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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel IGCSE
Music Technology (6MT02) Paper 01

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As always, candidates who had a substantial knowledge of both musical and technological topics, along with the appropriate vocabularies, were the most successful. Candidates were generally well-prepared by centres for both special focus styles, perhaps slightly more so for Rap and Hip hop.

There were very few incomplete papers again this year, indicating good time management and exam technique. However, as has been the case in the past, candidates sometimes answered a question from a past paper, rather than addressing the question that has been asked. This was especially the case with Q5.

Additional sheets continue to be used, despite the instruction to only write in the space provided. Most candidates gave vague and generic responses on the additional sheets, often having already scored the maximum marks in the space provided. Notes and workings out should *not* be submitted. Use of additional sheets also results in a slowing down of the scanning/marking process.

Candidates are reminded that answers need to be specific. General responses such as 'more instruments', 'a thicker texture', or 'another synth', will rarely attract a mark; 'a synth pad has been added', and 'there are additional/backing vocals' are much more specific responses.

It simply cannot be stressed enough that clear and legible handwriting is extremely important, as marks will most certainly be lost if examiners are unable to read the answer. This also applies to staff notation questions which seemed, however, to be much more legible this year.

Specific questions

- 1(a) Mostly correct.
- 1(b) Most popular answer was *Vocoder*. Some candidates mentioned *autotune*. There were some vague responses regarding *EQ/Synths/Phase*.
- 1(c) Many responses were detailed and described how the arrangement had changed with the addition of pads, new synth timbres, additional vocals. Many, however, merely said *more instruments* or *thicker*, both of which are too general. *Change of key* and *Guitar comes in* were also popular incorrect answers.
- 1(d)(i) Many candidates identified that this was a type of *slapback* echo, identifying the *short delay*, and the *low feedback*, with very few mentioning the *amplitude*, *panning* or *EQ* of the delayed signal. Some candidates described reverb instead.
- 1(d)(ii) This was a mixed bag, with a significant amount of candidates stating that the reverb and delay had *increased*. In the second part, many candidates referred to increased *length* of reverb, rather than increased *amount*.

- 1(e) A mixed bag of responses, but the majority of candidates chose the correct rhythm.
- 1(f) This differentiated well between the candidates who had a firm grasp of filtering, and those who did not. *Short attack/decay* were the two most popular answers, along with *LPF*. The use of an *envelope* to control the filtering was very rarely mentioned, along with the *resonance/Q*. The most common wrong answers were *HPF* and descriptions of delay or reverb.
- 2(a)(b) A surprisingly wide range of responses for (a), but most candidates identified the genre, even if the year was wildly out..
- 2(c) Responses to this question were quite perplexing, given the relatively polarised panning positions. All three instruments were described as being in all three positions, and some candidates mention moving panning. Some candidates identified all three, but this was not generally well-answered.
- 2(d) Most responses were correct.
- 2(e) The overwhelming majority of candidates scored a mark.
- 2(f) Quite a few candidates scored three marks. Many scored two, usually missing the A at the end. Some scored one for the D, but there were some who were clearly not familiar with score notation.
- 3(a) Candidates had a variety of ways to describe the rhythmic change, and some of them quite convoluted. Most spotted either *fewer notes*, or *sustained notes*, whilst the more able candidates scored a full two marks. Some candidates wrote about something *other* than rhythm such as pitch or the relationship to other instruments.
- 3(b) This was generally fairly well-answered, with many candidates identifying a combination of *delay time*, *feedback*, and *panning*. Some candidates suffered from lack of specificity or correct use of technical vocabulary.
- 3(c)(i) This was mostly well-handled by candidates, with most solutions matching the problem. However, some responses were vague, e.g. *bad mic placement/move the mic*, and solutions included *use a grand piano*. Most popular responses were to do with *inaccessibility* and the *wide range of frequencies* to be captured.
- 3(c)(ii) The vast majority of candidates scored here as there was a wide variety of ways to describe the EQ.

