

Student Name: Marcus Copeland

Student Number:  
1904485

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For this essay I shall be discussing elements of three songs from specific genres and explaining my production response to these songs. The genres I will be speaking about are Trap music; a sub genre of Hip Hop, Future Bass; a sub genre of Electro - Pop and Mid tempo R&B. Each of these genre's share elements of production tools amongst them as well as having signature elements that distinguish them from any other genre. One of the main reasons I have chosen these genres is as a result of my interest in them and my desire to learn how to produce authentically within these genres.

### Trap / Hip Hop:

One of the genres I've decided to look at is Trap/ Hip Hop. Hip hop has been one of the major genres in the music industry for many reasons and elements of its sound has been strongly represented throughout the music industry for decades. Trap music is a relatively new offspring of Hip Hop which was birthed in Atlanta, Georgia and has grown in influence and prominence within popular culture over the past ten years (Adaso, 2019). Trap music's imprint on pop music can be heard in elements of the production crossing over into the mainstream world with some of the most renowned artists outside of the genre in "Old Town Road" by Lil Nas X (which fuses trap with country music) and "7 rings" by Ariana Grande which all score major success within the charts. These songs have been influenced by undeniable elements of trap music within its make up.

Many rap songs are based around an 8 bar cycle and because of the way hip hop was developed the genre became accustomed to having 16 - 24 bars for a verse, with the occasional 32 bars also been used as a verse structure. The chorus became a natural 8 bars and followed the pattern of most other genres of music sometimes having a 'chorus A' and 'chorus B' section, this is highlighted in a reference track I'd chosen 'I like it' by Cardi B. Whether the song was more about having a message or whether it took more of a pop vibe would directly affect the length of the verse. If the rap was about giving a message commonly the verse would extend beyond 16 bars to either 24 or 32 bars. The below gave a brief indication to the general rule of thumb for rap music which is different to that of the common pop song (Quote - insert citation here).

Sampling has been a well practiced technique within Hip Hop and has been the bedrock in which the genre was built on; as producers would sample whole songs and drum patterns to then 'chop them up' into different sequences. There is also the similar approach, in thought, to sampling which requires the producer to replay a song exactly as the original. This gets around the legalities of copyright and can be a more cost effective way (in some cases) of achieving the result as a sample [Deahl, 2019]. For the most part sampling within trap music isn't a process that happens all too often, replaying is more common but still not a widely used practise.

The reference track "I Like It" is a remake of a well known Latin song by Peter Rodriguez - "I Like it Like that" that has been replayed. The song is a modern take on the original track which has been well received, as a consequence the song made history in the American Hot 100 list as she was the first female rapper to have two No.1's [Cobo, 2018]. Cardi B's version pays tribute to her Latin background by meticulously replaying the original chorus of the well known tune to generate the same feeling as the original. This kept the vibrance and energy of the original track whilst Cardi B's flow seemed to interweave in between the percussion mixing up her lyrical flow and dialogue as she switches between Spanish and English languages.

My response to the track was similar in theory if not all the way in practice. The initial concept for my track 280219 was built around a reggae guitar loop. Although the sample I chose wasn't a full instrumental, my thought process was that of being inspired by my heritage as an Afro-Caribbean to create the song. This particular practice of sampling not all too prevalent within the trap genre as a whole was used to create a song that transcended the genre and points to the fact that the boundaries can be pushed to accommodate things by a song by song basis.

Whilst listening to the song the original song has a strong sense of percussion presence, giving the track a great rhythmic feeling. Another key ingredient in trap music, (which is becoming even more prevalent in other genres of music) is the use of 16th or 32nd note hi hat spurts. Quite commonly the hi hat will have a pattern that consists of a consistent 4th or 8th note pattern with a strategically placed burst of hi hats at 16th - 32nd note intervals. On occasions too so the this hi hat pattern is

distinguished from the regular 4th or 8th these additional hi hat bursts will be panned slightly left or right just so that it has it's own pocket within the mix away from the main hi hat pattern which is usually kept central in the mix. It's also key to note that the panning technique is not the rule of thumb for the genre as it's usually left at the discretion of the producer to decide given what is happening within the song. With my particular track response I felt that the hi hat pattern was best served in the middle of the track as I'd taken inspiration from the reference track "I Like it" and had a some percussion elements panned left and right of the mix within the same hi mid frequencies and didn't want them to compete for space.

