

Examiners' Report/ Lead Examiner Feedback

January 2016

NQF BTEC Level 1/Level 2 Firsts in
Music

Unit 8: Music and Production Analysis
(20375F)

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General

This was the fourth sitting of this paper with a considerable increase in learner numbers for this series as compared to previous years.

The paper discriminated well with over 40% of learners achieving pass level and above with several more reaching Distinction level than in previous tests.

Whilst there is evidence that some learners responded very effectively to the paper, it is evident that learners are not been adequately prepared for the test. This is particularly noticeable in the questions targeting knowledge of key musical devices (both musical and rhythmic) where responses seen related to dynamics or instrumentation.

Learners are also unprepared for the more extended abstract questions such as 9 and 21, where knowledge of the full unit content is necessary to respond effectively. Learners clearly lack the knowledge required and consequently are unable to apply or synthesis the information to respond.

There continues to be a trend where learners are approaching the paper purely from a production perspective with very limited knowledge of music/musicality. As stated in the grade boundaries, learners must have knowledge of both in order to pass.

The division between those learners who have undertaken prior study of the unit specification and those who have not is very noticeable in this paper more than the other test sessions. Those with prior knowledge have been able to access the whole paper and attempted to provide responses to all questions. Invariably, these responses have shown a grasp of the key concepts of music and production supported with effective exam practice techniques.

The paper has also provided some higher overall grade outcomes than in previous sessions, with the responses given corresponding to the mark scheme.

Question 1 Which **one** of the following genres best fits this music?

This was a highly successful question with most learners being able to identify synthpop as the correct response.

Question 2 What is the tempo of this piece in terms of BPM (beats per minute)?

A good proportion of learners at all levels were able to score successfully here. There were examples of learners' notes and working out on the paper, demonstrating good examination technique.

Question 3 Identify **two** different **rhythmic** devices used by different electronic instruments during the introduction of this piece from 0:00 to 0:27.

Learners found this question very challenging whilst others failed to read the question clearly. Whilst the majority scored 2 marks for identifying a correct electronic instrument, a significant number were unable to identify the rhythmic device used by the instrument selected.

3 Identify two different rhythmic devices used by different electronic instruments during the introduction of this piece from 0:00 to 0:27.	Q03	2
Electronic instrument 1: <i>Synth</i>		
Rhythmic device 1:		
Electronic instrument 2: <i>Drum machine</i>		
Rhythmic device 2:		
(Total for Question 3 = 4 marks)	Total	2

Some provided descriptions of how the instrument was played, examples of different dynamics were offered and several answered through suggesting a production effect used at a certain point. These answers were not credited. Learners were also able to identify more than one synth and referred to this as synth 1 and synth 2, whilst others used synth and keyboard. This was creditable.

A range of musical devices were also offered such as block chords and some provided tempo changes.

Question 4 Identify a non-rhythmic musical device used from 0:27 to 0:35.

Learners appeared to have been confused between a non-rhythmic device and a non-tuned instrument as the responses reflect this. Several learners provided drums as an answer whilst others offered a production effect as in the example below:

4 Identify a non-rhythmic musical device used from 0:27 to 0:35.	Q04	0
<i>The use of levels on the vocals</i>		
(Total for Question 4 = 1 mark)	Total	0

Some learners were able to show a clear understanding and identify a precise non-rhythmic device as below:

4 Identify a non-rhythmic musical device used from 0:27 to 0:35.	Q04	1
<i>Stabbing of the chords on the ^{keyboard} piano</i>		
(Total for Question 4 = 1 mark)	Total	1

It was evident also that some learners did not have the necessary understanding of rhythmic devices in general.

Question 5 Which decade was this piece originally recorded in?

This question tested learner's understanding of musical styles and genres and it was evident that those who had prepared for the paper were able to identify 1980s as the correct response.

Question 6 Which vocal technique does the singer use from 1:16 to 1:34?

Most learners were able to distinguish the difference in the vocal sound in that it was not sung. Responses varied between rapping, spoken word and talking in time was also credited for this level.

6 Which vocal technique does the singer use from 1:16 to 1:34?	Q06	1
<i>Talking in time to the hythm Chythem.</i>		
(Total for Question 6 = 1 mark)	Total	1

Question 7 Identify the type of voice heard from 1:35 to 1:50.

