

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Music Technology (8MT0) Paper 03

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General Introduction

General Issues:

Adjusting to a new specification always brings challenges for both teachers and students. The strictly musical element of the legacy specification has now been removed, and longer questions with more marks allocated have been introduced, both of which necessitate a paradigm shift in thinking. We also have a levels-based mark scheme in addition to the points-based mark scheme used in the past.

Most of the challenges of the new specification have been met. It has been noted that there has been much sharing of examples of good practice and teaching strategies online (in various forums and platforms) between centres, and this indicates a high level of professionalism in terms of quality of delivery.

There was one issue of note however, and that is in the understanding of the various assessment objectives, particularly the balance of AO3 and AO4 in questions 4d and 5. This is discussed in more detail below.

There were extremely few incomplete papers this year, indicating good time management and exam technique.

Additional sheets continue to be used, despite the instruction to only write in the space provided. Most students gave vague and generic responses on the additional sheets, often having already gained all of the available marks. Use of additional sheets also results in a slowing down of the scanning/marking process.

Students are reminded that answers need to be as specific as possible. General responses will rarely attract a mark. For example, 'reverb' on its own is a very general response, but 'a *long* reverb has been *added*' is much more specific. A descriptor or qualification will often gain an additional mark,

It simply cannot be stressed enough that clear and legible handwriting is extremely important in this as in any other written examination, as marks will most certainly be lost if examiners are unable to read the answer.

Specific questions:

Q1(a) Most students correctly identified both the type of reverb and its means of production. The majority of students identified the panning of the guitar correctly.

Q1(b) The most common correct answers were concerned with the polarised panning and constricted frequency range, though these were described in a variety of ways. A significant number made references to the reverb, but very few discussed levels in the mix.

Q1(c) Most students identified double-tracking, and then went on to identify a valid method of using digital technology to recreate this. The most popular correct answers were to duplicate the audio and move one by a small amount of time, and ADT.

Q1(d) A significant number of students had clearly understood the permanence of bouncing tracks on analogue tape. Students showed awareness of the noise produced by analogue tape, and the potential build-up of hiss. However, there were many vague answers such as 'the sound gets worse', which were not detailed enough for a mark.

Q2(a) Many students correctly identified the era, based on the level of technology used, but some placed it a decade later.

Q2(b) Many students simply wrote 'panning', and were referring to a new recording rather than altering the existing mono track, which was specified in the question. Most correct answers referred to some type of stereo spreader/enhancer. A significant number stated 'use a plug in', but with no clarification of the type of plug in to be used.

Q2(c) Most correctly identified the mic set up used in this recording, and therefore understood that proximity to the single mic used would help to achieve balance. Far fewer referenced musicians playing louder or quieter. Some students misread the question, and described how better balance could have been achieved in a modern recording.

Q2(d) Most marks were awarded for using multiple mics, and multitrack recording. A significant number of students also recognised that recording digitally could lead to a better signal to noise ratio. The response 'better mics' was often used, but without justification as to what 'better' meant; 'mics with a wider frequency response' would have gained a mark.

Q2(e) A significant number gained full marks with an appropriate description of the direction and distance of the mic. A significant number named an appropriate mic type. However, some responses were very unclear as to where the microphone should be placed e.g. 'By the trumpet', 'Near the trumpet' etc.

Q3(a) Many students identified the correct positions of at least two parts of the kit, but others simply said it was panned either left or right in its entirety, or discussed issues relating to capture.

Q3(b) Many students identified the correct EQ characteristics expressed in both descriptive and technical terms. A significant number used vague terms such as high/low EQ, without referencing boosting/attenuation/cutting. Some identified a modulation effect on the second guitar, but very few qualified the reverb on the first guitar.

Q3(c) Few students achieved full marks, but many recognised the benefit of applying the same effects, EQ or dynamic processing. Some descriptions of 'mixing together' were too vague. It was seen that quite a few students had used their understanding of grouping tracks in their practical work, and had applied this to their answer.

Q4(a) Almost universally correctly answered.

Q4(b) Sample clearance was by far the most popular answer, expressed in a wide variety of ways. Matching the key and tempo were also popular. Many were making references to whether it would fit/match, which needed clarification in terms style, key, tempo, and so forth. Similarly, the quality of the sample was often not clarified.

Q4(c) Many students identified that it was looped, and that there was no variation in velocity.

Q4(d) Most students probably got the two or three AO3 marks available here, but very few (if any) were awarded the three available for AO4. Many identified the automated delay towards the end of the extract and the looped bass and drums, and so forth, but failed to discuss the impact of these on the recording. However, this discrepancy between marks for AO3 and AO4 was highlighted further in question 5.

Q5 There was a wide range of approaches in answering this question including: parallel lists of each track; using acronyms as sub headings to cover different production elements; writing about one track then the other followed by a comparison; writing chronologically about each separately, or both together.

Track comparisons often described opposites without any insightful explanations. Some answers were vague and difficult to follow; it was not always clear which track or instrument within a track was being referred to.

Some answers dwelt for far too long on describing how a vocal or guitar may have been captured, which is conjecture, but missed many other production characteristics. Most students did tend to concentrate on production, but some wrote extensively on purely musical characteristics such as song structure, or performance qualities, which cannot be credited within this specification. Some answers were very repetitive, particularly those that spread over additional sheets, where students often wrote lengthy conclusions reiterating their previous statements with no further clarification or debate.

Not many AO4 marks were awarded as explanations were often too vague or very questionable. It cannot be stressed enough that eight marks are available for AO3 (identifying elements of the production), and eight for AO4 (analysing why those elements had been used, and the effect they had on the recording as a whole).

Many students were giving answers from the AO3 domain (demonstrating listening skills and understanding), but very few from AO4 (demonstrating analysis and creating chains of reasoning). For example, if a student commented on the relatively narrow use of the stereo field in CJ Bomb, and then went on to discuss that this is because it was designed for a club situation, where extreme panning mitigates against itself because of the relationship of the sound system and the listener, they have made a chain of reasoning, and would be awarded a mark for AO3 *and* AO4.

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