

SYLLABUS FOR
ANALYSIS AND COMPOSITION OF COMMERCIAL
MUSIC

Prepared by

CHUCK BUTLER

Revised September 2005

ANALYSIS AND COMPOSITION OF COMMERCIAL MUSIC

For the purposes of this course, we are defining commercial music as any music created “for hire” as part of a broadcast advertising campaign (radio & TV commercials) or other commercial media (i.e. film, television, & video game soundtracks). Each class will take a “what’s it made of” approach, analyzing the key elements of a particular genre. There are several goals:

1. expose students to key examples of contemporary idioms, chosen for historical, commercial, musical, or technical importance
2. review the compositional and sonic elements that define each example
3. discuss the appeal of each genre to specific segments of the population
4. examine how examples may be applied in contemporary media

Students will participate in in-class aural and written analysis of selected examples. Most weeks, students will be required to compose timed examples in the genre(s) analyzed in class.

Covered genres:

Rock

R&B and Rap

Electronic: Dance, Techno, Sound Design

Country, Folk, and Reggae

Novelty

Mainstream Pop

There will be a written final exam covering all material.

Final projects will be assigned as follows:

Students will be required to “pitch” an advertising account. Guidelines will be presented in class as to the type of account and other requirements. Students will compose/record :30 and :60 versions in an effort to “win” the client’s business. Students will then “make their pitch” before the class in week 15.

Student’s grades will be based one-third each on weekly assignments, mid-term test score, and final project score.

WEEK 1

Introduction to class

The first week will include student orientation: what material will be covered, what work will be expected, how students will be graded. Discussion will include an overview of the role of a commercial composer.

WEEK 2

Working as a commercial composer

Class covers working with ad agencies, producers, writers, & directors. Basic publishing information is discussed as applies to commercial composers. There will also be an introductory explanation of basic commercial forms and terminology: 10, 15, 30 and 60 second TV “spots”, 60 second radio spots, jingles vs. underscores, etc. Audio and video examples will be presented in class.

WEEK 3

Rock

This class focuses on the rock idiom. In-class analysis will cover the composition, arranging, and recording techniques defining the genre. The following recordings will be referenced:

Bill Haley & His Comets	“Rock Around the Clock”	single	1954
The Beatles	“I Wanna Hold Your Hand”	Meet the Beatles	1963
The Beach Boys	“Good Vibrations”	single	1966
The Beatles	“Got to Get You Into My Life”	Revolver	1966
Chicago	“25 or 6 to 4”	single	1970
Led Zeppelin	“Rock & Roll”	IV	1971
Pink Floyd	“Money”	Dark Side of the Moon	1973
KISS	“Rock & Roll All Night”	Alive I	1976
Pink Floyd	“Comfortably Numb”	The Wall	1979
AC/DC	“Back In Black”	Back In Black	1980
Peter Gabriel	“Shock the Monkey”	Security	1982
Def Leppard	“Photograph”	Pyromania	1983
Metallica	“Enter Sandman”	Black Album	1991
Nirvana	“Smells Like Teen Spirit”	Nevermind	1991
Nine Inch Nails	“Closer”	The Downward Spiral	1994
Green Day	“Nice Guys Finish Last”	Nimrod	1997
Limp Bizkit	“Nookie”	Significant Other	1999
Linkin Park	“In The End”	Hybrid Theory	2000
Linkin Park	“ENTH E ND”	Reanimation	2002

In addition, examples of the use of rock in advertising will be presented.

Instructor will review the **Analysis Form**, which will be used during classroom aural analysis and homework assignment preparation to identify key elements of musical material. Students will review standard melodic, chordal, and percussion notation as necessary to fill out the form. In addition, the instructor will explain other areas of the form that cover instrumentation and sonic elements.

ASSIGNMENT:

Students are to compose/record a :60 underscore as would be appropriate for a sports-car commercial. Specific parameters to be discussed in class.

