

Keenan Bailey
2007999
Online Blended Foundation
Element 2 - Essay

Song Reference 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CIYy0MxsU0>

The first song I have chosen to reference is the first single from Stormzy's second album, Heavy is the Head, released in 2019 by #Merky/Atlantic records, called "Vossi Bop".

There is a very playful vibe to this record and it was one that I could not get out of my head when I first heard it and this is why I chose this as a reference.

Hip Hop and Rap in the UK is generally viewed by most by its sub genres, UK Garage, Drum and Bass, Grime, Road Rap and more recently Drill and did not follow the same trend or traditional route as its counter part across the Atlantic with it being more influenced by dance and electronic music.

I won't delve too deep into the history of Hip Hop as I want to focus more specifically on the UK, especially in relation to the song, "Vossi Bop" which I am analysing.

In the UK, MCs such as Rodney P, Black Twang and the late TY Musical were some of the earliest pioneers when it came to defining the UK Hip Hop sound. They used their original British accents instead of American ones, which at that time was also popular in the UK but regarded as unauthentic.

On the other side of the Hip Hop spectrum with Grime, people such as Wiley, Kano, Ghetts and Dizzy Rascal, are widely regarded as the fore fathers and pioneered the sound in the early 2000's. The sound and culture is synonymous exclusively with the youth of the London and its slang and style is very much a UK thing. (*Barnard J, Okayplayer.com, Jan 2020*)

Enter Stormzy, a child of both genres, this is apparent in the record I have chosen to analyse because the sound is essentially hip hop.

Stormzy is not generally associated with Hip Hop and has always been widely regarded as a Grime MC.

"Vossi Bop" is characterised and driven by its motif which is the repetition of a very elemental or nursery rhyme sounding Xylophone, which carries on pretty much all the way through.

I was inspired by this sound and its repetition and I made this the basis on which I would create my track "Greedy".

I featured an artist called Sino Ako who I have been working with for the a few years because of her voice and her flow as she is a very competent lyricist and singer.

I chose to use the same style of motif for my song and created a repetitive xylophone style sound as the base and then created the rest of my production around this main element.

In the track "Vossi Bop", the producer Chris Andoh wanted create and use a very repetitive element as is popular with this type of music currently. (*Universal Music Publishing, umusicpub.com. 2020*)

The track itself is definitely more Hip Hop than Grime because it sits at 97 Bpm where Grime tends to be a bit faster and more within the range of 130 – 140Bpm. (*Morgan Britton L, nme.com, Mar 2017*)

The track has a Boom Bap feel and quality to the beat but is shaped by a sub bass which is more

closer related to grime and drum and bass.

The beat is also filled out with “trappy” hi hats synonymous with the current trend in popular music and can be found pretty much on any song in the charts these days and has been so since Trap has become more mainstream and became popular through bands like Migos, in about 2008/2009 even though trap originated in the American South in the late 90's. (*Besora M, cccb.org, Feb 2020*) (*Ju S, laweekly.com, Jun 2020*). Personally I come from an old school hip hop background so it was relatively easy to create that Hip Hop bounce with my drums and bass in my track.

“Vossi Bop” is also defined by the ad lib FX used, as the track in itself is very sparse and this use of FX is a technique used a lot and was pioneered by producers such as the Neptunes as well as James Shebib “40” who produced all of Drake's albums and has been quoted to be one of the main influences of Chris Andoh, who produced this track for Stormzy.

The arrangement of the track has a very basic formula and format of ABC ABC and is very easy to digest and listen to. There are also no extensive hooks or even a middle 8, which even some of the most popular Hip Hop songs which have become commercial hits have in their structure.

The producer Chris Andoh originally created it as a Drake “type” beat which he thought could be pushed in that way to an artist of a similar ilk. Then after posting the beat on snap chat, Stormzy almost immediately picked it up and asked him for the beat. A few days later he was in studio with Stormzy and the rest as they say is History. (*Ottewill J, musictech.net, Mar 2020*)

The rapper Stormzy has always been associated with Grime more than Hip Hop even though he has many Hip Hop or Gospel/Rnb sounding records and he definitely gives this track a UK Grime feel with his general swagger and London road man style but the track is definitely a Hip Hop track.

In 2015 the artist Skepta began making waves in New York with Grime and a new movement has begun to emerge in the States with kids now starting to listen to and enjoy UK grime as well as all over the world in places like Australia and South Africa etc. (*Leight E, billboard.com, Jul 2015*)

The main idea and basis behind my track Greedy was that I wanted to maintain an old school Hip Hop style but add that London gritty Grime sound to it as well so that it could have a cross cultural appeal on both sides of the pond and around the world.

Song Reference 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qv96V9uSGkI>

A little bit of luck is one of those Uk Garage tracks which in my opinion define the genre along with others such as So Solid Crews, “21 seconds” and Sweet Female Attitude, “Flowers” . This was the reason for choosing this track as it is prob the lesser known of the other two but still did relatively well in the UK charts.

