song 1(Own creation)

'I wish I Knew' - written in the key of A major

Instrumentation

Piano, string pad, drums, bass, rhythm guitar, lead guitar, stacked backing vocals, single lead vocal.

Arrangement

Verse 1, Chorus, Bridge, Verse 2, Chorus, Outro

Mix (EQ and level balances)

Characteristically the track has suggested gospel/RnB overtones. Lead by the bass, the aim was to capture the uplifting essence of the gospel vibe from the source track. The song arrangement is not specific to the source material but has similarities reflecting the overall feel and emotion of the track.

Tempo

The tempo differs slightly to that of the source track and registers at 84BPM. This change in tempo was instigated by the feel that I wanted to capture and that felt right for the meter and mode of the song. Unlike the source track the tempo stays fixed and constant. Instead I opted to use the rise and fall elements of the track to create the movement and emotion

achieved in the source material. The methodology behind this approach was to explore whether the same results could be achieved by using alternative methods?

Time signature

4/4

Musical key signature and mode

Song written in key of A major and sits within the Lydian mode.

song 2 (Reference)

'Stuck on You' - Ariana Grande & Justin Bieber: <https://youtu.be/pE49WK-oNjU>

Instrumentation

Guitar, Hammond organ, drums, bass, synthesiser, lead vocal/s, harmonised and duet styled backing vocals.

Arrangement

Intro, Verse 1, Pre-Chorus, Chorus, Verse 2, Pre-Chorus, Chorus, M8, Pre-Chorus, Chorus, Outro.

Mix (EQ and level balances)

The track is very much guitar lead and is based around an often used five chord sequence, popular in modern pop music structure. The guitar has a distinctive reverberated and heavily compressed sound. The tone is bright and implies the slow rhythmic feel and mode of the song. The vocals are big and bright and sit proud at the top of the mix.

Tempo

The song is played at 60BPM with a classic sounding old-soul delivery and vibe.

Time signature: 4/4

Musical key signature and mode

Song written in key of G# major.

Song 2 (Own creation) 'Single Release'

'Right Here Right Now'

Instrumentation

Guitar, Hammond organ, piano, drums, bass, clav, lead vocal, harmonised backing vocals.

Arrangement

This arrangement closely resembles that of the reference track.

Verse 1, Pre-Chorus, Chorus, Verse 2, Pre-Chorus, Chorus, M8, Pre-Chorus, Chorus, Outro.

Mix (EQ and level balances)

The mix and balance of this track is loosely based on that of the reference track.

Tempo

Tempo is 60BPM, same as the reference track.

Time signature

4/4

Musical key signature and mode

Song written in key of A major.

Song 3 (Reference)

Free Your Mind – En Vogue: <https://youtu.be/i7iQbBbMAFE>

Instrumentation

Drums, bass, guitar/s, lead vocal/s, backing vocal/s.

Arrangement

Intro, Verse 1, Pre-Chorus, Chorus, Verse 2, Pre-Chorus, Chorus, Break, Chorus/Outro

Mix (EQ and level balances)

Characteristically categorised as club/dance, New-Jack-Swing, rock-funk. The drums are upfront and supply a strong and percussive backbeat. The vocal melody line sits across a three-note rock styled guitar riff.

Tempo

100BPM

Time signature: 4/4

Musical key signature and mode

Song written in key of A major and sits within the Lydian mode.

Song 3 (Own creation)

‘Shame’ - written in the key of C major

Instrumentation

Elec Piano, drums, bass, rhythm guitar, lead guitar, stacked backing vocals, single lead vocal.

Arrangement

The song arrangement is like that of the source material

Intro, Verse 1, Chorus, Verse 2, Chorus, Bridge, Chorus, Outro

Mix (EQ and level balances)

Methodology behind this mix and production was capture the elements of energy, rhythmic feel, swing, groove, and meter contained in the reference track. Achieving this required the use of compressors, limiters reverbs, distortion, phaser, delay, and some EQ.

Tempo

90 BPM. The hire tempo of 100BPM (as in the reference track) did not deliver the singability, groove or feel of that reflected in the reference track. These I considered to the driving force and key elements to the track

Time signature

4/4

Musical key signature and mode

Song written in key of A major and sits within the Lydian mode.

The aim and purpose of this essay is to underpin, explore, further show, and understand the processes of building a and producing a song from start-to-finish. This also shows how these techniques, defining characteristics and musical decisions are all supported by the terms and relevant research carried out in writing this essay.

Regardless of musical style or genre, the overall aim when creating music is to create music that meet an overall standard of quality. What is important is that we understand the required tools, methods, and principles that are commonly associated. The purpose of having this knowledge and understanding is so producers can make constructing a quality track that delivers the intended messages a more coherent and easier process.

