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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

October 2020



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

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## **9MT0/03 Principal Examiner's Report to Centres 2020**

This paper was originally to be sat in the summer of 2020, but due to Covid-19 disruptions it was instead used for the unprecedented Autumn 2020 series, allowing a mechanism for candidates to appeal/approve their centre assessed grades. The paper was not amended from its original form and since there were only 22 candidates sitting it, all responses were marked by the Principal Examiner. Despite the small cohort, a wide range in the quality in responses was observed, with paper totals ranging between 12 and 53 of the 75 available marks.

### **Question 1**

- a) The majority of candidates were awarded 2-3 marks for this question, whilst others could not perceive subtle differences in panning or seemed to have their headphones on the wrong way around.
- b) This was answered well on the whole, although some candidates repeated 'distortion' - or an alternative term for distortion - which was already given in the question. Others listed a series of closely related modulated delay effects; these variations were all credited on the same line in the mark scheme.
- c) This required a detailed account of parameter settings. Most candidates were able to describe one aspect/parameter setting and then comment on the panning of the two taps, scoring 2 marks. Fewer were able to comment upon the different note values used to create the two taps, the feedback or the wet level.

### **Question 2**

- a) This was answered well on the whole. A few candidates offered responses that didn't fall under the category of MIDI techniques.
- b) Not many candidates were able to correctly identify the low pass filter, which opened very gradually to start with. Candidates need to be able to distinguish between a resonant low pass filter and a high pass filter (with high pass being the most common incorrect answer here).
- c) Strong responses drew upon the dance music staples of stutter looping, reversing and slow-down effects. Less successful responses cited general effects such as reverb that weren't specific enough for the context of sampler effects.
- d) Many failed to recognise that master compression was the principal reason for the change in level of the synthesiser riff. However, many candidates were able to identify likely parameter settings for threshold and ratio and so were awarded marks.

### Question 3

- a) There were a wide range of quality in responses, suggesting that some candidates didn't completely understand modulation effects, with some offering the name of modulated delay effects in error or simply 'LFO'.
- b) Candidates with good technical detail scored well here. Many were able to describe the reverb being created by a signal being passed through a metal spring, but fewer could describe the transducers required at each end.
- c) Candidates are reminded that the explain command word requires each point given (AO3) to be expanded with an accompanying justification or explanation of effect (AO4). Those who considered a range of production techniques in both the capture and mixing phases scored most marks here. More modest responses typically only considered capture.

### Question 4

- a) Candidates were asked to consider the source of unwanted noises heard in the recording. Responses such as 'hiss' and 'hum' were therefore not sufficiently specific.
- b) This required candidates to divide the given number by two in order to calculate the frequency of the note an octave lower. This proved confusing for some. Candidates are directed towards the Technical numeracy section of the subject content (3.2.3), on p39 of the specification.
- c) Many of the candidates were able to draw the correct filter shape with an appropriate cut-off frequency to remove the hum. Those that weren't as successful had problems such as the cut-off frequency being too high on the high pass filter, or the Q value being far too low in the case of the notch filter pathway in the mark scheme, both of which would have caused frequencies from the music to be cut.
- d) Once again, candidates are reminded an accompanying justification or explanation of effect (AO4) is needed for each (AO3) point. A score of 2/4 was common here, usually with just one technique explained in detail. Candidates require knowledge and understanding of production processes for all the 'eras' listed on p39 of the specification.

### Question 5

There was some excellent detail in candidate responses, pointing towards good preparation in centres for this form of extended response. Candidates are reminded to write concisely, using tabular form, sub-headings and bullet points (where preferred) to evaluate the two song versions in a clear and efficient way.

Nearly all candidates scored the maximum 5 marks allocated to AO3, with some candidates also attaining the full 10 marks allocated to AO4. Less successful candidates frequently did not comment on the overall effect or impact of the differing production techniques used in the two versions of the song; unfortunately, such responses gained limited credit for AO4.

## **Question 6**

This 20-mark extended response was answered fairly well on the whole, with many candidates achieving half marks or higher. Similar to Question 5, candidates are invited to use tables, bullet points and sub-headings to arrange their responses.

Sub-headings are especially useful here as the question first covers the way in which a certain technology/process is used a specific song as well as the impact it has had on music production over time. Centres should remind candidates of these two distinct elements that make up Question 6.

### ***Song specific detail***

Less successful candidates commented very little (if at all) on specific types of distortion being used in the stimulus song, and so fell short of the 5 marks available for AO3. A reasonable level of detail is required for AO3 points as the chosen song will always contain contrasting uses of the 'focus' technology that need to be differentiated with the use of relevant terminology. Leading on from this, evaluation of the process/technology in the context of the song can then be awarded AO4 credit.

More successful candidates were able to provide relevant, differentiated distortion-related terms for a number of the instruments within the song and explain the subsequent technical and/or musical effect of each distortion type.

### ***Impact of the technology***

In a similar way to last year, this second element to Question 6 was more successful for most, frequently with detailed discussion that explored the wider context and impact of the focus technology. Candidates who considered the development of the technology over time - and the subsequent impact on the production of music - demonstrated the best depth of knowledge.