

"Where's The Hook?"

TuneMoose Matt bates

Dec 12, 2023

Show 15) //

Come On Over / Shania Twain

- Reading the hooks in songs is like
- , making a playbook for arranging your own songs, originals and covers, for capture audience interest
- , making a playbook for infusing your Saturday evening jam session with new energy
- , making a map of how we are wired, sonically, the human condition, and not so different from other spheres of human activity

BEAT

- Beat. The kick drum is hard to listen for in a lot of songs. It's way down low at 50 Hertz, a dull low thud, almost sub-sonic. You boys with big bass sound systems in your cars, you love the kick drum, don't ya, ya, I know you do. We can pick out the kick drum easily tho, in this song, with a classic four-on-the-floor beat, that drives the music forward.

Call Me / Blondie

- That was too easy. Now for a challenge. There are two cool beat elements in this next song. Listen for what the kick drum and the snare drum are doing. Kick drum, is that low pitched thud, and the snare drum has some spring wires stretched across the drum head to give it a bit of a rattling sound on the drum hit. The expectation for these sounds is that the kick lands on beat 1, and the snare lands on the backbeat, beat 3.1 2 3 4... Kick 2 Snare 4.... But that's not exactly what's being played, the expected positions have been moved around. The result is a slight tension, and a pushing feeling for resolution, which comes in the chorus and gives that chorus a comfortable feeling of arrival.

Baby In The Black & White / Madison Violet

We Will Rock You / Queen

- We Will Rock You by Queen, now there's a beat song for ya. Some songs are all about beat. Some songs have beat as a strong part of the groove. And some songs have beat buried in the mix. But it's rare that songs don't have a beat. Not never, but rare. Beat has been with us, in our music, for a long, long, time.

UNUSUAL SOUNDS

- Shifting gears, let's look at a few songs where unusual sounds figure big in the roster of hooks. I would claim that new sounds have been a big part of musical evolution, since ancient times. In recent times a lot of new sounds are electronic. Working in the science museum

business we say that if you don't have someone's interest in an exhibit in the first 10 seconds then you've lost them. In music I would say it's just a few seconds. And unusual sounds are a convenient vehicle to spark that initial interest. Check out the opening sounds of **Into It / Camila Cabello**

Steal My Sunshine / LEN

- The advent of popular synthesizers started invading music in the 1980's, and with that came a ton of new sounds in our pop songs.

Hands Up - Single Version / Ottawan

OUT OF THE BOX

- Let's challenge ourselves again with some music that's, outside the box, outside our normal expectations. Ghir Enta by Souad Massi of Morocco crosses a traditional Moroccan opening with a groove that, to me, is a mix of Latin, Argentinian and Gypsy. A bit out of the box to our Canadian ears, perhaps, but what a great groove. I find it quite accessible.

Ghir Enta / Souad Massi

- We were talking about Beat, earlier. Most songs are in 4 beat time... 1 2 3 4. Some songs are in 3 beat, or waltz time... 1 2 3. Some others are in 6 beat time, similar to 3 beat.... 1 2 3 4 5 6. We expect music beat to be 2 beat, 4 beat, 8 beat, 16 beat, or 3 beat, 6 beat, 12 beat. It just is, and there's likely a human rhythm that drives this, like heartbeat, walking, clapping and such. But some music, is just weird, or I should say, different. Why bother? Well, we like the comfort of our home base beats, but the occasional excursion into odd beats, makes life interesting. Variety, the spice of life. Lisa Hannigan with Ocean And A Rock is cued up next. This is 5 beat. Odd beats are often broken up into smaller parts, as it is here with 3 + 2. Check it out

Ocean And A Rock / Lisa Hannigan

OUT OF THE BOX Continued

- We composers like to cast ourselves as, artistic explorers. And, as such, most composers like to dabble in beats outside the box, outside the confinements of standard beat structure. Brian Wilson, principle composer for the Beach Boys, got that need-to-be-different out of his system in this song, California Girls. For his pop audience though, he only got to do it for the opening of the song.