Research suggests that in today's music-making world, the only rule is there are no rules. It encourages producers to avidly record and manipulate sounds, parts, and sequences to create sample banks for inclusion in songs and projects. It says to mix rhythms and genres together to create beats and melodies that go further and to create new categories of music. However, it also suggests that just because you can do anything in music does not always mean that one should.

No matter what type of music is being made the primary aim is that it sounds music. It should be enjoyable for other people listening too. Like a chef with a kitchen full of ingredients, there are myriad ways to put your masterpiece together, and it is extremely easy to muck it up. <https://www.waves.com/six-stages-of-music-production> Accessed 28/09/2020

Understanding the various types of commonly used song sections can help a producer to understand the music they hear, as well as to supply greater options for the music that they also write. These all go towards forming the first stages and approaches in music production.

Research has suggested that the following six stages have become recognised as common denominators linking 'popular' music forms, genres, and styles throughout. It suggests that each production begins from a basis of 'creation' and these are by no means set in stone and are based entirely on how individual producers and songwriters think about the process.

Producers commonly use this breakdown as a general guideline to help organize the song-writing process. It is helpful to understand what goes into each stage of a creating a song from scratch and always properly achieving the best results. <https://www.waves.com/six-stages-of-music-production> Accessed 28/09/2020

Song-writing

This research strongly suggests that what makes a good song is very much highly debatable and shows that a good song in terms of content will depend on the listener and what captures, and their tastes etc. This is totally subjective and will usually derive from elements of melody, harmony, and rhythm. The music and lyrics must also work together to support

each other. They also need to sound musical when the singer sings them.
<https://www.waves.com/six-stages-of-music-production> Accessed 28/09/2020

Song-writing is the process of putting musical ideas together to form a larger structure of coherent melody, harmony, and rhythm, a process that creates a structure that results in a beginning, middle and end. A good song should develop as it goes along and have a good feel and a sense of rhythm. It helps if you can make the listener want to tap their feet to the groove or sing along with the song's harmony or melody.

Tracking

Tracking is the process of recording the various instruments. Recording can be one track at a time, or multiple tracks all together, known as multi-track recording. Key elements of tracking is to ensure that you achieve the best possible results from each recording, taking into account the feel, the timing, the intricacies and accurateness of delivering the right the sound and timbre of the sound, (how well does the part sit within the track?) It argues that in some cases, a producer may have the opportunity within a recording session to experiment with the part. In other situations, it may be that the part is played in a specific and precise way. Research suggests that the cleaner the results during the recording process, the better the outcome. Preparation is always key to achieving a successful and good sounding recording.

"When you push record, give the performance of your life and think about nothing else. Every time". <https://www.waves.com/six-stages-of-music-production> Accessed 28/09/2020

Editing

Editing is the process by which to quickly get the song sounding good, with parts that are cohesive and fluid. Editing is an important stage of the production process. The research carried out supports that: editing is always best undertaken as a separate activity away from the recording process.

Research also suggests that digital technology has made the editing of performances a much easier process to manage than the good old days of analogue tape. In an attempt to keep the vibe of a recording, carrying out tasks like moving parts around, time-stretch and warping, reversing, smoothing out parts, using fade functions, changing the pitch etc. Given the powerful nature of today's DAW's, with just a few simple clicks of the mouse, these can now be done and achieved in a much quicker way and much shorter space of time,
<https://www.waves.com/six-stages-of-music-production> Accessed 28/09/2020

Mixing

"For many, this is where the real fun starts. You have written your song, recorded the parts, and now it is time to sit back, relax, and turn this track into a masterpiece. Knowing how to mix well is an art form that takes years of learning and practice. But that does not stop anybody from doing it, and you should feel free to dive right in and start exploring the possibilities". <https://www.waves.com/six-stages-of-music-production> Accessed 28/09/2020

Mixing is the term known for the process of combining all the recordings into a 2 track (left-right) stereo mix. A good mix should let the producer hear all the instruments clearly and with detail. This mix will also affect the way the song is listened to, interpreted, and received by its listeners. Getting the tracks to blend by adjusting the individual levels and balances is a massive and especially important stage of this process. This is where the producer decides just how everything is going to sound. This is where a producer will make crucial decisions about the overall balance of the song before final mastering.

Mastering

Mastering is the process by which a song or an album is processed using carefully selected pieces equipment. These can either be analogue or digital processors. The aim of this is so that any mixing deficiencies can be found, and that songs all have the same characteristics by the end of the process, ensuring a final master mix that still sounds fresh.