- 3(d) This was well-answered by the majority of candidates.
- 3(e) This seemed to be something of a lottery, with no clear winner.
- 3(f) Again, this revealed the candidates who had a real grasp of synthesis, and could identify the correct element via their listening skills.
- 4(a) Most candidates spotted a *minor* interval, just which kind was not so clear-cut.
- 4(b)(i) *Distortion, riff, and power chords* were all popular answers, along with *minor key*. *Dropped tuning* was rarely mentioned. But most candidates seemed to understand the basic elements of grunge, although some mentioned elements that are not heard in this particular track.
- (4b)(ii) Quite a few candidates noted that the vocal in this track is not particularly shouted or aggressive. References to *dynamic contrast* and *clean* guitars were few and far between.
- 4(c) Mostly well-handled by candidates who were specific in their answers. Many responses referred to the *entire mix* dropping in level, rather than in the shift in prominence between the guitars and the vocals.
- 4(d) Responses to this question were more detailed, with candidates describing at least one correct element of the mix.
- 4(e) *Double tracking, opposite panning* and *distortion* were all popular answers, and most candidates scored well.
- 5(a) A fair proportion of candidates gained marks on this question if they read the question accurately. No marks were awarded for *walking bass*, for example. Also, some candidates fell foul by putting correct responses under the wrong heading, *12-bar blues* under *rhythm* for example.
- 5(b) This elicited a good set of responses, with some candidates stating not just *organ* but *Hammond B3*.
- 5(c)(i)(ii) The majority of candidates were on the right lines, particularly with part (ii), where they were more likely to have had hands-on experience. There were some references to *slashed cones* and use of *EQ* or *FX* other than distortion.
- 5(d) Candidates often referred to the same thing twice in different ways, most often to do with *balance*. *Multitrack* and *multiple mics* were common answers. Again, many answers were vague, such as *it's a better mix, this sounds better than the 50's* and so forth.

- 5(e) Many candidates described the careers of artists such as Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis et rather than focusing on the label. Non-Sun artists were often referenced, and biographical details that did not answer the question were often given. Most candidates knew *Sam Phillips* and *slap back*. Those who went into more detail, acknowledged Phillips' penchant for recruiting artists from a variety of musical backgrounds, forming the melting pot that was to become rockabilly and rock & roll, leading to the breaking down of racial barriers and stereotypes.
- 6(a) Generally well-answered, though some candidates did not seem to understand the word *tonality*.
- 6(b) This elicited many vague and general responses. There were also many responses talking about *delay* rather than *looping*, and references to *stuttering*.
- 6(c) A high proportion of candidates identified the correct rhythmic combination.
- 6(d)(i)(ii) Part (i) drew a range of marks. The main stumbling block was for candidates who identified the chord A, but heard *minor* rather than *major*. Part (ii) was more consistent.
- 6(e) A wide range of answers was given, with no discernable pattern.
- 6(f) A relatively small proportion of responses mentioned *half time*. Vague responses such as *less of it* and *not so much rhythm* were not credited.
- 6(g) A very small percentage of candidates identified the correct controller, opting for *envelope*, *LFO* and *pitch bend*.
- 6(h) This sampling question was generally more accurately answered than 6(b). *Rhythmic diminution* was described in many and various ways, but this, along with *stuttering* and the *pitch bend* at the end were frequently identified.
- 6(i)(i)(ii) This was generally well-answered with candidates noticing the change in *level* or the change in *EQ/filtering* which, again, was described in many ways. Most candidates identified a reason for the change, mostly focusing on *a new section/artist*.
- 6(j) This was well-handled by candidates who stayed within the time period stated in the question. Some referred to artists and techniques from the late 80's, 90's and even later. *MC's*, *DJ's* and their various functions and contributions were well-represented, as were the sources for *beats*, the role of *block parties* and the attendant cultural references. Most popular artists were *Sugarhill Gang*, *Afrika Bambaataa* and DJ Kool Herc.