California Girls / The Beach Boys

MELODY

- Studying saxophone with a Jazz musician, I spent a lot, a lot, a lot of time working with harmony, or chord changes. But I asked him once what he felt was the most important aspect of a song, full expecting harmony to be the answer. He said, Melody. Melody rules. Melody, that sequence of pitches, or notes, strung together in a rhythmic pattern, and repeated several times in a song, either by the lead vocal, or an instrument, or both. (hum Song Sung Blue)

Name that song! I'd say that Beat and Melody are the two things, easiest to remember about a song, 'cause we can hum them back to ourselves. Ok, anyone who said Song Sung Blue, gets the prize.

Song Sung Blue / Neil Diamond

- In Song Sung Blue, much of the power of the melody is in the vocal leaps. There are other devices, to engage us in a Melody. Some melodies are short, very short, and repeated, repeated a lot. Easy to remember, and kindof mesmerizing in the continued repetition.

A Well Respected Man / The Kinks

(I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm / Ray Noble

- I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm by Ray Noble and his orchestra. We heard a strong melody repeated, mostly by various instruments, and in the middle by his vocal line.

- Great songwriters are usually great melody writers. Paul McCartney, Bruce Spingsteen, and... Bob Marley. Bob's melody is so strong here, in Redemption Songs, filled with hooks in the lyrics and vocal leaps, that it doesn't need much in the way of instrumental accompaniment.

Redemption Song / Bob Marley & The Wailers

(All I Really Want / Alanis Morissette

(Houston / Larry Gatlin

We're pickin' out the hooks, those things that, catch our attention, and draw us into the world of the song, for a few minutes

HISTORY

- I've heard that we have a few brains. At the centre we have our oldest brain, the reptilian brain. The second and third developed on top of it. It is where our primal instincts live. Music has seen similar evolution with new sounds, new note combinations being built on ancient, primal musical elements, beat and a 5 note melodic scale, the Pentatonic scale. Let's look back a ways, a long ways, like about 3 thousand years. What would the music of Ancient Greece have been like. Simple beat, groove, and simple melodies? Petros Tabouris gives us his take on that, in Pentheas' Dance

Pentheas' Dance / Petros Tabouris

- Fast forward a couple thousand years and we have voices singing together in ultra big spaces, cathedrals, perfect spot for creating lush reverb on choral and organ sounds. The voices here in Panis Angelicus from the Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos, sing in unison, that is they are all singing the same notes. It would be a while yet before we get two different set of notes sung at the same time. Unison singing, has such a power to it, and an arresting one-mindedness. An ancient hook, it appears, of course, still now in our modern songs. And reverb

is a fundamental sound in nearly all modern music. Listen for that echoy reverb here, and the power of unison singing.

Panis Angelicus / Les Moines de Santo Domingo de Silos

DOWNWARD STEPWISE HARMONIC MOTION

- One of my favourite hooks is Downward Stepwise Harmonic Motion. A sequence of short steps in pitch in the bass, or low notes, is the characteristic signature of this harmony. A few songs leaped out at me this week as great examples. Here are the Kinks again. You can't miss the descending harmony in the opening of this song

Sunny Afternoon / The Kinks

- And here it is again quite strongly in the chorus of Changes by David Bowie. where he sings the title line 'Cha cha cha changes'. Listen for it in the bass line.

Changes / David Bowie

- And there's something that was a bit strange in the chorus, barely noticeable, but nevertheless a bit, different. Yep. The descending harmony bit was 9 beats long, not the expected 8.

- Ok, so your ears are trained now to hear the downward stepwise harmonic motion, right? Here it is again. Paul McCartney, great songwriter, great melody writer. A couple of other hooks to listen for... The sub bass kick drum beats in the middle of the song, just a few of them. And the opening... he goes from a tight, constrained feeling sound, called a telephone effect in the biz, to a wide open and lush sound, at the 20 second mark. Unusual sound used as the opening of a song. Sound familiar? But listen for the stepwise descending harmony in the chorus when he sings 'Do It Now'. And if you're really good, you'll hear that in the opening verse he's using a rising stepwise harmony. You get extra points for that, ha ha.