Given the readily available list of plugins contained within today's music making technology, with a little bit of knowhow, producers are able achieve a good standard of mixing and mastering. Owing to this mastering no longer stays the prevail of the musical elite. That means that it is not always now necessary to farm out the mastering process to other so-called professionals. As with anything, a professional is always going to do the job best. But you can "fake it" with a good chain of plugins and the right pre-sets.

<https://www.waves.com/six-stages-of-music-production> Accessed 28/09/2020

Music production is simply the process of making music. The more comfortable one becomes with the process, the easier it will be to make music, and to make it sound good.

<https://www.waves.com/six-stages-of-music-production> Accessed 28/09/2020

This research suggests two ways to get better at making music: learning and doing. Whether playing an instrument or learning how to mix and produce, constant practice is the suggested key. Performing this routine over and over is said to build up ability, technique, and work efficiency.

Across many different genres, there are a handful of terms that are commonly used to refer to the various sections of a song. Much music, especially in genres that are related to pop music, is structured by combining these standard section types in a variety of ways. The most common sections are:

Verse or "A" Section: A song's verse is generally a recurring section usually between 16 or 32 bars in length and serves as the main body of the song. In music with lyrics, the verse often contains the "story."

Chorus or "B" Section: The chorus is usually also recurring, and of comparable length to the verse. It acts as a contrast to the material of the verse and usually holds the "hook" of the song. Often, the chorus serves as a point of musical resolution, while the verse creates musical tension.

Recurring verses share the same music, but they generally have different lyrics, while recurring choruses most often share both music and lyrics. Additionally, in music with lyrics, the chorus often includes the title of the song. As a rule, the first chorus in a song occurs after a verse. Sometimes songs will begin with a chorus.

Bridge or "C" Section: The bridge serves as a contrast to both the verse and chorus and typically occurs only once in a song. Musically, bridges are often substantially different from the rest of the music in the song; they may be in a different key, employ unusual chord progressions, or have a dramatically different level of textural density and energy. In some types of music, the bridge is used for instrumental solos. Often in pop music the bridge occurs only after at least one verse and one chorus.

In some songs that use this basic form, there may be one or more added choruses added to the end. But otherwise, this form is used unchanged in many contemporary pop songs hear on the radio. "Royals" by Lorde is an example of ABACB form followed exactly.

Research suggests there is a wide variety of song forms made from the various combinations of verse, chorus, and bridge. These types of sectional constructions seem less

commonly used in more underground or experimental music and most contemporary electronic genres without vocals tend to avoid conventional verse and chorus sections, and instead create formal contrast via addition and subtraction of layers.

<https://makingmusic.ableton.com/fuzzy-boundaries> . Accessed 02/10/2020

“While we venture to make music that is uniquely our own, every other piece of music we hear is automatically processed and becomes an unconscious part of our musical vocabulary. Taking too much is theft. Taking too little does not acknowledge our influences”. Making Music Creative Strategies for Electronic Music Producers”.

<https://books.apple.com/us/book/making-music/id988342731>

Musicians who aim to find and develop a unique voice, there will always be an internal conflict to resolve when hearing music that is inspiring. To truly be original, is it necessary to ignore all external influence? How much can you “take” from other music before what you have made no longer feels like it is yours? What and where is the boundary between homage/inspiration and plagiarism/copying?

Research furthermore suggests, these are not merely questions with “right” or wrong answers. It shows that each artist needs to figure out their own level of comfort when borrowing from other sources. But there are some strategies that let you infuse your own work with the “essence” of your inspiration, while simultaneously forcing you to make something new. One of these is to write a catalogue of attributes.

Methodology:

Here, this research suggests that the list of identified outcomes should certainly be included these elements. It also encourages to repeatedly listening to music that inspires you and when doing so pay attention to the attributes of sound, harmony, melody, rhythm, and form.

<https://makingmusic.ableton.com/catalog-of-attributes> . Accessed 02/10/2020

For example, a lot of contemporary hip-hop, uses syncopation and unusual stress patterns to go against the rhythm of the text. And it is always possible to apply more than one syllable of text to a single sustained note or, conversely, sustain a single syllable of text across more than a single pitch. But these are conscious and genre-specific musical decisions.

<https://makingmusic.ableton.com/the-rhythm-of-lyrics>

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Conclusion

In music creation today, DAW's have become an essential tool in helping producers to record, edit, manipulate, mix, and master their works.

The research carried out in writing this essay strongly supports the argument that although producers and music makers often have an individualised approach to creating music; the concepts behind the way they do this appears to be universal.

It does not seem to matter what style of music is crafted, there are still fundamental issues involved in making that music sound good. And no matter what the producer's goals, the overall aim is getting the music to sound good.