In the early to mid 90's American DJ Todd Edwards, began remixing soulful house and incorporating more time shifts and more vocal samples than normal house records, and pioneered the UK Speed Garage sound. (*residentadvisor.net, Oct 2020*)

However, it was only when a North London DJ, “EZ” acquired one of Edwards records and played it at a faster tempo in a Greenwich night club that UK Garage took off. (*UK Garage, Wikipedia, Sep2020*)

A little bit of luck, was originally released as a Dub plate in 1999 and then peaked at #9 in the UK charts in 2000.

It is characterised by its four to the floor break beat shuffled type rhythm and distinctive sub bass, which was a mainstay for pretty much every track in this genre.

The breakbeat was taken or “sampled” from an earlier record called Hyperfunk by Antonio.

Sampling explained by Martin Russ (*Sound Synthesis and Sampling Russ M, p. 46*)

When I created my record called “Find a Way”. I took the inspiration from many of the early sampling techniques used but chose to use digital samplers, instead of the analogue versions used in the 90's mainly because of the lack of access to these machines and also the time it takes to do this, as it can be a very long and painstaking process.

Sampling or reusing a portion (or sample) of a sound recording from another song, comprising of any elements such as sampling the melody, speech, or entire bars of music was generally performed on a sampler such as an MPC, S2000 etc or cut, chopped and time stretched and manipulated by a DAW.

These samples were then used creatively as effects, hook lines or melody's, repeated or chopped and screwed vocals or as the main basis or background for a song or record. (*Cornell K, tunecore.com, Aug 2016*)

This record, “A little bit of luck” also features samples from a 1991 breakbeat hardcore record called 'Unity' by Timebase featuring Kromozone.

This is extremely apparent as the bass line on this record was clearly sampled from the original.

This is a major part of the music and just as in the 60's and 70's most musicians and singers would start their careers by singing cover songs. In the same way I feel producers in the 80's, 90's and to the present day pay homage and tribute to the artists and producers on the records they sample. Not to mention the fact it takes a serious passion for music and extensive time and research to find the “right sample” for the record you are creating and there is a big difference between blatantly copying and using samples creatively, the later of which I am definitely not an advocate of.

I created my drum groove using the generic sampler in logic and took drum samples from various sources and then just programmed them in using my midi keyboard and overlaying them with a few percussive loops to created movement.

When I created the bass line, I kept the original style in mind and created a sub bass using Alchemy in Logic Pro and tried to stay as true to the original sound as possible but also in order to create the old school effect, I used a plugin called saturation to create harmonic distortion. This gives it, its vibe or “warmth”, as this genre is defined by its bass lines and drum sound and I wanted it to have an old school gritty vibe about it.

The reference track also features “interpolated” vocals from Yami Bolos, “When a Man in Love”. (Interpolation is the process of re-recording a vocal melody without having to re sample it, it is generally used when the artist or label declines from allowing a particular vocal melody or phrase to be licensed or re used.) (*Interpolation, Wikipedia, Sep 2020*)

I believe in my opinion, that this is another way of paying homage to an earlier sound and also recreating something in a new way for a new era or style of music.

The free style skating over the top of the beat, tana tana tana hoy, to me is very reminiscent of the reggae toasters of the early 80's, who would do the same over Rub a Dub, Dancehall and Reggae music and became the basis for Hop Hip and all of its children including UK Garage.

The fact that Mc Neat uses the exact same phrase in the record, “A little bit of luck”, may have just been because this was a song he grew up hearing and he liked how it sat on top of the record.

In my opinion this is not stealing an idea but more being inspired by it and paying homage to his heritage or musical upbringing in the same way the reggae toasters of the 80's would do when they were “ridin” a “riddim”. (*jamaicansmuisc.com Jul 2020*) (*Jamaican Toasting, Wikipedia, Jul 2020*)

For my vocal I asked one of my friends and long time collaborators Marv Radio, who is a UK rapper and beat boxer, to collaborate with me. He grew up in Brixton and South London and grew up around this sound and is very familiar with the style I was trying to create. I then chopped up his words and melodies to create the phrases I eventually sampled and used on the record.

The droning overtone of the wall of sound in the beginning of the track provides a back drop for the sound as it is used in the same way a synth or pad would generally be used and it is used to add effect and to create tension and then release just before the beat drops.

I recreated this style by overlaying a few synths and crated effects using various delays, saturation and distortion to make it sound as if they were sampled from an old record.

The vocals are generally repetitive in a Reggae toasters style, with the same phrase or phrases being repeated over and over. "Wit a little bit of luck we can make it through the night".

This makes the song instantly recognisable and it creates an indelible ear worm that will stay in your head for days or weeks on end.