Do It Now / Paul McCartney

HUMOUR

- Humour. It came up last week with that Duppy Gunman song. What is humour? Like, what makes something funny? Hmmm, good question. When we hear a joke, it's like we're led down a garden path, and then suddenly, the punch line makes us quickly see things, in a different perspective. I think that's one thing that makes something, funny. If as an adult, we act like a child, for a moment people might think we, lost are marbles, but then when they realize, we're doing that on purpose, that's funny. If we crack our voice in a song, someone might think that we, 'made a mistake', oops, but then when they realize we did that on purpose, it's funny. When we lead people into a song about Spain, and then talk about working at the local Pizza Pizza, and vacuuming the turf at the skydome in Toronto, it's funny. And funny, is a hook. That mental heat generated as we re-calculate the map based on the punch line information, it's engaging. We, are, good, at, figuring things out. We like, puzzles. We're good at it. It engages us.

King of Spain / Moxxy Früvous

- Humour. What else is funny? Sadly, humour comes out of fear, sometimes. We don't like to be made a fool. Why? Well, my working theory is that in times of great upheaval, like drought, war, floods, outrageous food prices, etc etc it'll be the strongest people who survive. And strong people have control of their environment. So to be made a fool, is to feel out of control, and our reptilian brain doesn't like that too much. So, when we do something deliberately to act a fool, there's that conflict, in the minds of our audience, between what our reptilian brain really wants, security, control, and what we appear to be foolishly doing. And that paradox creates mental heat recalculating the map. How do we make sense of something so senseless. That's funny.

Does Your Chewing Gum Lose Its Flavour / Lonnie Donegan

- Humour. Ok, one more idea. In our lives many things, just, go together. Like potatoes, plate, fork, peeler, boiling water, all kind of go together from, our day to day experience. Right? But, potatoes, blue sky, mountain, water skis, and running. Don't really go together, easily. But, with a bit of work, they could, maybe, like.... One fine blue-sky day I was eating my lunch of leftover potato pancakes at the top of the mountain I had just climbed, and there, off in the distance, I could see that my brother was zipping around the lake on water skis, and so, I went running down, to see what was going on, as my brother had never skied before. Ok, that was hard work, but possible, and kind of fun. So when we hear words, or beats, or vocalizations or instrument sounds that don't really go together, or don't go with the context, of say a serious radio show like this one, we get caught up in the mental heat of recalculating the map. Making sense of it. And maybe there is no reason. And then, it's just, funny.

Tubthumping / Chumbawamba

REQUEST - Karim

- I have a request next, from Karim in Guelph. What about folk songs, he asks. Where are the hooks in songs by artists like James Taylor, or John Prine. As a taster into the Folk Music genre, let's look at The Moon Is Down by John Prine. Like with classical music, folk music is a 'quieter' genre. It's musically less dense than say, a contemporary 120 track hyper-produced pop song. The hooks come, within a less dense context. Something that would float by un-noticed in that pop song, could stick out as a significant hook in Folk. John Prine. A humorous guy. I think John is a master, at juxtaposing things that don't normally go together. It's funny, and often, also, catapults us to, a new understanding. On the turntable, ready to go is The Moon Is Down. What's going on in the way of hooks. Here's a few I hear...

0 sec - cool groovy guitar riff, with very rich sonics

0-23 sec - statement of the melody with lots of little guitar flicks, bends and twangs to catch our attention

27 sec - vocals enter

29 sec - 'Moon Is Down' Ok what does that mean? ok well the sun goes down, ok, ya, I guess the moon can go down, ok, that would be in the morning maybe, oh, he's been up all night,

ohhhh, that's what this about, what's the matter? why's he been up all night? Typical John Prine humour. Hooks that are both funny, and poignant

36 sec - 'All over town' Gratuitous use of rhyme

40 sec - 'Forecast Is Grey', what? how does that fit, nice image though

46 'She's Gone Away', ohhhh! He lost his girl.

Other hooks....