A high percentage of learners were able to identify the type of voice, with most responses being female or alto.

7 Identify the type of voice heard from 1:35 to 1:50.	Q07	1
alto		
(Total for Question 7 = 1 mark)	Total	1

There continues to be some uncertainty with learners identifying falsetto as a female vocal type. Credit was also awarded to answers which identified the range as mid or low female voice. Singing techniques were also provided e.g. head voice which was inaccurate.

Question 8(a) Identify the texture of this piece from 1:59 to 2:11.

Learners were able to successfully identify the texture as thin, sparse or used other descriptions that were acceptable. This examples show a descriptive response to the question.

8 (a) Identify the texture of this piece from 1:59 to 2:11.	(1) Q08a	1
Thin texture with the synth, bass, drums and vocals		

This accurate single response was also credited.

8 (a) Identify the texture of this piece from 1:59 to 2:11.	(1) Q08a	1
thin		

Very few had mistaken the texture as dense or thick which was inaccurate.

Question 8(b) Name **one** musical device used in the main vocals from 2:53 to 3:16.

Learners were able to provide a response to this question and most were accurate.

(b) Name one musical device used in the main vocals from 2:53 to 3:16.	(1) Q08b	1
Repetition.		

and

(b) Name **one** musical device used in the main vocals from 2:53 to 3:16.

(1) Q08b 1

~~Rep~~ Harmony

There were a number of learners who provided descriptions of this part of the music. These responses could not be credited as the question specifically asked for a device as in the example below:

(b) Name **one** musical device used in the ~~main~~ ^{section} vocals from 2:53 to 3:16.

(1) Q08b 0

There is a contrast of the two vocal styles

It is evident that some learners are unable to identify musical devices and centres are encouraged to focus on this aspect of the unit specification during the teaching and learning period and in preparation for the test.

Question 8(c) Name **one** other artist/band of the same genre.

Most learners showed a good understanding of the style and genre of Synthpop and were able to provide a very wide range of examples for this question. Most responses referred to bands such as Human League, Depeche Mode, Duran Duran and Erasure as in the following examples:

(c) Name **one** other artist/band of the same genre.

(1) Q08c 1

Erasure

(c) Name **one** other artist/band of the same genre.

(1) Q08c 1

Duran Duran

(c) Name **one** other artist/band of the same genre.

(1) Q08c 1

Human League

Some learners identified bands of the same period but were not in the style of synthpop, whilst other offered 90s electronic bands such as Moby which is inaccurate.

Question 9 Describe **two** ways in which the music changes from 3:17 to the end of this piece in contrast to the previous section.

Many learners had not read the question clearly and had responded through providing a difference in mood to gain the second mark.

In this instance, the aim of the question referred to the way in which the music has changed from a previous section. Whilst a significant number of learners have been able to identify at least one way this has changed, some found difficulty in describing through drawing comparison to the previous section for the additional +1 mark.

The example below show a good response to the question gaining the maximum 4 marks:

9 Describe two ways in which the music changes from 3:17 to the end of this piece in contrast to the previous section.	Q09	4
1 The texture gets thicker. More instruments/electronics and voices join in, creating a thicker atmosphere with alot more going on. It is a lot more unpredictable too as vocal lines are randomly sung adding to the thickness.		
2 The The drum beat changes to include a lot more bass, this happens because the keyboard riff comes back in. The bass drum is following and is playing along with it.		
(Total for Question 9 = 4 marks)	Total	4

9 Describe **two** ways in which the music changes from 3:17 to the end of this piece in contrast to the previous section.

Q09

4

1 The style of sing changes possibly to a female singer or the vocalist changes to singing in falsetto.

~~setto~~ The lyrics change. The style of singing also adjusts to a different "genre" almost, like soul singing style, where before was more ~~melodic~~ structure based singing into free open singing

2 The texture of the song becomes more ~~best~~ busy in this section because another instrument adds in with "Riffy" patterns that continuously change whereas before there ~~was~~ ^{was} a ~~drone~~ ~~prolonged~~ brass ~~section~~ section playing straight chords.

(Total for Question 9 = 4 marks)

Total

4

Question 10(a) Identify the environment in which this piece was recorded.