WEEK 4

In-class review of previous week's assignments.

WEEK 5

R&B & Rap

This class focuses on the R&B and Rap idioms. In-class analysis will cover the composition, arranging, and recording techniques defining the genre, including the impact of technology. The following recordings will be referenced:

James Brown	"I Got You (I Feel Good)"	single	1965
Aretha Franklin	"Respect"	single	1967
Marvin Gaye	"What's Goin' On"	What's Goin' On	1971
Stevie Wonder	"Superstition"	Talking Book	1972
Stevie Wonder	"Sir Duke"	Songs in the Key of Life	1976
Stevie Wonder	"Isn't She Lovely"	Songs in the Key of Life	1976
Chaka Khan	"I Feel For You"	I Feel For You	1984
Whitney Houston	"Saving All My Love"	Whitney Houston	1985
Bobby Brown	"Every Little Step"	Don't Be Cruel	1988
Macy Gray	"I Try"	On How Life Is	1999
Public Enemy	"Fight the Power"	Fear of a Black Planet	1989
MC Hammer	"U Can't Touch This"	Please Hammer Don't Hurt Em	1990
LL Cool J	"Mama Said Knock You Out"	Mama Said Knock You Out	1990
Will Smith	"Gettin' Jiggy Wit It"	Big Willie Style	1997
Eminem	"The Real Slim Shady"	The Marshall Mathers LP	2000
Missy Elliot	"Get Ur Freak On"	So Addictive	2001
X-ecutioners	"Let it Bang"	Built From Scratch	2002

In addition, examples of the use of R&B and Rap in advertising will be presented.

ASSIGNMENT:

Students are to compose/record a :30 piece in the hip-hop idiom for a children's toy (composition must include rap vocal). Additional parameters will be discussed in class.

WEEK 6

In-class review of previous week's assignments.

WEEK 7

Electronic: Dance/Techno/Sound Design

This class focuses on electronically generated styles including Dance, Techno, and Electronica. Sound-design aspects of these productions will be discussed as well. In-class analysis will cover the composition, arranging, and recording techniques defining the genre, including the impact of technology. The following recordings will be referenced:

Louis & Bebe Barron	Forbidden Planet	Soundtrack	1956
Wendy Carlos	"2 Part Invention in F maj"	Switched-on Bach	1968
The Bee Gees	"Stayin' Alive"	Saturday Night Fever	1977
Vangelis	"Chariots of Fire"	Chariots of Fire	1981
Nitzer Ebb	"Hearts and Minds"	Believe	1988
C&C Music Factory	"Gonna Make You Sweat"	Gonna Make You Sweat	1990
The Crystal Method	"Busy Child"	Vegas	1997
Bjork	"Joga"	Homogenic	1997
Eiffel 65	"Blue (Da Ba Dee)"	EuroPop	1999
Moby	"South Side"	Play	1999
Squarepusher	"Go Spastic"	Go Plastic	2001
Pink	"Get the Party Started"	M!ssundaztood	2001

In addition, examples of the use of electronic music in advertising will be presented.

ASSIGNMENT:

Students are to compose/record a :30 theme for "Technology Today", a technology-oriented television magazine program. Additional parameters will be discussed in class.

WEEK 8

In-class review of previous week's assignments.

WEEK 9

Country, Folk, and Reggae

This class covers country, folk, and reggae genres. In-class analysis will cover the composition, arranging, and recording techniques defining the genre, including the impact of technology. The following recordings will be referenced:

Hank Williams	“Cold, Cold Heart”	single	1951
Norah Jones	“Cold, Cold Heart”	Come Away With Me	2002
Patsy Cline	“Crazy”	single	1961
Foggy Mountain Boys	“The Ballad of Jed Clampett”	single	1962
Lynrd Skynrd	“Sweet Home Alabama”		1974
Charlie Daniels Band	“The Devil Went...Georgia”	single	1979
Alabama	“My Home’s in Alabama”		1980
Bonnie Raitt	“Something to Talk About”	Luck of the Draw	1991
Shania Twain	“Man I Feel Like A Woman”	Come on Over	1997
The Dixie Chicks	“Wide Open Spaces”		1999
Arlo Guthrie	“I Ain’t Marching Anymore”	single	1966
Peter, Paul & Mary	“Puff (the magic dragon)”	Peter, Paul & Mommy	1969
Bob Marley	“One Love”	Exodus	1977
Peter Tosh	“Get up, Stand up”	Equal Rights	1977
The Police	“Walking on the Moon”	Reggatta de Blanc	1979
UB40	“Red, Red, Wine”		1983

In addition, examples of the use of country & reggae in advertising will be presented.

ASSIGNMENT:

Students are to compose/record a :30 country-oriented instrumental piece appropriate for a pickup truck commercial. Additional parameters will be discussed in class.

WEEK 10

In-class review of previous week’s assignments.

WEEK 11

Novelty

This class covers the development of novelty music. In-class analysis will cover the composition, arranging, and recording techniques defining the genre. The following recordings will be referenced:

“My Old Flame”	Spike Jones	1939
“Pal-Yat-Chee”	Spike Jones	1940
“Poisoning Pigeons in the Park”	Tom Lehrer	1950
“Hello Mudduh, Hello Fadduh”	Allan Sherman	1965
“The Purple People Eater”	Sheb Wooley	19xx
“Tip Toe through the Tuplips”	Tiny Tim	19xx
“They’re Coming to Take me Away”	Napoleon XIV	1966
“Bohemian Rhapsody”	Queen	1975
“The Streak”	Ray Stevens	19xx
“Fish Heads”	Barnes & Barnes	1978
“Dead Puppies”	Ogden Edsl	19xx
“King Tut”	Steve Martin	1978
“The Adventures of Geggerly”	Frank Zappa	1978
“Catholic Girls”	Frank Zappa	1979
“Rod Thorax”	Chuck Butler	1990
“The Alternative Polka Medley”	Weird Al	1996
“Everything I Do”	Warp 11	2002
“Chemical Calisthenics”	Blackalicious	2002
“Chic N’ Stu”	System of a Down	2002
“Lunchlady Land”	Adam Sandler	2004
“The Chanukah Song”	Adam Snadler	2004

In addition, examples of the use of these styles in advertising will be presented.

WEEK 12

Pop

This class focuses on the development of contemporary pop styles. The following recordings will be referenced:

BJ Thomas	“Raindrops...Head”	Butch Cassidy...Soundtrack	1970
The Carpenters	“Superstar”	Reminiscing	1971
Barry Manilow	“I Write the Songs”	Tryin’ To Get The Feeling	1975
Steely Dan	“Hey Nineteen”	Gauche	1980
Phil Collins	“In the Air Tonight”	Face Value	1981
Michael Jackson	“Beat It”	Thriller	1982
The Talking Heads	“Burning Down the House ”	Speaking in Tongues	1983
Prince	“When Doves Cry”	Purple Rain	1984
Steve Winwood	“Higher Love”	Steve Winwood	1986
Alanis Morissette	“You Oughta Know”	Jagged Little Pill	1995
Beck	“Where It’s At”	Odelay	1996
Britney Spears	“Baby One More Time”		1999
Norah Jones	“Don’t Know Why	Come Away With Me	2002
Nelly	“Hot in Here”	Nellyville	2002
Evanescence	“Bring Me To Life”	Fallen	2003

WEEK 13

Commercial Advertising: Jingles

In this class, students will review the elements of commercial jingles, including stylistic considerations, development of lyric, and writing to a target audience. Various audio examples will be presented for analysis.

ASSIGNMENT:

Final project.

WEEK 14

Written Exam

WEEK 15

In-class presentation of Final projects.