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Portfolio of Writing

Module: ADAD4018

BA (hons) Creative Music Technology

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Task 1 - Ryan Moule-Observational Writing: Identify an image and write a semiotic analysis (518 words)

Task 2 Julia Lockheart-Manifesto Writing: "What do I believe in?" (536 words)

Task 3 Jon Pugh-Reflective Writing: Do you know what you think? (543 words)

- Task 1 - Ryan Moule-**Observational Writing: Identify an image and write a semiotic analysis**

Semiotics can be defined as “the general theory of how communication takes place. This requires ‘signs’ ...grouped together into ‘texts’... and understood by means of a ‘code’”

(Latham, 2011). The constructs of semiotics are:

The sign is quite simply a thing whether object, word or picture which has a particular meaning to person or group of people. It is neither the thing or the meaning alone, but the two together. The sign consists of the signifier, the material object and the signified which is its meaning. These are only divided for analytical purposes: in practice a sign is always thing plus meaning.

(Williamson, 2002, p.2)

Semiotics is coded into your brain from a young age to the extent that you behave and think automatically without questioning it. We behave this way as we are taught to act in a certain way by observing others and learning. For example, we are taught that red is a negative colour and can mean danger or stop and green is a positive colour associated with go, safety and nature. However, in other cultures, people are taught that red is a positive colour and associated with happiness, joy and celebration.

Once this knowledge is instilled, this causes us to not realise hidden subjects in life and become blind to things that are not what they appear to be. For instance, a lecture theatre writing desk, may appear to be made of wood although is wood vinyl glued onto a block of shredded wood pieces (Moule, 2019).

Connotation can be the emotion or idea given to you in response to a word or phrase.

Denotation is the literal word or phrase. Broad (1916) had a similar idea when he said “adjectives like white denote all white things...and that they connote the quality of whiteness”.



Figure 1 Still from Arcane Roots song "Curtains".

This image still from the Music Video Curtains by Arcane Roots (2016) connotes the otherworldly, atmospheric and abstract aesthetic.

The dark blue undertones give a futuristic impression as the earth's atmosphere appear the colour associated with space. Also the alien beams of light heading out connote a new entity unearthing from below the surface, hence the cave setting. The green gives off a sense of nature, a subject often signified with peace and harmony, as to be at peace is to be "one with nature".

The song also gives an impression to support this futuristic atmosphere, as the composition mainly consists of a range of synths that start the song, as the song progresses the instruments develop and more organic instruments appear such as acoustic piano, orchestral elements such as strings and guitars. This connotes alien like synths rising up and becoming organic and one with nature, much like the image. Regarding the composition of the image, both natural and futuristic elements cross in the centre, drawing the eye of the viewer to this focal point. As the elements are not at right angles this gives a greater emphasis of tension between the two. When observing the image with the music as opposed to without the music my understanding of the image has changed and I feel differently towards it.

Illustrations

Figure 1. Luke Bather (2017) Promonews, titled: Arcane Roots 'Curtains' by Miguel Santana. Available at:

<https://www.promonews.tv/videos/2017/02/02/arcane-roots-curtains-miguel-santana/45914> accessed 14th october, 2019

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Arcane Roots (2016) *Curtains*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4U-WoT9IAuU> (Accessed: 3rd January 2020)

Task 2 Julia Lockheart-Manifesto Writing: "What do I believe in?"

My beliefs, work and practice

1. No idea is wrong.
2. Anything can be made to sound good.
3. **If you run out of ideas, create new ways to be creative.**
4. **take time out of your practice to seek inspiration from life and events going on around you.**
5. Don't care what other people think, make music that makes you happy, not others.
6. Express yourself and add your own character and emotion into your creations.
7. **Use different cultures music and genres, don't get stuck in one genre.**
8. Imagination is everything, it is a preview of my dreams and goals.

Manifesto Point 3.

“If you run out of ideas, create new ways to be creative.”

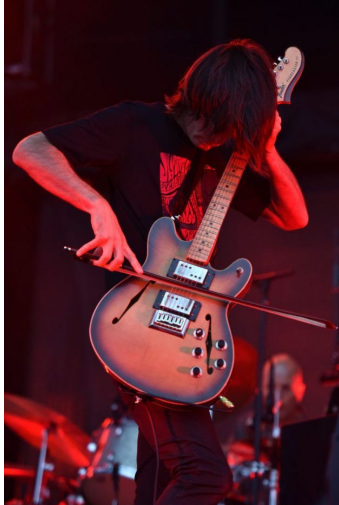


Figure 2 Johnny Greenwood Radiohead

You are never without ideas or ways of making music, you have to break out the usual ways of doing things and “thinking outside the box”, this is supported by an interview between Annett Bonkowski and Conor O’Brien (2016). With this mentality you can make anything you dream about become a reality if you really try. Creativity is “the ability to produce original and unusual ideas, or to make something new or imaginative” (Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, 2020). Through this way of thinking you should never lack creativity and always produce more individual content that defines you as a person, for example, the band, Radiohead, never fail to be creative, when they run out of ideas they take a cello bow to a guitar and develop a whole new beautiful sound. As seen in the image above.

Manifesto point 4

“Take time out of your practice to seek inspiration from life and events going on around you.”