- The cool guitar picking, that we heard in the opening, comes back as second voice, answering John's vocal statements, in a call-response fashion. A conversation

- Nice organ pads start coming in mid way

- Ditto, a subtle female harmony, comes in as the song builds

- Imagery, stars fell out of the sky, fell out of her eye, shattered when they hit the ground...

- And lots of juxtaposition of things that don't normally go together, metaphor,....'gravity pulls but it can't keep you around'

The Moon Is Down / John Prine

IN-SYNC VOCAL HARMONY

- People singing together. Another one of those things that goes back to ancient times. Singing together.... community, cooperation, security, safety, I got your back and I know you got mine

Lollipop / The Chordettes

(Small Of My Heart / Madison Violet

SLAPBACK DELAY

- In-sync vocal harmony. The Beatles. A big part of their sound. But also, let's listen for slapback delay in John's vocals. In the fifties when tape recorders, were starting to be used for recording, there was an effect discovered, by feeding the 'slap back' delay, back into the mix. The slapback delay comes from the physical distance between the playback head and record head on a tape recorder. This created a subtle vocal doubling sound, a bit like reverb and a bit like people singing together. John loved using this effect on his voice, when he sang.

Eight Days A Week / The Beatles

SONGWRITING

Another taster now of things to come. Songwriting. A vast subject. Let's get a start on this. Songwriters create the demo, that a producer then makes into a record with an artist, or band. The song demo outlines, the song form (how different song sections are arranged), the lyrics, the melody, the rhythm and the harmony. Wish You The Best by Lewis Capaldi strikes me, as a song, with a strong, songwriter effort, driving things. We've got strong melody, filled with adequate vocal leaps, a flip into falsetto voice, and a big jump in energy, going from a low pitched verse section, to high pitched chorus. Long tones are included in the chorus melody. All told, it's classic melody writing. The song form is also a classic verse-chorus with pre-chorus structure. You write songs? Yes? Start with a form like this and you're off to a great start. V V Pre CH V Pre CH . Two verses off the top to establish home base, a pre-chorus to rise the

energy into the chorus, chorus to state the point of the song, back home with another verse, only one verse needed to remind us of home, then pre-chorus and chorus again to repeat the point. Then some repetitions of various bits that the producer probably put in to make the emotional contour work, not really the songwriters job. Clever lyric writing with unexpected rhymes including internal rhymes, rhymes within a single phrase. That's a lot to digest, I know. There we go, a bit of a taster on songwriting.

Wish You The Best / Lewis Capaldi

(Back To Black / Amy Winehouse

(Country Honk / The Rolling Stones

Final Song and Goodbye

- Taking us out, I have a good example of call and response between the vocal and Chuck's revolutionary guitar riffs. This is Carol from Chuck Berry. See y'all next week.

Carol / Chuck Berry

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Playlist

1 / Come On Over / Shania Twain

2 / Call Me / Blondie

3 / Baby In The Black & White / Madison Violet

4 / We Will Rock You / Queen

5 / Into It / Camila Cabello

(6 / Steal My Sunshine / LEN

7 / Hands Up - Single Version / Ottawan

8 / Ghir Enta / Souad Massi

9 / Ocean And A Rock / Lisa Hannigan

10 / California Girls / The Beach Boys

11 / Song Sung Blue / Neil Diamond

12 / A Well Respected Man / The Kinks

(13 / I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm / Ray Noble

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(29 / All I Really Want / Alanis Morissette

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19 / Do It Now / Paul McCartney

20 / King of Spain / Moxy Früvous

21 / Does Your Chewing Gum Lose Its Flavour / Lonnie Donegan

22 / Tubthumping / Chumbawamba

23 / The Moon Is Down / John Prine

24 / Lollipop / The Chordettes

(25 / Small Of My Heart / Madison Violet

26 / Eight Days A Week / The Beatles

27 / Wish You The Best / Lewis Capaldi

28 / Carol / Chuck Berry

(31 / Back To Black / Amy Winehouse

(32 / Country Honk / The Rolling Stones