A sound that is synonymous with trap music is the use of 808's throughout the genre, it's almost safe to suggest that if there isn't any use of 808's within the song you could question whether it's trap music. The use of 808's can be implemented in two main functions; as a kick drum or as the bass element of a song by tuning the 808 kick to the specific keys and scales. On occasions the track can contain a bass note with a small amount of attack; enough to give the impression of a kick drum. An example of this is Wstrns' track "Victim." A major feature of "I Like it" as well as the sample, is the 808 bass which pumps through the song. In the midst of the 808 bass you have the kick that is clearly felt whilst in the mix. This was a personal challenge for me as the 808 bass frequency had a wider bandwidth than most synth bass sounds I'd used before; it was a challenge to understand how to treat both kick and 808's effectively so that they could both be heard clearly and changed the character of the bass too much.

My first thought was to try and level out the the elements by trying to balance them; it resulted in the overall sound of project feeling very empty with no low end energy as I was lowering the volume to of each sound by quite some distance until they couldn't be felt. My second train of thought was to remove some of the frequencies at 80hz in the 808's. I thought by doing this it would create a pocket for the kick drum to pierce through and although it helped it didn't do that job as much as I thought it would. There are a few processes through research I found that helped combat this issue. One process that kept coming up was the use of sidechain and multi-band compression. According to Lu Diaz, "Sidechain compression and multi-band compression will play a big role. A C6 multi-band compressor can help you dip a frequency in your 808 to make room for the kick."

When you have two instruments fighting for territory within frequency the side chain technique can be a great solution for the problem because allowed me to [Help Me Devvon, 2018]. It cleared a space around 60hz for the kick to pierce through but also allow the 808 transient to be felt shortly after with a very quick attack and quick release [see Fig.1]. There's a slight curve that is created in the sound of 808 bass as the sidechain compression is released quickly, this is a feature that can be heard across many songs in the genre.

## Future Bass:

Future Bass is a relatively new genre that has been slowly making it's presence felt in the mainstream arena with solid hits in recent years. Recent breakout songs in this style include "Closer" by the Chainsmokers and Halsey along with Martin Garrix and Bebe Rexha with "In the Name of Love" it's key to note that the artist themselves are not exclusive to this genre but would rather be considered pop stars who have adopted this genre as part of their sound. The genre has close connections to multiple genres; in looking into what music makers have stated about the genre it seems it largely depends on which part of the world you live. Generally speaking those music makers based in America tend to lean towards the influence of Trap music in Future Bass, "Back in the day it was call 'chill trap' or 'melodic trap,'" says Hauldren (Turner and Turner, 2019). Those based in Europe tend to lean towards sharing characteristics with Electro-Pop and EDM. I do agree with both trains of thought that both trap music and EDM influenced future bass in different ways.

A direct characteristic that Future Bass, EDM and Electro - Pop share in common is the use of a 'drop.' The type of drops vary between genres depending on the structure of the song but use of the drop is always with the same intention; to create transitional tension and release leading into a prominent piece of the song (Simone, J. 2019). The drop usually pulls out a lot of elements of the

production to set the tension, the way this is done in Future Bass is more subtle than in the EDM world, for the most part.

Both Genres implement the rule of a breakdown which helps the drop to hit harder with elements. An EDM track generally keeps the snare going during the rise; increasing the pulse of the snare hits crescendoing from 4th notes to 8th notes to 16th notes and possibly 32nd until after which they create that all important pause for the drop to hit with more affect (a good precedent for this is Get Ready by Boostkids). With Future bass the elements that contribute to be a lot more subtle in their approach, especially the pop-based artists who incorporate Future Bass into their sound as artists. The elements in this section tend to be lighter in construction, generally snares aren't as hard hitting and when implemented arrive later on in the build. The musical tension is created by the vocal melody and the use of an FX riser, which is the case, in Zara Larsson's "Never Forget You" where she uses the rise and drop to introduce the Chorus to the listener and then go on to have an instrumental chorus there after.

The reference track "Never Forget You" applies a structural technique, previously mentioned, for the first chorus two choruses which is known as the 'drop chorus'. It's mainly used in a structure with a double chorus; it uses the same principle as the 'drop' with the idea of making the second chorus more impactful the second time around (Senior, 2011).

Future Bass has a familiar relationship in drum programming and soundscape to Trap music. Sonically, they both share the same sound palette with elements coming from the 808's which are common in both genres. In my response to "Never Forget You" I used a layered kick drum as a means of creating a more well rounded kick sounds as the original kick sample had been lacking in 'punch' in the 3kHz. Hi hat patterns are also quite closely shared between genres as you can often hear the previously mentioned 16th and 32nd pattern fills in the more underground songs of Future Bass; the panned processing that is applied in Trap music can also be heard for these hi hat fills, this is something implemented in the chorus of "In the Name of Love."

