

Examiners' Report/ Lead Examiner Feedback

June 2014

NQF BTEC Level 1/Level 2 Firsts in
Music

Unit 8: Music and Production Analysis
(20375F)

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General Comments

This was the first sitting of the paper and generally learners responded reasonably well to this.

It was evident that some were better prepared than others. Learners who had been provided with the specific teaching and learning requirements stemming from the unit specification performed more successfully.

These learners were more able to access the questions relating to the use of instruments and voices, particularly in identifying techniques and the musical devices used. This in turn supported their response to questions demanding analysis of the pieces where they were able to identify points for discussion.

It was evident that some learners had not been prepared adequately for these questions and did not have the music knowledge to support the answers given, but instead provided generalisations with some drawing ideas from the actual question content to help formulate their response.

Centres are also advised to prepare learners more thoroughly for the test in terms of general exam technique as several learners misinterpreted questions. Also, it is advisable to focus on practising extended writing questions and to provide learners with a structure or writing frame particularly in support of question 21.

Learners require knowledge and understanding of both music and music production to achieve well in this unit. Those with knowledge of just one area are disadvantaged and unable to access the full test effectively.

Most recall questions were answered well by learners, but some requiring specific knowledge of key terms appeared to challenge learners that had been less well prepared.

It was noticeable that several learners responded to questions from the knowledge gained in other areas of the qualification/units. This was encouraging and centres are advised to support this during the teaching and learning so that learners develop a broader understanding of music practice in its vocational setting. This would support their ability to score well in this test.

Question: 1(a)

This question performed well with the majority of the cohort identifying the correct genre of Rock.

Question: 1(b)

A good majority of learners identified the correct instrumentation of Rock group with orchestra and choir. Some learners were uncertain of the type of group and identified answer A.

Question: 2(a)

Responses varied here with only a few identifying the actual precise tempo. Many learners showed some mathematical workings out, but it was evident that their process was incorrect, resulting in the inaccurate answer. This appeared to have tested learners at all levels.

Question: 2(b)

This was more challenging for learners in identifying the staccato playing technique used by the lead guitar; many learners provided an accurate response.

Question: 3

A key question in identifying the learner's knowledge and understanding of Learning Aim A is the ability to identify the tempo of the piece in terms of the actual key signature.

This was a very accessible question with most learners able to provide an accurate response. All answers were in numbers (4/4). Those learners less well prepared were unable to provide the precise metre and answered incorrectly e.g. 3/4.

Question: 4(a)

This was less well answered with learners generally identifying instruments that had already entered previously and thus misinterpreting the actual question.

Question 4(b)

Learners did not respond particularly well here with many misinterpreting the question or not reading the precise requirements. The question asks for responses relating to the actual melody itself but many learners had discussed dynamic features, texture or the significance of the drum part which are unrelated to the melody.

(b) Explain **two** differences between the main musical parts (melody) from 0:21 to 0:45. 2 Q04b1

1. Backing distortion guitars play long notes (4) 2 Q04b2
whereas orchestra is playing staccato

2. guitar plays ascending through scale
whereas orchestra plays descending.
(counter melody)

(Total for Question 4 = 6 marks) 5

Question 5

This question challenged learners at all levels as they were unable to specify which part has the main melody. Several responded with 'voice' or 'vocal' which was accepted, but only a few identified the 'lead' and none used the term 'tenor'.

Question 6(a)

Most learners were able to identify the vocal tone of the lead singer with the majority responding with either deep, rough or soft.

Question 6(b)

A good majority of learners identified the correct male vocal technique as Falsetto. No other responses were accepted.

Question: 7

This question tests learner's ability to identify the features of the melody or the actual device played by the guitar.

The mark scheme allowed for varied responses and most learners were able to identify the part as the solo or main melody.

Those with an understanding of techniques were able to identify the actual device – 'Riff'.

Only a few learners did not attempt the question at all.

Question: 8

Learners scored well here and most were able to access the question and score at least 2 marks for identifying two correct points. Most of these points related to either dynamic changes or reference to the marching style drum.

It also discriminated well with a good number able to score the additional mark through providing explanations justifying how it made the section dramatic.

A good number provided two responses but few were able to provide an explanation justifying why it is dramatic.

2 Q08-1
2 Q08-2

8 Explain **two** ways in which a dramatic mood is achieved from 2:28 to 3:22.

1 → The drums fills in the back-ground add a build up effect and add suspense to the music.

2 The backing vocals add a dramatic mood as ~~it~~ ~~is~~ it is almost as if they are in pain also there are no main vocals over the backing vocal therefore the listener can hear it **(Total for Question 8 = 4 marks)** 4

thorally

Question: 9(a)

This was well answered with a wide range of accurate responses given. The majority of learners had very good knowledge of a range of production techniques and it was evident this stemmed from practical knowledge gained in other areas/units of the qualification. Some confidently provided more than the required two examples but this was unnecessary; the question total credited a maximum of two accurate responses only.

