

Unit 14: Listening Skills for Music Technologists: “Blood to Bone Mix”

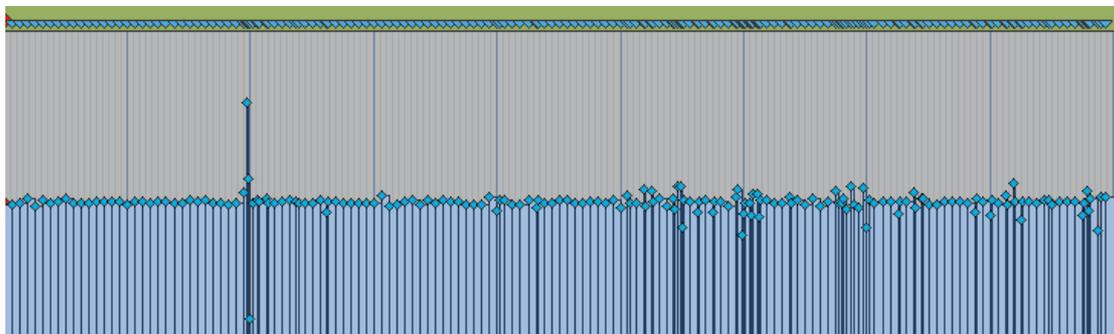
Task 1: Criteria 1

1. Firstly I created a new Pro-Tools session with a 24-bit depth and a 44.1Khz and imported the 23 audio tracks into it, setting the tempo at 147bpm. I then organised them into edit and mix groups and coloured them for reference.



2. Next I proceeded to go through the track bar by bar, listening to see if the band managed to adhere to the click track tempo. Although the majority of the track was in time, during the faster paced segments they did speed up, but they were playing off time together, so it was ok.

The Tempo Map can be seen below:



3. Pre Mix Report:

The song consists of 11 sections:

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- Intro 1 (Bass Only) (8 Bars)
- Intro 2 (Drums Come In) (8 Bars)
- Verse 1 (16 Bars)
- Instrumental Chorus (16 Bars)
- Re-Intro (8 Bars)
- Verse 2 (Short) (8 Bars)
- Chorus 2 (16 Bars)
- Mid-Section 1 (16 Bars)
- Mid-Section 2 (16 Bars)
- Chorus 3 (16 Bars)
- Outro (16 Bars)

It follows a verse-chorus-verse-chorus like structure in 4/4 timing with long instrumental sections throughout the song. The song starts with the bass playing for 8 bars, with a tone with less bass and lower mid frequencies, giving the impression he is playing on the “higher” D and G strings, which fall in the same register as the lower strings on a guitar. He is playing an arpeggiated melody, letting the first note ring out (possibly the open A string) creating a dissent tonality almost separating it from the chord.

This rhythmic pattern is repeated right up until the chorus when he starts playing a different pattern in which he changes tempo to a “galloping” pace switching back and forth. During the Mid sections 1 the bass starts off with a pattern, which lasts for 4 bars and is the root note variation what the rhythm guitar is playing.

The song also follows a “Loud-Quiet” dynamic with the verses being fairly stripped back, while everything crashes in during the chorus, especially in up towards the first Mid Section, where it goes back and forth before everything comes to a crescendo before driving forward towards the end.

The drums start off with just kick drums mostly in the verses, with the “4 on the floor” rhythm creating the sense of building energy, with each kick on every beat in the bar. As the song progresses the drummer adds in fills, usually involving the snare, hitting both the head and the rim, while accentuating the start of some bars with a crash cymbal.

Going towards a slightly drum and bass else drum beat in the choruses, if it was looked at in 1/8 notes, the with the snares falling on the 2nd and 4th beats, and the kick falling on the 1st, 1+, and 3+, with rhythmic variations. Its also worth noting the drum drops out towards the second chorus, and the first mid sections, allowing the vocals to stand alone for a bar before everything crashing back in to create excitement and interest. The sharp transients also imply it was played with sticks rather than brushes.

The Guitars take a back seat in the verses, with Guitar 1 playing with a pretty fast attack to it, suggesting it was played with a plectrum with the riff following a pattern of letting the chord die down before playing a descending melody in a

minor scale. It then changes to the same “galloping” pace the bass does, having mid to higher frequencies suggests its be played on the middle strings, possibly the D, G and B. However the higher bass and guitar are occupying this higher range, so there is conflict between the two.

Guitar 2 appears towards the start of the first chorus, playing arpeggiated chords, sitting under guitar 1 which takes the lead, filling out the spectrum with a less distorted tone meanwhile Guitar 3 mainly acts to bolster Guitar 1 during the Mid-Section’s adding to the intensity, making it sound bigger, while dropping out when it goes back to the chorus.

The singer has a fairly good voice, and can stay on key pretty well throughout the song, with a very “less is more” idea.