The sound of synth bass is heavily important in the genre of Future Bass; it is the most crucial single sound with the genre. The synth bass sound needs to be aggressive, powerful and commanding; for that reason most synth bass sounds are layered to create interesting character. I chose to layer my bass sound with a plug-in called Substance from Output. The characteristics of the patch gave me the initial inspiration for the song as it delivered a bold sounding synth with a wide bandwidth (see Fig.2), making it one of the main features of the song in which everything was built around.

Future Bass isn't complete without having a vocal chop in the production, it's an element that; "Closer" by Harley uses a vocoder affect which forms the basis of the chordal representation in the song. For the chorus of "In the Name of Love" the production is layered with multiple vocal lines and riffs that are applied with a filter. One of the lines which one of the riffs is used in place of a synth line. Zara Larsson's "Never Forget You" uses a similar technique but is used as an auxiliary sound which is quite low in the mix. My production response to this was two fold; I used a vocal sample which I chopped up, I then cut out specific phrases then to spread across the chorus. Lastly, I added a plugin called Little Alterboy by Soundtoys which is able to manipulate pitch and alter the formant of the sample (see Fig.3).

## Mid Tempo R&B

Mid tempo R&B has had a huge influence on the music industry over a long period of time; often affecting pop culture through the mid 90's as well as sharing a close relationship with Hip Hop. The reference track that I've chosen for this particular genre is Justin Timberlake's "Not a Bad Thing" which is a song endearing the listener to love again. In terms of the genre, mid tempo R&B has such a vast palette of sounding songs with many differences in production techniques and writing methods over the years that have progressed music as a whole. R&B is a genre that has been defined largely by the producers who is in, some cases as equal in stature as its artists. The producer behind this track goes by the name of Timbaland, who has been one of the key figures in R&B and Hip Hop progression with hits in every decade from the 90's, 2000's and through till present day and is responsible for a lot of Justin Timberlake's success.

The song "Not a bad Thing" is a strong example of how the genre mixes live instrumentation with programmed sounds and how to marry that relationship seamlessly. The percussive components of the song are programmed with a number of individual elements of claps, clicks, hi hats, kicks and miscellaneous percussion sounds that help to create a strong sense of syncopation. Again, a common sound source for the genre, in regards to drums, is the use of 808's. I do think the 808's are one of music's most versatile drum sounds used as they can be applied across multiple genres with ease and fit every the different circumstances well.

I initially tried to create a similar sounding kick without going through the layering process, it was difficult to achieve as there were some unique sounds within the layered kick that was difficult to find an individual ready made sample with the same energy as the kick used in the reference song. Like the kick, the claps have also been layered with a snare which gives takes the back beat more body and feels like it balances well against the layered kick drum. I took the same approach as there reference track with this aspect of my snare also. This is a common practice within R&B and Hip Hop up until today using samples such as the MPC 2000.

The chordal elements within the song are made up of guitars (electric and acoustic), a Piano, warm pads and miscellaneous synths creating a heavily layered production which is quite common in the sound of R&B. The use of electric and acoustic guitars are common place in R&B, another example of this this type of production would be "You've got it bad" by Usher. The electric guitar on the reference track utilises a chorus and delay affect which adds some depth to the electric guitar. The acoustic guitar is used rhythmically which adds to the musical syncopation of the drums, this is an element I paid great attention in creating in my response to the brief.

Vocal production is an essential part of R&B creation, there are many producers again using a lot of layers to create a thick sounding lead and background vocal sound. The R&B vocal is something that I describe as feeling silky in delivery; the vocal process can utilise a wide variety of effects that can dramatically alter the voice for example artist use the autotune as an affect that alters the character of the voice deliberately. The lead vocal is always front and centre in the mix, one way in which this is achieved is by using a doubling effect on the lead vocal giving it more presence and reinforcing its position in the, as well as using similar processing techniques as that of most pop techniques where the vocal is the king of the song. In truth learning

Another major aspect of production in R&B is background vocals. Often there will be 'BV's' used to add harmonies to the mix to support the lead vocal in main the chorus and sometimes adding a touch of harmony to emphasise words within the verse. Background vocals can be anything from adlibs to group unison lines and also padded vocal harmonies. I could hear a vocal padding in the reference track "Not a Bad thing," of 3 to 4 part. From past experience on recording background vocals the 3 to 4 part harmony tracks are layered. With this particular song I recorded all the backing vocals in their part harmonies and processed them all in a group together to give a collective sound as the backing vocals.

In conclusion many of the genres mentioned share many elements that are the same in production theory and have all been influenced in one way or the other by each other. I have found that many techniques that apply for one genre apply for all and that each genre also has elements that allows it to stand out from the rest.

Figure.1



Figure.2



Figure.3



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