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Creative Tools for Music in the 21st Century

by C. E. GORDON

The Art of Sounds' website address is:
www.theartofsound.co.za

Authors Note:

Allow me first to establish what this eBook is not.
It is not a technical handbook and makes no claims at being a music production or music business authority or of demystifying the creative process in song writing/ production.

This eBook is a tool in aiding the aspiring music producer or sound engineer in exploring a creative process (and its application) and deals with the assimilation and dissemination of related themes within its context.

It is designed to assist you visualize the space between the creation of and the music itself and to stimulate creative thought. Reading guidelines: As a full audio work consists of individual parts, it is advised this eBook be read within context i.e. each section represents a song or track as on an audio album.

I acknowledge all contributors who inspired this work, who have helped shaped the world within and around me. It is for some of us more than language or commodity, but art's fascination with itself. The expression of its thought, will and desire.

May your journey take you to places you've never been, and show you things you've never seen or heard of before, as you discover the sound track to your soul.

Play on...

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IN THE BEGINNING

1.1 Star Borne

You've acquired the skills, tools and music. You've played every gig, entertaining friends at home, at clubs, rooms, and radio. If you're an engineering or production student, you'll be acquainted with listener fatigue. As with some I've encountered, acing assignments or exams and taking lengthy breaks from analysing sound are standard issue.

Depending on your motivation, and if your passion is music to begin with, sooner or later you're bound to hit a wall. Unless you've been self-taught or trained in music theory, breaking through any wall is not going to be easy. If you're a bedroom producer or production enthusiast happy with the level and quality of your work, it won't resonate with you.

Today where many are producers, label owners, and aficionados, and music is traded as commodity, the impact on human perception and the redefinition of art

is understated. How we digest art is a subjective process and one individuals' provocation is another's tedium. Two thousand years ago it served a different purpose. Generations understood the value of the skilled musician and their ability in translating life's trials and triumphs through the medium of sound. The beauty inherent in music is its universality.

With popular music and the rise of Rock n' Roll in the nineteen-fifties (1950's) the genre wouldn't have existed without the inroads made by the Blues and journeymen architects prior. As the forerunners to the counter-cultures' perceived authenticity, they were the original pop culturists as the communities they fostered (until Rock appropriated Blues and presented itself to the mainstream consciousness), already had a high degree of fluency within its social framework. As with House music via Rhythm and Blues (Rn'B)/ Soul/ Disco, tracing roots to the jooks (jook joints) of the nineteen-forties (1940's).

By considering the socio-economic and socio-political aspects of our music and the implications of it on the listener, a broader dimension unfolds. Developing your skill or talent in the nineteen-forties (1940's) either took place in the jook or in the church. You were either one step closer to Heaven or one step closer to Hell. Today these themes remain embedded and recurring in the Southern (American) musical landscape and legacy.

How, at all, does it affect you and the impact of your creativity on your community? The answer isn't blowing in the wind. It is found in the sensibilities driving the creative process. It is a quality placing a Dj/Producer/Musician/ Engineer in Chicago's south side, to one in Osaka, to the townships of southern Africa on the same page. Whether you're a House, Hip Hop, Dubstep, Trance, or Pop 'Head', we share the same past, present, and future.

1.2 The Sonics of Success

Why do we create and what do we seek to convey through our creations.

Do you want to achieve more with your tools than your creativity allows?

Sonically, traditional instrumentation i.e. drum, bass, guitar, keys, etc. are an established way of creating music with. (Sonics being the distinct aesthetic space distinguishing, characterizing and defining various genres). Understanding the Sonics of electronic music is important if you're going to develop an authentic creative signature. This element will either relegate you to novice status or with a combination of other elements, mark your ascendancy in the music world. This is of the aspects of the craft distinguishing you from the rest. (Consider also authenticity in the digital realm is a dated concept and success a personal definition). The beauty of electronic music is in it's no rules approach

to creativity and production. However, opting for a more formal education in music theory or production is wise.

What music theory will equip you with is an understanding of production as structure. Structure is good. With individual objectives, the tenets of music theory won't resonate with everyone, it has a tendency to dilute and restrict spontaneity in the creative process. Nevertheless, being a member of a dedicated creative community stands you in good stead where this is concerned. The sage advice is to surround you with musicians or producers who are higher up the skills food chain. This is the time when working partnerships are forged. Having kindred souls to work with and bounce ideas off with will bring a level of objectivity. All the soft and hardware in the world are meaningless if you are unable to create coherently. So too aiming for the bottom line regardless of artistic merit in the digital age of an evolving, volatile and fickle industry. Playing the numbers game makes for work of a short shelf life, and in the case of the by numbers producer, a space on it too.

How to capture mainstream imagination in theory:

Combine musical talent, technical know-how and the ability to translate and represent popular cultural themes in audio 'images' back to self. It is the interpretation of it audiences resonate with. Popular cultures' themes and tastes are a representation of these images. However, long term success in this area isn't formula based i.e. it is the so-called 'x

factor' determining longevity over talent, ability and the marketing machine. To capture and hold a fickle publics' imagination requires transcending even the artistic. (You could go the Robert Johnson route and get to the top of the food chain quicker but you'd have to ask around for directions).

How?

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