Learners responded well to this and most answers referred to Studio or studio overdub. Studio live is incorrect and not rewarded.

Question 10(b) Explain **one** decision the sound producer of this song may have made to achieve a balanced stereo field.

Some learners had misinterpreted the question and provided answers relating to editing techniques and a number of irrelevant responses not referring to the 'stereo field' but more the balance overall in terms of volume/levels.

There were also many generalisations and some referring specifically to different programmes, software and studio equipment that were not creditable.

(b) Explain **one** decision the sound producer of this song may have made to achieve a balanced stereo field.

(2) Q10b 2

by spreading the percussion evenly right to left, this has been done by placing bass instruments on left and other instruments to the left to give an even spread then having the vocal in the middle to even it all out

Question 10(c) Music production effects are used widely to enhance this piece. Outline the result of using the following effects.

Most learners had attempted this question in the main, but there was a significant number of learners who had not attempted all of this four part question. This was very challenging for those learners who had not prepared sufficiently for the LA B – the production element of the unit.

The following shows a good response gaining the maximum 4 marks.

(c) Music production effects are used widely to enhance this piece.

Outline the result of using the following effects.

(4) Q10c

4

Effect	Result of using the effect
Reverb	Reverb makes it sound like it's in a room, like it reflects sounds from walls.
Tremolo	makes it more interesting to hear, going up up and down in volume.
Distortion	makes it sound grittier and more heavy than the original sound.
Delay	gives it an echo type effect but keeps in time with the tempo.

(c) Music production effects are used widely to enhance this piece.

Outline the result of using the following effects.

sub(4)

Q10c

4

Effect	Result of using the effect
Reverb	Reverb adds echo to the piece making it sound fuller or thinner.
Tremolo	Tremolo changes the amplitude of the sound.
Distortion	Distortion can make the piece heavier by adding layers.
Delay	Delay makes a sound last longer after it ends.

Question 11 This remastered recording of the song was released on a greatest hits compilation in 2010.

Explain **one** advantage of recording this song using digital technology.

This was a very accessible question where most learners had a sound knowledge of the advantages of digital recording. Most were able to support the point through providing an advantage, whilst some provided two points and did not provide an explanation of the advantage. This prevented learners from accessing the second +1 mark for the explanation.

The following example shows a good response to this question.

11 This remastered recording of the song was released on a greatest hits compilation in 2010.

Q11 2

Explain **one** advantage of recording this song using digital technology.

As the song is recorded using digital technology, further in depth mastering/editing steps can be taken to achieve the wanted sound quality/end product.

(Total for Question 11 = 2 marks) Total 2

Question 12 Name the genre of this piece.

Many learners were able to identify Punk or Punk Rock as the correct genre. Some were mistaken with Rock whilst others gave a variety of responses relating to the Rock sub-genre which were inaccurate.

Questions 12 to 20 relate to track 2 on the CD: **London Calling** by **The Clash**.

Q12 1

12 Name the genre of this piece.

Punk rock

(Total for Question 12 = 1 mark) Total 1

This was an accurate response gaining 1 mark

Questions 12 to 20 relate to track 2 on the CD: **London Calling** by **The Clash**.

Q12 0

12 Name the genre of this piece.

Rock

(Total for Question 12 = 1 mark) Total 0

This response only identifies Rock which is inaccurate.

Question 13 Identify **two** instruments used in this piece apart from the lead and rhythm guitar.

A significant number of learners were able to identify the drum kit and bass guitar, whilst some provided individual parts of the kit as below:

13 Identify **two** instruments used in this piece apart from the lead and rhythm guitar.

Q13 2

1 Drums / ~~drum~~ - kick drums

2 High hat

(Total for Question 13 = 2 marks) Total 2

For this question, vocals were not credited. Centres are reminded that vocals are not accepted as 'instruments' unless otherwise stated.

Question 14 What type of key is this piece in?

Whilst this has been answered highly successfully in past tests, this cohort found the question relatively challenging in the variety of responses seen. Some provided a single letter e.g. A, G, D etc. and a few learners showed some insecurity in their understanding of the difference between time signature and key signature, often providing 4/4 as an answer:

14 What type of key is this piece in?	Q14	0
4/4		
(Total for Question 14 = 1 mark)	Total	0

Several were able to identify this correctly as a minor key.