The song structure is very simple as the beat and breaks along with the sub bass form the over all sound and make up the body of the track and is common in the UK Garage sound.

A few effects, scratches, rewinds and hits do drop in and out from time to time to create movement in the track.

In the past many DJ's would also create drop in effects and spin offs where a DJ would pull back a record very quickly creating a spinning effect or sound or press the stop button to create a slowing down sound effect. I by passed this process by using some samples of these FX and used them creatively in my track to create the same vibe.

UK Garage is now a worldwide phenomena and is still enjoyed by many ppl around the world but is distinctly known as a UK or London sound from the underground and will continue to move dance floors for time to come and is not uncommon to be found or used in commercial or pop records, such as AJ Tracy and Mabel's recent single "West Ten".

Song Reference 3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nj2U6rhnucl>

"A futuristic pop sound with an old school funk feel", was the premise behind the production on Dua Lipa's second studio album Future Nostalgia.

"Break my Heart" is the second single off this album and the reference I choose for my final analysis.

I have always considered myself to be a child of the 70's even though I was born in the 80's but the disco scene of the late 70's and early 80's is one of my favourite eras in music and this song is very reminiscent of that vibe, which is why I chose it.

My first thought upon hearing the introductory synth bass line was that it reminded me of, INXS "Need you tonight", or Queens "Another one bites the dust". I then found upon further research that they used this song INXS "Need you tonight" as one of the major inspirations behind the track and this is also very apparent throughout the song as it contains many of the elements in the original such as the bassline and the funky guitar riffs. (*Skinner T, nme.com, Mar 2020*)

Break my Heart pays homage to late 70's and 80's and the style is very reminiscent of the underground boogie sound of the early 80's. (*Barrera J, redbullmusicacademy.com, Jan 2015*)

I used this as my first point of reference when creating my track called, "Get me started".

I wanted to try and apply the same principle of using inspiration from the 80's but striving to create

a more modern or futuristic sound.

I started with a synth bass preset in alchemy called 80's Disco Funk which I tweaked but the preset pretty much had all the elements for the sound I was trying to recreate.

I was trying to create that funky type of 80's bass style groove, which would also be the driving force behind my track and remain present throughout the song.

I choose to use a soft synth instead of electric bass so I could get closer to that type of sound without having to over process the audio signal, using some of the tips I found on music radar as-well. (*musicradar.com, Apr 2018*)

In my reference track there are many elements of Dance-Pop, Disco and Europop characterised by the four to the floor dance beat and synths.

The funky synth string swells and the break downs are very reminiscent of the 70s disco sound.

In the middle 8 part of the track when the songs breaks down it feels like a Electro House record.

You find yourself waiting for the climix as the track builds to create tension and then releases, dropping you back into the double chorus as the synth strings bring back the hook.

I tried to maintain that dance sound when creating my drum beat. I also decided to add a few extras which define the funk to me such as a cow bell in the chorus and a traditional funk soul clap to cap off the end of certain bars creating a hook of sorts.

“Break my heart”, has a very typical pop song structure and tempo as it sits between 113Bpm and 116Bpm. It is in 4/4 and the key of the song is E minor. When creating my track I tried to keep the feel more or less the same, so I stuck with the traditional 4/4 time signature as well as the tempo of 113Bpm. I then however decided to change the key to provide a slightly different feel to my track and wrote my version in the key of A minor.

Dua Lipa sings about how it feels to be vulnerable in a new relationship, as no matter how good it feels it could end at anytime.

“It's a perfect explanation of 'dance crying.' It's about finally being in a happy place and knowing this new person is amazing. But then thinking: 'Nothing else compares to this, and what if this ends and it breaks my heart?' [...] It's [sweet] and vulnerable, [because] you also see how much you care. — Lipa speaking to [Apple Music](#) about the meaning of "Break My Heart"

(*itunes.apple.com, 2020*)

When I wrote the words for my track, “Get me started” it was about a guy seeing a girl in a club and putting on all the moves to make her feel special and to make it feel like one of those nights that never end.

The song has a very “bouncy” feel to it and I tried to maintain that using a similar drum groove and placing emphasis on the bassline. I also used a technique called side chaining, to side chain a few of the elements to the drum beat to create more movement and bounce.

The choruses are defined by the disco strings as well as the catchy guitar riff which I tried my best to emulate in my version.

If you listen to any of the great classics by Chic or Sister Sledge from the late 70's and early 80's the funky guitar riffs and licks as well as the bass line and drum groove create the movement and feel of their songs. When processing my riffs I referred to some tips from sound on sound as they explain the tech behind the design. (*Walden J, soundonsound.com, Jun 2009*)

When creating this style of music, you realise less is more so defining specific sounds and parts make up a big part of the overall sound and how it translates to the listener.

