



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCE
Music Technology (9MT0)
Paper 03

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9MT0/03 Principal Examiner's Report to Centres 2023

General comments:

This year's paper differentiated extremely well between candidates, with total marks ranging from fewer than 10, right through to the high 60s. There were very few incomplete papers this year, indicating sound time management and exam technique.

Candidates are reminded to listen closely to the audio stimulus material; to draw out relevant production details from each stimulus recording, rather than describing a general capture and/or mixing approach for the particular era, genre or featured instrument. Where an effect or production technique is identified, candidates should provide clarification about parameter settings and/or the way in which it is used, rather than providing a list of effects with no qualification.

Additional answer sheets continue to be used. Candidates are reminded to write concisely, and in the space provided wherever possible to avoid the use of extra sheets. Responses for questions 5 and 6 that used a tabular format/bullet points were far more concise than those written in continuous prose. Candidates should be encouraged to take this approach if they prefer, rather than producing an outline plan and then reiterating similar points in continuous prose.

This report should be read in conjunction with the published mark scheme.

Specific questions:

Question 1

- Q01a - Many scored 1 mark out of 2, suggesting a less-than detailed knowledge of modulation effects.
- Q01b - The majority of candidates identified an appropriate process.
- Q01c - Many were unable to hear plosives on the recording or give a valid term for them. A large number were able to identify at least one solution.
- Q01d - There was strong differentiation in this 4-mark describe question. Common pitfalls were referring to a general approach to recording acoustic guitars rather than what was heard in the stimulus recording, and not being specific enough to clarify when different things happened/changed, e.g., the switch from single track to a panned double-track.

Question 2

- Q02a - Many recognised that the dry signal disappeared, leaving only the wet, however a significant number incorrectly stated that the wet signal had got louder or the reverb was longer. In the second part, few were able to access full marks as further technical detail was required. Very few were aware of pre-fade sends.
- Q02b - The majority scored 2 of the 3 marks. A common pitfall was describing sustain as being time based.
- Q02c - A wide variety of response qualities. More successful responses used correct terms and explained the process in stages.

Question 3

- Q03b - This was well-answered in the main. Some candidates got either pitch or rhythm incorrect, scoring 1 out of 2, whilst very few scored 0.
- Q03c - A wide range of quality in responses. Less successful candidates listed effects used without any qualification, e.g., 'compression and reverb used'.
- Q03d - A wide range of responses observed. Many candidates confused bit depth (related to digital sampling) with bitrate (used in data compression).
- Q03e - More successful candidates included technical specificity in their response.

Question 4

- Q04a - Well-prepared candidates understood the describe command and were able to provide 6 relevant points. Less successful responses typically only discussed 1968 technology limitations - and so didn't answer the question - or approached the response as they would an explain command (features plus accompanying AO4 evaluations).
- Q04b - There was generally reliable knowledge of EQ and filter types used for remastering. The most common pitfall was the discussion of dynamics processes, which weren't covered by the question.

Question 5

In this year's question paper, candidates were provided additional guidance on expected scope and content in a bulleted list. As well as referring to each of these production aspects, candidates may also use them as sub-headings.

Candidates appeared to find the comparison of the two songs selected for Q05 more challenging than 2022. As last year, candidates often did not refer to the songs specifically and instead offered a pre-prepared account on (principally) capture and technology associated with each era of recording, resulting in a low- to mid-band mark.

Study of each song - without resorting to this pre-packaged rote learning would have revealed details relevant to each, e.g., that Van Halen did NOT use a drum machine (as some had written), and that Paul Anka's more contemporary version was far from an EDM remix with limited dynamic range - another surprising, recurring trend where candidates were making assumptions without listening.

Blank responses were extremely rare, indicating reliable exam technique for the cohort.

Discussion of levels:

- Level 1 (1-3) responses tended to be extremely brief, with many inaccuracies and usually limited to a few valid AO3 points.
- Level 2 (4-6) demonstrated a slight improvement in scope and detail, although principally limited to AO3 points rather than explaining parameters and/or effect for each feature. There may have also been some inaccuracies.
- Level 3 (7-9) responses had some clear detail, but this tended to be very general or have strong AO3 but limited AO4 depth of explanation. There tended to be lots of detail that matched the era in a general way and wasn't specific to the stimulus songs. Limited or general discussion of effects parameters in this band.
- Level 4 (10-12) responses were detailed and covered most/all aspects of production. There was a slight limitation in depth of explanation. Parameters were discussed. This level also covered highly detailed responses that with limited scope.
- Level 5 (13-15) responses were highly detailed, without limitation of scope. There was assured expertise with most/all aspects explained in depth. Parameters were discussed and applied to specific instruments and/or locations within the songs.

Question 6

For Q06, far more candidates identified song-specific features than in previous years, which meant AO3 often scored the maximum 5 allocated marks. Despite the marks awarded for AO3, fewer were able to evaluate the effect of each feature to score additional, AO4 marks for this half of the question.

The second, wider context component of Q06 required candidates to draw upon their knowledge of the development of music technology - and its associated eras and genres - to establish which trends and techniques could be considered retro/lo-fi, rather than, again relying upon pre-arranged accounts. There was great differentiation here too, ranging from general and vague overviews of retro and lo-fi production, through to detailed and assured responses scoring full marks.

Encouragingly, blank responses were also very rare here.