14 What type of key is this piece in?	Q14	1
Minor		
(Total for Question 14 = 1 mark)	Total	1

Others did identify the full and correct key of E minor:

14 What type of key is this piece in?	Q14	1
E minor		
(Total for Question 14 = 1 mark)	Total	1

Question 15 Identify the texture from 0:00 to 0:20.

A significant number of learners were able to identify the texture as thin or sparse. Some misinterpreted this and provided responses relating to type of voice.

Most gave one word answers which is creditable whilst others proceeded to describe the subsequent development of the texture as in the example below:

15 Identify the texture from 0:00 to 0:20.	Q15	0
Thin texture going in to thick		
(Total for Question 15 = 1 mark)	Total	0

Question 16 Identify the vocal tone of the lead vocalist from 0:21 to 0:49.

Learners were successful in being able to identify the tone of the lead vocalist's voice providing a wide range of responses to this such as breathy, course, raspy and so on.

16 Identify the vocal tone of the lead vocalist from 0:21 to 0:49.	Q16	1
Breathy		
(Total for Question 16 = 1 mark)	Total	1

There were instances where answers referred to the pitch which was inaccurate whilst others identified the type of voice i.e. tenor, baritone etc. This was not an accurate response and no credit was awarded as in the example below:

16 Identify the vocal tone of the lead vocalist from 0:21 to 0:49.	Q16	0
baritone		
(Total for Question 16 = 1 mark)	Total	0

Question 17 Identify the structure of this piece using letters that correspond to the given sections. Part of the structure is given. Place your answers in the boxes below.

This question was attempted by most learners with a significant number gaining the three correct responses in the accurate order. Those who did not receive the full 3 marks, generally were able to identify B (verse) and C (chorus) but unable to identify the instrumental break (D). Some learners demonstrated effective examination technique and had evidently spent time working the structure out clearly as below:

17 Identify the structure of this piece using letters that correspond to the given sections. Part of the structure is given. Place your answers in the boxes below.	Q17	3							
A - Introduction									
B - Verses	ABC B - - CDBE								
C - Chorus									
D - Instrumental break	$\begin{array}{c} \text{CD} \\ \text{---} \\ \text{ABEBCDCDB} \end{array}$ <p style="margin-left: 40px;">lyrics</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">London calling</p>								
E - Outro									
A	B	C	B	C	D	C	D	B	E
(Total for Question 17 = 3 marks)	Total	3							

Question 18 Explain **one** idiomatic playing technique used by the rhythm or lead guitars throughout this piece that is characteristic of this genre.

Most learners were able to provide a response relating to an idiomatic technique used by the guitars. Several referred to the different means in which the guitarist articulated the performance through the use of e.g. strumming and pitch bending.

18 Explain one idiomatic playing technique used by the rhythm or lead guitars throughout this piece that is characteristic of this genre.	Q18	2
<i>the rhythm guitars use a stabbing method to create an aggressive mood which is typical for ^{the} punk genre.</i>		
(Total for Question 18 = 2 marks)	Total	2

Some found difficulty in providing an explanation and several provided generalisations with regards to the style that were not creditable.

Question 19 Explain **one** way in which a dramatic mood is achieved from 1:51 to 2:19.

Responses were wide ranging here which reflected the array of possible answers available to fulfil the question. Some learners found difficulty in identifying musical point for the first mark and often this was using basic musical vocabulary.

Whilst some learners identified a musical point, others referred to production aspects and effects which were also creditable as in the examples below:

Musical response:

19 Explain one way in which a dramatic mood is achieved from 1:51 to 2:19.	Q19	2
<i>The voices which are either making screeching or just being loud create a rebellious sort of sound and attitude.</i>		
(Total for Question 19 = 2 marks)	Total	2

Production response

19 Explain **one** way in which a dramatic mood is achieved from 1:51 to 2:19.

The feedback from the guitar and the screaming vocals are used to create tension.

(Total for Question 19 = 2 marks)

Q19	2
Total	2

There continues to be evidence of learners not achieving the second point that requires an explanation of the mood itself.

Question 20(a) Identify the production effect used on the lead vocal from 3:12 to the end.