9 (a) One production technique is the adding of reverb.

Identify **two** other production techniques used in this piece of music.

(2) 2 Q09a

Technique 1

Distortion / fuzz on the bass guitar and electric guitar

Technique 2

adding an echo effect on the vocals

(b) Before producing this piece, the band will have chosen to record in a studio

Question: 9(b)

Learners who had gained knowledge and studied the content of Learning Aim B were able to respond well as the question requires an understanding of both analogue and digital recording.

Part (i) was less well answered with some providing general responses. Most were able to identify the analogue as having a rawer sound.

Others did not focus on the actual question and provided disadvantages, but these were rare.

(b) Before producing this piece, the band will have chosen to record in analogue, digital or by using both means.

(i) Identify **two** benefits of recording in analogue.

(2) 2 Q09bi

1 Feels more like a live song.

2 When mastering the track its easier to do with a physical mixing table in front of you.

Part (ii) was very effective with a wide range of responses, some had evidently drawn from personal experience and others were able to understand the versatility in terms of the software available and the benefits of editing and storage.

All learners scored better on the digital response as they will have drawn their responses from more practical knowledge of digital recording as compared to analogue.

Those without the required knowledge offered basic generalisations that are not factually supported e.g. cheaper, quicker.

(ii) Identify **two** benefits of recording in digital. (2) 2 Q09bii

1 Easier to add in effects.

2 You can plug everything into 1 soundcard and then most of the editing can be done from the computer.

(Total for Question 9 = 6 marks) 6

TOTAL FOR SECTION A = 25 MARKS

Question 10

A high majority of learners answered correctly here with most identifying Soul as the genre/style of the piece which was the anticipated response. Those identifying R & B were also credited as an accurate response.

Question 11

This question was accessed well with the majority of learners responding accurately. Learners performed better here than in question 2b which tested learners' understanding of tempo in terms of BPM.

Question 12

Whilst the level of demand for this question is at the lower boundary, only a few learners answered accurately. Many identified the Saxophone as one of the brass instruments heard as opposed to trumpet or trombone which were the correct answers.

Question 13(a) and 13(b)

This discriminated well at the higher level and only a few learners were able to identify Swing rhythm as the correct response.

Learners who had studied the unit specification were able to identify this, but only some provided an explanation of the effect on the actual piece to gain a full 2 marks.

13 (a) Identify the rhythmic device the lead singer uses throughout the piece.	(1) 1 Q13
Swing rhythm	
(b) Explain the effect this rhythmic device has upon the piece.	(1)
It makes the track more powerful and creates a good build up	
(Total for Question 13 = 2 marks) 1	

This response shows an accurate answer for 13(a), but the learner is unable to provide an explanation of this rhythmic effect on the piece for the additional mark for 13(b).

Question 14

This was very accessible with most learners providing an accurate response in identifying the texture of the instrumentation as either thick or dense.

14 Describe the texture of the instrumentation of the piece from 0:08 to 1:17. 1 Q14

Dense, lots of instrument playing

(Total for Question 14 = 1 mark) 1

Question: 15

This question performed well and nearly all learners responded with call and response, whilst a few answered using subject and answer.

A few identified vibrato and other responses identified the wide vocal range through offering a brief explanation on the use of the range, although the justification is not required for the mark.

Generalisations referred to dynamics which was inaccurate.

Question: 16

Learners appeared not to fully understand the question and approached it through explaining the meaning behind the actual lyrics with no reference to any musical features.

Those scoring 2 marks were able to identify two valid reasons, but were unable to provide full descriptions justifying the point made.

Learners who achieved a full 4 marks on this question demonstrated a sound understanding of a wide range of musical features with rhythmic techniques identified mostly.

These answers clearly showed a full understanding of what is required in the question as opposed to providing general responses. These responses also included direct reference to the actual part in the lyrics where the singers interrelate supported with a good range of valid references to musicality and expression.

Most identified the improvisation between singers and commented on special features such as the fillers or linked passages and referred to the 'soul-like' characteristics.

16 Describe **two** ways in which the singers communicate meaning and mood from 1:03 to 1:35.

2 Q16-1

The lyrics are as follows:

2 Q16-2

'Every chain, has got a weak link

I might be weak yeah

But I'll give you strength

Oh, hey

You told me to leave him alone

My father said, "She can come on home"

My doctor said, "Take it easy"

Oh but your lovin' oh much too strong'

The instrumentation behind the singing at this point becomes minimal, so the main focus ~~is~~ is the lyrics and the vocals. It is sung with passion/assertively which shows they are trying to make a point. They also use the call and response technique which shows they ~~to~~ are feeling what they're singing and influencing other people to feel it too. (Total for Question 16 = 4 marks) 4



Question 17

Most of the answers were accurate here with the organ being the most widely used response. Synthesiser was also accurate but those identifying the instrument as electric keyboard answered incorrectly.

