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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCE  
Music Technology (9MT0)  
Paper 03: Listening and Analysing

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## **9MT0/03 Listening & Analysing**

### **Principal Examiner's report to centres 2019**

#### **General comments:**

Adjusting to a new specification always brings challenges for both teachers and students. The strictly musical element of the legacy specification has now been removed, and longer questions with more marks allocated have been introduced, both of which necessitate a paradigm shift in thinking. We also have levels-based mark schemes (for questions 5 and 6) in addition to the points-based mark schemes previously in use.

Nearly all of the challenges of the new specification have been met, with the majority candidates being adequately prepared to respond to the various command words contained within the question paper.

One issue of note was the understanding of the balance of the AO3 and AO4 assessment objectives in question 5. Many candidates scored the maximum available 5 marks for the AO3 element but did not perform as strongly in the AO4 element when providing explanations and qualitative statements.

Candidates are reminded to refer closely to the audio stimulus material at all times, particularly in regard to question 6, which requires close examination of how a technological/production aspect is used in a commercial recording as well as its wider impact. This year, many candidates ignored the specific context of the stimulus material and instead proceeded to write down everything they could recall about sequencing (and often, other production aspects too).

There were extremely few incomplete papers this year, indicating good time management and exam technique. Additional answer sheets continue to be used – candidates are reminded to write concisely, and in the space provided wherever possible to avoid the use of extra sheets. Responses for questions 5 and 6 that used a tabular format/bullet points were generally more clearly structured and far more concise than those written in continuous prose. Candidates should be encouraged to take this approach if they prefer, rather than producing an outline plan and then reiterating similar points in continuous prose.

This report should be read in conjunction with the published mark scheme.

#### **Specific questions:**

- Q1(a)** This was answered successfully on the whole. Less successful candidates did not read the question properly and were not giving answers relating to the **performance** they could hear. Frequently, they were providing responses more appropriate to Q1(b).
- Q1(b)** Answered well, with many candidates identifying a lack of multi-tracking or similar, poor balance and hiss. Some candidates were not quite clear enough regarding the limitations of the recording medium or microphones, e.g. offering responses such as 'bad frequency response' without clarifying that restriction of the frequency response was the issue.
- Q1(c)** Well-handled overall, though there was sometimes confusion in the candidates' responses when linking the type of reverb with a description of how it was created (e.g. naming echo chamber and describing natural reverb capture).
- Q1(d)** Most candidates achieved one of the two available marks. Often, the processes used were not sufficiently specific for the context, e.g. a more generic reference to EQ rather than identifying an appropriate filter for the task.
- Q2(a)** Generally, very well answered. Some candidates offered vague responses such as 'pan' rather than a more specific process appropriate to the context. Some candidates confused remastering with remixing, suggesting that parts should be re-recorded or sampled.
- Q2(b)** Very few candidates seemed to understand portamento, often referring to envelope settings in their response or leaving the answer space blank. Several candidates recognised the link between the LFO in the song and oscillator pitch, but few were able to identify the high - and increasing - depth.
- Q2(c)** Almost all candidates exhibited a clear understanding of compression parameters and were able to apply this knowledge to what was heard in the song.
- Q2(d)** Scores of 0-3 marks were frequently awarded here. Marks were most often awarded for recognising a mid boost on the bass and a low frequency boost on the kick drum. For the bass guitar, candidates often had their mark capped at a maximum of 1 for drawing additional boosts that would have countered the effect of the mid boost.
- Q3(a)** Well answered in the main; more able candidates were able to recognise the long pre-delay and reverb times, whilst others were only able to identify the reverb type.
- Q3(b)** Well answered with a significant number of candidates achieving full marks. It appeared that a number of candidates incorrectly thought the lower octave lead vocal was an example of double-tracking. A significant number of candidates had clearly noted the structural references of verse and chorus but had not carefully looked at the time references provided. In many cases this did not affect the final mark but nevertheless candidates should be reminded to refer carefully to the time references given in the paper.
- Q3(c)** On the whole, candidates exhibited strong knowledge of filters and were able to describe the type/changes in the filtering. However, some candidates were getting low pass and high pass muddled up with each other.

- Q4(a)** A wide range of responses, with many correctly identifying the vinyl crackle used in the introduction. Several candidates identified processes that were being used in the song but are not lo-fi effects as defined by the specification subject content.
- Q4(b)** The mark scheme covers a wide range of approaches/solutions and the candidature addressed all of these, often with a high level of technical detail. Sometimes it was unclear - or there was some confusion - as to why types of microphone or placements had been chosen, nevertheless many responses drew upon a combination of techniques that would be practical for the recording context.
- Q4(c)** Most candidates were able to name two production techniques being used on the vocal, but fewer offered explanations to accompany both techniques. Scores of 2-3 marks were very common.
- Q5** Most candidates were able to achieve all 5 marks allocated to AO3. Frequently though, there was repetition of similar AO3 points, e.g. describing the pan position of every instrument in the mix. Subsequently, this left less time to concentrate on evaluative points for AO4 (which is allocated 10 of the 15 marks). Many candidates correctly recognised that the remix was based around samples taken from the original (for AO4), however far fewer were able to clearly explain how samples had been treated in the remix other than perhaps looping and adding a larger vocal reverb. Candidates should be prepared to discuss in the detail the production techniques used in each version, making close reference to effects parameters and their impact on the overall sound/arrangement.
- Q6** For the first part of the task, relatively few candidates discussed the sequencing techniques used on the various instrumental lines within the song. Such an oversight often limited the success of AO3 and ultimately meant that the highest levels of the mark scheme could not be accessed. Some candidates ignored or misunderstood the term sequencing. There were responses focused entirely on sampling or DAWs, whilst others concentrated principally on capture and/or effects processing. This said, it was clear that most candidates did have a good understanding of the development of hardware/software, and the wider implications on music as a whole.

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