Most learners identified this correctly as echo, whilst the other acceptable answer included delay.

20 (a) Identify the production effect used on the lead vocal from 3:12 to the end.

echo

(1) Q20a

1

Some used one word responses and a few gave an explanation of how this was used, although the latter was not necessary for this question. Some learners are continuing to provide multiple answers despite previous notification in past reports that only the first response would be acceptable as an answer. Centres are encouraged to remind learners of this when providing exam technique advice.

Question 20(b) Explain **one** production technique used during the recording of this song.

Some learners scored well here when identifying a technique used at the point of recording as in the following response.

(b) Explain **one** production technique used during the recording of this song.

Overdubbing is used during the recording of this song as many layers of guitar and vocals are played one on another to give the song more texture.

(2) Q20b

2

(Total for Question 20 = 3 marks)

Total	2
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Question 21 Compare the key features of the **style** and **genre** of the two pieces.

Learners continue to find difficulty in identifying aspect of the music to discuss and subsequently the responses tend to be generalisations that lack in comparisons. A few learners misinterpret the means of comparison through only focusing on the similarities. Whilst this may have some relevance, it does restrict the amount of responses that can be made as in this instance, there are very few similarities between the styles and genres of the tracks.

Learners must focus on identifying a point and justifying this through referring to both tracks in order to achieve credit. Many learners appear to be using the previous questions as an aid memoire to answer and whilst this may be useful, replicating some answers that were inaccurate in the first instance is ineffective.

Centres are strongly encouraged to invest teaching and delivery time in supporting learners with relevant exam technique and providing suitable writing frames. It is good practice to use previous test papers for this.

In order to answer this question successfully, learners must have a sound knowledge of the unit specification in both music and production. Evidence of this was limited in this session, with many learners solely reliant on production knowledge and very little musical understanding.

This is an example of a response gaining 7 marks:

Such as machine
→ a drum machine
and a synth bass.

SECTION C

Question 21 relates to both track 1 on the CD: **What have I done to deserve this?** by **Pet Shop Boys** and track 2 on the CD: **London Calling** by **The Clash**.

Q21 7

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

In the Pet shop boys song they use alot more synth sounds which gives it its electronic feel and making it sound more light hearted and 'pop' like. whereas London Calling uses more live instruments such as electric guitar, drum kit and big ceremonial drums. This gives it a much harsher sound that appeals more to a Rock audience rather than Pop.

In addition London Calling is in a minor key making it sound more sinister and heavy than the Pet Shop Boys song which is in a major key therefore making it sound more up beat and happy.

Furthermore the vocals in 'what have I done to deserve this' use techniques such as vibrato and melisma's which is common in pop whereas in London Calling which is rock it is more common to use scratchy, rough sounding vocals. In addition the Clash tend to use shrieking vocals at points whereas the Pet shop boys stick to a more limited use of vocal techniques and range. Nevertheless there is a similar technique used at 3:28

although not to the same extent.

12



The Pet shop boys also incorporate a constant use of harmonies in the lead vocals as well as using effects such as chorus to make the vocals sound fuller. Although the Clash also use multiple vocal layers, it is only used in certain sections. Furthermore there are sections where it is only one vocal line with no harmonies or effects like chorus. Nevertheless they do both use harmonies throughout.

The clash also use distortion on their guitars to create the raw and harsh sound characteristic of Rock whereas The Pet Shop Boys ~~are~~ have a more clean and clear tonal quality common in Pop music.

Another point of comparison is their structure, ~~The~~ The Clash incorporate ~~more~~ more instrumental breaks for example which is characteristic of Rock music, whereas The Pet Shop boys follow a more traditional structure of pop which is designed to make it more catchy.

Finally going back to the vocals of both genres, rock tends to follow less of a melodic vocal line, which is seen in The Clash, whereas a more pop orientated song tends to have a more clear melody line, which is what the Pet Shop boys do in their song.

TOTAL FOR SECTION C = 8 MARKS

TOTAL FOR PAPER = 50 MARKS

Furthermore the content of each song is hugely contrasting as rock tends to talk about much darker topics, evidenced in The Clash's song, whereas pop deals with more light hearted topics like the ones of the Pet Shop boys.

(Total for Question 21 = 8 marks)

Total

7

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