Question 18

This question performed well and learners appeared to have good understanding of this style. The question allowed learners to interpret 'Contemporary' as linked with Aretha Franklin or current/present day. Responses varied significantly, with Beyonce and Whitney Houston the most widely used answers.

Some responses used Aretha Franklin which was evidently an inaccurate answer.

Question 19

Most learners identified the recording as 'live' and the question performed well.

Question 20

This question tested knowledge of placement and the learners were able to apply knowledge well. However, there was a tendency to include more than three responses.

Candidates must not provide more than the stated number of responses.

20 In the box below, identify where **three** of the instruments heard in this piece would be typically placed by the sound production team to ensure best sound placement for this type of recording. 3 Q20

backing vocals	Lead vocals	Trumpet
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Left

Centre

Right

(Total for Question 20 = 3 marks) 3

TOTAL FOR SECTION B = 17 MARKS

Question: 21

This question allowed learners to respond at their own level, with nearly all answers gaining at least 1 mark.

Those learners who approached the question through only focusing on similarities, reduced their opportunities to respond more fully. Some approached this in a form of two columns and whilst they clearly showed how both pieces were comparable they did not allow themselves opportunity to justify each point made due to the format used.

A good number of learners achieved 4 -5 marks, but were unable to achieve higher as they were not always linked to each piece, some relied on the basic elements of music to help generate their answers, but were unable to gain further than 5 marks. Those gaining the higher merit level were able to provide fuller responses and could draw from specific points in the pieces to compare effectively.

Only a very small number gained 7 and these answered fully, going beyond the most obvious features of dynamics, instrumentation and texture. These included references to a range of key musical devices in both pitch and rhythm relating directly to the individual genre whilst also providing a more balanced and knowledgeable comparison. They applied a wider range of musical language and demonstrated fluency of knowledge with full explanations.

Question 21 relates to **both** track 1 on the CD: **Supremacy by Muse** and track 2 on the CD: **Chain of Fools by Aretha Franklin (feat. Mariah Carey)**.

21 Compare the key features of the **style** and **genre** of the two pieces.

(8) 6 Q21

Track 1 is a rock song with an orchestra commonly found in rock of the 60s such as; Queens, "A night at the opera" or Green Day's "American idiot" it uses a range of orchestral instruments such as; Timpani, flat's, kettle drums, staccato strings. The tempo increases throughout the melody up to Chorus where more of the band play plus at 4:00 to the end it's more fast beat also dense due to all of the orchestral instruments, both songs have orchestral instrument where as Muse have a strings section, Aretha has a horn section instead including a band, both songs also have different structures Muse has a structure which starts off as

A, B, A, C, A, D, A, F where as Chain of Fools's more linear with A, B, A, B, A, B, A, C, Muse includes 2 middle 8's, Chorus and verses and an outro whereas; Aretha has mainly Chorus and verse and an outro. Aretha and Mariah both do a call and response in the second verse where as; Muse do a middle 8 guitar part that plays the melody with a backing vocals behind it.

Grade Boundaries

Unit	Max Mark	D	M	P	L1	U
20375F – Unit 8: Music and Production Analysis	50	40	32	24	15	0

External assessment

The suite of 'next generation' NOF BTECs include an element of external assessment. This external assessment may be through a timetabled paper-based examination, an onscreen, on demand test or a set-task conducted under controlled conditions.

What is a grade boundary?

A grade boundary is where we 'set' the level of achievement required to obtain a certain grade for the externally assessed unit. We set grade boundaries for each grade (Distinction, Merit, Pass and Level 1 fallback).

Setting grade boundaries

When we set grade boundaries, we look at the performance of every learner who took the assessment. When we can see the full picture of performance, our experts are then able to decide where best to place the grade boundaries - this means that they decide what the lowest possible mark should be for a particular grade.

When our experts set the grade boundaries, they make sure that learners receive grades which reflect their ability. Awarding grade boundaries ensures that a learner who receives a 'Distinction' grade next year, will have similar ability to a learner who has received an 'Distinction' grade this year. Awarding grade boundaries is conducted to make sure learners achieve the grade they deserve to achieve, irrespective of variation in the external assessment.

Variations in externally assessed question papers

Each exam we set asks different questions and may assess different parts of the unit content outlined in the specification. It would be unfair to learners if we set the same grade boundaries year on year because then it wouldn't take into account that a paper may be slightly easier or more difficult than the year before.

Grade boundaries for all papers can be found here:

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