Figure 3 How To See The Northern Lights In Iceland In 2020

Taking time out of your of your practice helps to relax your mind and removes stress away from something that brings you joy in life. From this you can avoid ‘writer's block’ which can become very frustrating and may distance you from music. Inspiration is “someone or something that gives you ideas for doing something” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). Going into the world and experiencing life will give you the creative mind to be inspired, whether it's by other musicians, the feelings and emotions provoked from being around people you care about and even dislike or by events that are happening. For instance, political situations that occur may make you angry, many metal bands such as the band, *Northlane*, use this to fuel their music as they are unhappy about the industry and want to speak out, this is evident from the track ‘Intuition’ lyrics (2017). However, on the other hand, you may spend your spare time adventuring in new relaxing places such as the icelandic wilderness. This may inspire you to create a beautiful, gentle, musical piece of piano ambience much like the artist *Olafur Arnalds*. Inspiration is everywhere and sometimes you have to take a break from your work to enjoy life and gain some perspective to fuel your passion.

Manifesto Point 7.

“Use different cultures music and genres, don't get stuck in one genre.”



Figure 4 Alt J Album Artwork

From the use of different cultural influences in music you can take away any limitations in your writing process. Through doing this you not only have access to an array of new instruments and techniques but it connects you to people around the world and brings people closer through music. You are not just limited to one area of music and people. Culture can also cover more than just nationality, it can also spread to religion, language or art. In addition to culture, you also have genre to take into consideration. A song does not have to be limited to one genre, it could have multiple. This gives you more options when writing music. The band, ALT-J, do this in many of their songs by incorporating other languages and cultural instruments such as the song '*every other freckle*' Girl (2014). In this song the band include a section of the song where the genre completely changes and new instruments are introduced such as flutes, shakers and many percussive elements. This receptively connects them to many types of people and makes them stand out from other musicians.

Illustrations

(Figure 2) Will Brewster (2019) Gear Rundown: Radiohead's Ok Computer. Available at:

<http://www.mixdownmag.com.au/gear-rundown-radioheads-ok-computer> (Accessed: 3rd January 2020)

(Figure 3) Jamie Carter (2019) Travel Leisure, titled: How To See The Northern Lights In Iceland In 2020

(<https://www.travelandleisure.com/trip-ideas/nature-travel/iceland-when-to-see-northern-lights>)

(Accessed: 3rd January 2020)

(Figure 4) Under The Music Covers (2014) An Awesome Wave. Available at:

<https://underthemusiccovers.wordpress.com/tag/an-awesome-wave/>

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Task 3 Jon Pugh-Reflective Writing: Do you know what you think?



Fig. 1 Alef Matthews artiste

“Reflective practice and critical analysis are major components in any creative discipline” (Barton, 2017). My first experience with music technology started at the age of five with playing the piano and guitar, this developed to play the viola, electric guitar, bass and drums. At the age of 9 I joined 'Swansea Rock School' which was run by Dai Smith of 'The Storys'. This fired an interest in writing original songs and performing them in a band. “Originality is created through individualized interpretation and creative thought” (Reiders, 2007, p.10). I then attended a music project where I met other musicians and formed the band 'Purge the Ocean'. Later we recorded music with James Weaver, a Swansea recording engineer. Being in this studio environment made me think that there is more to music than just playing instruments. I then become obsessed with learning how to record in a studio as you can sculpt sound and develop the whole composition.

I began to learn with Dai to use his professional equipment, recording, mixing and mastering audio for companies and other bands. This inspired me to build my own studio. I have networked professionally to ask for advice and have been encouraged to pursue a career in the music industry. Education in the subject developed from FE to HE.

Degree level has provided the opportunity to explore lots of new ways of making and recording music. Outside of education I am in a band called "Apathy Avenue" playing bass. In this band I tour across Britain playing our original music. This music has been recorded and released across all musical platforms and is growing in popularity. As well as this, I also produce my own original music with a genre ranging from ambience to electronic. This is heavily influenced by my love of the music created by "Olafur Arnalds" and the band "Arcane Roots" to whom I continue to be inspired. The way that instruments are used gives the opportunity for interpretation. 'Producing meaning depends on the practice of interpretation, and interpretation is sustained by us actively using the code – encoding, putting things into the code – and by the person at the other end interpreting or decoding the meaning' (Hall, 1980, p.46). Music has its own narrative that can be interpreted through codes with each listener's context influencing the outcome. Producers have a heavy impact on how a song can sound. Through different ways of mixing and mastering a piece of music you can make the song sound completely different and give different emotions. "Artists bear ultimate responsibility for whatever objectives they choose to pursue through their work" (Irvin, 2005, p.1). Therefore, this means that a mixing and mastering engineer is as much a contributing artist to the song as the person who wrote it.

In the foreseeable future, I am aiming to achieve a master's in music. With this degree I hope to get a job in a professional sound studio producing, recording musicians and if possible inspiring them to take the same career path as myself. If I cannot gain a job in a studio I aim to create a company from home, like "Dai Smith" and "James Weaver". In this business I will record, produce, mix and master people's music for them to release.

Bibliography

Images

Fig. 1 Alef Matthews artiste [online image] Available at: <https://twitter.com/alefmatthews/photo> (Accessed: 3rd March 2020)

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