The vocals are sparse, with the verse delivery being 3 stanzas of lyrics followed by him holding the note on the last word of the 4 set, with a fairly mellow tone, at a conversation level volume. He sings louder in the chorus, with a quicker delivery going up and down in pitch, he uses both the dynamics of his voice both in pitch and volume to create excitement through switching between them in different parts of the song.

Influences:

The band gave 4 reference tracks, with specific instructions on what they wanted their instruments to sound like, with the list being as follows:

- Sober by Tool (Bass Tone)
- I Will Possess Your Heart by Death Cab for Cutie (Bass and Vocals)
- All The World is Mad by Thrice (Chorus Vocals/Instrumentation and Guitars)
- Are You Interested? by Cog (Guitars)
- Avon by Queens of the Stone Age (Drums)

Sober:

Both Songs are bass driven, with guitars providing atmosphere, letting the bass be heard due to lack of guitars in the verses. Young Griffio also mimics the vocal delivery of the Singer, having a quieter verse and a loud chorus adhering to the Verse/chorus/verse/chorus format. The bass tone in question is slightly overdriven, allowing it to have a gritty, darker sound, with the high mid’s giving it a growly bassline.

The way I would go about achieving this would be to use the DI’ed signal of the bass, and then either use a guitar amp style plug in to get the overdriven tone, or re-amp it through a guitar amp physically. I also potentially take out some of the lower mid range frequencies around 300Hz, and boost the high mids around 1-3Khz to emphasise that more trebly guitar like tone.

I Will Possess Your Heart:

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This song is a lot longer than Young Griff, but follows the same verse/chorus/verse/chorus format, with multiple instruments layered on top of each other to create a textured, atmospheric sound. The song also lacks dynamic, with everything staying the same tempo. I found the bass tone similar to the Tool song, but was far less aggressive, as it was un-distorted, and had more mid range, more walking along rather than driving the song.

The vocals in this song didn't have any dynamics to them, as they are all the same tone while the backing vocals are really low in the mix and only come to the fore-front when the main vocal stops. The backing vocals sound like they are being modulated somehow, either chorused, or through a Leslie, as compared to the young griff where they can be heard as loudly as the main vocal.

In order to recreate the bass tone, I would take the DI signal and apply the same steps as I did with Tool, but not use any distortion, and possibly use some compression to boost the signal and get a more rounded tone.

For vocals, I would compress the main vocal so they had an overall consistent level, around a 2:1 ratio, a medium threshold, slow attack and release, plus maybe not have the backing vocals always at the same time as the main ones. Instead maybe move them so they are not together and use a chorus like effect on them to add a sort of slow ripple-like flanger to make them some a bit more like they do here.

All the World is Mad:

There are numerous guitar parts in this song, layered and panned out hard left and right to achieve the most stereo separation possible, with the bass, vocals and drums in the center. These guitars also are heavily distorted playing extended power chords to give dissonant tones, jumping in and out during the verses, and both common of post-hardcore bands. Like the other songs, the Bass pushes the song forward but is just playing root notes compared to the arpeggios of Young Griff's bassist. Its tone is slightly overdriven, almost the combination of the distorted Tool tone and the DCFC one.

The Vocals are one constant level using the dynamics between the guitars and bass to create excitement, with the exception of no different backing vocals and just a double take of the original one to make it seem more convicted and powerful. To recreate this I could take out the backing vocals in the choruses and just had the double taked ones, while saving the backing vocals for the Mid-Section

Since we have three guitar parts, I would pan them differently so they had a large stereo image, maybe taking out some of the guitars to create the same jumping in and out, while EQ-ing each of the amp recordings different to get a full spectrum of tone.

Are You Interested:

The song starts with the Guitars at the forefront of the mix, which sound slightly chorused, letting the notes ring out to create a more atmospheric sound before the bass and drums kick in, grounding the song and giving it momentum. When the drums come into the mix the guitars become quieter, forming one compressed layer, which adds sustain to the notes. Blood to Bone's verses have this feel to them, as the guitar parts are very minimalistic, while the chorus's definitely have the same driving rhythm as this one does. The Bass isn't as prominent in this song, giving more emphasis on the mid range, while leaving room for the kick, under pinning the guitars. The Backing vocals are throughout this song, with them being slightly quieter in verses creating a layered almost choral sound with the effected guitars.

This guitar sound could be achieved if I modulated some of the different guitar parts giving that flanging sound, coupled with heavy compression during the chorus to let the vocal stand out.

Avon:

This influence can be heard towards the Mid-Sections of Blood to Bone, as the whole band go into a driving rhythm, very much like QOTSA do with their songs. The drumming is quite similar, with a lot of the fills in Young Griffon fitting QUOTSA's sound, with the cymbals and snare fills emphasising the first and third beats, in the verse, creating a waltzing sort of beat, while the Chorus's which has the snare on the 2nd and 4th beat, giving the song momentum.

The Overheads sound panned very wide and are heavily compressed to the point the signal is distorting, while the snare sounds more like a tom, due to the lack of rattle in the mix. This could be achieved by using a compressor on them with a fast attack and release, a low threshold, and a high ratio, giving them a constant washy "ringing" sound.