I did not recorded a live band, which generally would be made up of Drums, Bass, Guitar and maybe a Synth or Keys player, so you have to work hard to get the same feel that a live band would

have.

I wanted to make sure the track would be relevant to today's listener, so when mixing my vocals, I used some creative delays and FX. I also played in my electric guitar licks to give the track a bit more of a live feel.

I added in a trap or triplet style beat and hi hats in one of the pre choruses in keeping with today's sound and to create some variation in the arrangement.

I aimed to maintain a similar song structure as "Break my Heart" which is Intro – Verse – Pre Chorus – Chorus – Bridge – Verse – Pre Chorus – Chorus – Mid 8 – Double Chorus..

In the context of modern music or today's sound I feel that there is a trend towards this "retro future" sound as made popular by artists like Dua Lipa as well as The Weekend. (Holden S, *bbcnews.com*, Apr 2020)

It is my assumption and belief that in 2021 we will be hearing more songs with this type of "retro future" sound in the pop music scene and in years to come.

Written by Keenan Bailey (solarkidd) October 2020
Tile yard Education (MA Commercial Music Production)

Bibliography

Encyclopaedia Britannica Light A 27 Jul 2020 [Online] Available from
www.britannica.com/art/hip-hop [Accessed 15 September 2020]

Okayplayer.com Barnard J Jan 2020 [Online] Available from
www.okayplayer.com/music/uk-hip-hop-artists-rap-90s-music.html [Accessed 15 September 2020]

Universal Music Publishing Updated daily 2020 [Online] Available from
<https://www.umusicpub.com/uk/Artists/C/Chris-Andoh.aspx> [Accessed 15 September 2020]

nme.com Morgan Britton L 24 March 2020 [Online] Available from
www.nme.com/news/music/santan-dave-grime-rap-difference-video-2027048 [Accessed 15 September 2020]

cccblab.org Besora M 11 February 2020 [Online] Available from
<http://lab.cccb.org/en/extremely-short-history-of-trap-music/> [Accessed 15 September 2020]

laweekly.com Ju S 8 June 2020 [Online] Available from
www.laweekly.com/10-trap-songs-for-people-who-dont-know-shit-about-trap/ [Accessed 15 September 2020]

musictech.net Ottewill J 17 March 2020 [Online] Available from
www.musictech.net/features/interviews/stormzy-producer-chris-andoh-vossi-bop/ [Accessed 15 September 2020]

billboard.com Leight E 26 July 2015 [Online] Available from
www.billboard.com/articles/review/6642086/skeptas-new-york-live-review [Accessed 15 September 2020]

residentadvisor.net 7 October 2020 [Online] Available from <https://www.residentadvisor.net/dj/toddedwards/biography> [Accessed 17 September 2020]

Wikipedia UK Garage 24 September 2020 [Online] Available from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UK_garage [Accessed 17 September 2020]

Russ M, 1996 *Sound Synthesis and Sampling*, Oxford, Focal Press a division of Reed Educational and Professional Publishing Ltd

tunecore.com Cornell K 9 August 2020 [Online] Available from <https://www.tunecore.com/blog/2016/08/music-sampling-breaking-down-the-basics.html> [Accessed 17 September 2020]

udiscovermusic.com Draper J 15 November 2020 [Online] Available from <https://www.udiscovermusic.com/stories/a-brief-history-of-sampling/> [Accessed 17 September 2020]

Wikipedia Interpolation 21 September 2020 [Online] Available from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interpolation_\(popular_music\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interpolation_(popular_music)) [Accessed 17 September 2020]

jamaicansmusic.com Jul 2020 [Online] Available from <https://jamaicansmusic.com/learn/origins/toasting> [Accessed 17 September 2020]

Wikipedia Jamaican Toasting 17 July 2020 [Online] Available from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deejay_\(Jamaican\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deejay_(Jamaican)) [Accessed 17 September 2020]

nme.com Skinner T 26 March 2020 [Online] Available from <https://www.nme.com/news/music/listen-to-dua-lipa-80s-inspired-new-song-break-my-heart-2635101> [Accessed 18 September 2020]

redbullmusicacademy.com Barera J 27 January 2020 [Online] Available from <https://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2015/01/underground-boogie-1982> [Accessed 18 September 2020]

musicradar.com Future Music 18 April 2020 [Online] Available from <https://www.musicradar.com/how-to/9-80s-style-retro-sound-design-tips> [Accessed 18 September 2020]

Apple Music 2020 [Online] Available from <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/music-movie/dua-lipa-on-break-my-heart/1524876317> [Accessed 18 September 2020]

soundonsound.com Walden J 2009 [Online] Available from <https://www.soundonsound.com/techniques/funky-guitar-processing> [Accessed 18 September 2020]

BBC News online Holden S 1 April 2020 [Online] Available from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-52109397> [Accessed 18 September 2020]