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GQ Principal Examiner's Report

Summer 2022

Music Technology GCE 8MT0 03

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Publications Code 8MT0_03_pef_20220818

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General Comments

It was very pleasing to note that centres and candidates continue to better understand the demands of the specification and examination paper, despite the enforced absence of a written examination for two years. It was clear that, in general, students were well prepared and had practised with past papers and suitable resources.

As always, it is important for candidates to take note of the command words used in the questions as well as the mark tariffs so they ensure they can access the highest marks available for the question.

It is always better if candidates keep their responses within the space provided; there should be sufficient space provided underneath each question for a full mark response, accommodating even the largest handwriting. As such, for those with smaller handwriting, there will probably be more space provided than is necessary. In this case candidates should not continue writing after they feel they have fully answered the question as this can often lead to contradiction and repetition.

Specific Questions

1a

There were a range of responses that had not been fully anticipated, but any that answered the question correctly were given due credit. The most common response for part iii was to recognise that the sequenced drum parts had become somewhat less complex. Part iv was poorly answered in general with few candidates recognising the pronounced bass response. This may be because they are so used to bass-heavy mixes that an 80s recording did not seem to qualify as having much low frequency content to their ears. There were also many examples of responses that contradicted themselves or contained two answers, one of which was correct and the other incorrect.

1b

This question was well answered in general. Although the mark scheme allowed for diagrammatic or numeric responses, there were no examples of these.

1c

This question was meant to have two parts in which the first demanded a technical observation (AO3) and the second asked candidates to provide context as to what this production technique achieved in a musical sense (AO4), essentially preparing candidates for the requirement to do this in the later extended response questions where it is less explicit. There were a range of responses with some candidates mixing up the requirements of the two parts or repeating their response to part i in part ii, albeit with different words.

1d and 1e

Candidates were clearly well prepared for questions of this type.

1f

Many responses to this question leant towards fading out tracks individually rather than fading out the track as a whole with the master volume control.

2a

Candidates were clearly well prepared for this question although many only mentioned one part of the frequency response that was restricted e.g. "lacks low frequencies", thus only achieving half of the marks available for the question. Part ii was very well answered.

2b

The best responses to this question recognised the key element being the single mic, accessing the full range of marks. However, many candidates took the wrong approach, concentrating entirely on the direct to tape element, but ignoring the single mic aspect. Such responses often mentioned spill which was, of course, not an issue when using only one microphone.

2c

This was generally well answered. It should be noted that credit is only given for the solution if it matches the problem that has been identified.

3a

Candidates are generally getting better at identifying technical features of effects such as delay and have clearly been well prepared for this sort of question. Candidates should always be able to aurally identify the parameters listed in the specification for each effect, although credit is often given for recognising additional parameters (such as feedback in this case). This does not mean that additional parameters need to be taught at AS level, but it is fair to award marks to students who have gone beyond the basic requirements. Full marks are always available to those who have covered only the parameters listed in the specification.

3b

Headphones appeared to have been worn the correct way round in the vast majority of cases.

3c

Many candidates correctly identified the waveform with some incorrect answers at least writing a recognised waveform rather than something completely random. Part ii attracted many responses that identified a specific synthesiser model. Any instruments that existed within a reasonable timespan of the recording were accepted.

3d

As always, candidates find unique ways to express things when they are reaching for the vocabulary required to describe musical and production features, but any responses that clearly pointed to the answers listed in the mark scheme were given credit. Such an unusual sound world is always likely to attract some interesting responses.

4a

“Pitch bend” and “pitch wheel” were not creditworthy responses to this question, but many candidates correctly identified LFO or modulation wheel. “Modulation” on its own was not acceptable as candidates would need to identify what was being modulated.

4b

This question had a similar structure to question 1c with identical issues.

4c

Candidates generally responded well to this question, but few achieved full marks, missing out or making an error with at least one aspect listed in the mark scheme.

4d

This question was less well answered. The focus is on music technology rather than the instrumentation itself. Candidates should be directed to listen to the effects, dynamic processing, balance, panning etc. of the instruments rather than simply identifying them. Having isolated the technological aspect (AO3), candidates must then give an explanation of what this does in the context of the mix or what effect it achieves on the perception of the listener (AO4).

5

The responses to this question continue to improve as centres and students have increased experience of the specification. The same points made for question 4d hold true for question 5 in that the marks are split into AO3 and AO4, where the AO3 marks are generally observational and the AO4 marks are for elucidating on the observation. It was interesting to note that many candidates wrote an acronym on their answer books to direct their attention to the subheadings in the mark scheme such as “capture”, “instrumentation” and “effects” etc. This generally had a positive impact on the quality of the responses and highlighted the good preparation that is being done in centres. Candidates also often created brief essay plans before embarking on writing their proper response. This encouraged concise, well-structured responses that were less susceptible to repetition.

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