

Afro Celt Sound System: "Release"

Context: The song 'Release' is a tribute to Jonas Bruce, one of the keyboard players, who died suddenly.
Famous singer Sinead O'Connor stepped in and wrote the lyrics for this song.
The lyrics imagine Jonas telling the band he is still with them in spirit and they should be happy for him.
*"Don't argue amongst yourselves because of the loss of me,
I'm sitting amongst yourselves, don't think you can't see me.
I haven't gone anywhere, but out of my body"*
'Volume 2: Release' debuted in 1999.

Dynamics Linked to texture:
Gets louder when more instruments eg. Verses/ solos
Gets quieter when less instruments eg. Break/ outro
Dynamics = Linked to technology
As made of 'loops' & synthesised sounds, no dynamic markings
Editing techniques used to make some parts louder than other / more 'prominent in the mix'

Rhythm: Rhythm uses straight rhythms and syncopated rhythms, also use of semiquavers and occasional triplets, polyrhythms, slightly swung
Polyrhythm and cross rhythms

Tempo: Tempo is moderato – 100bpm

Metre: Metre is free time at the start and changes to 4/4 when bodhran enters

Structure: Intro, Verse 1, Break, Verse 2, Solos, Verse 3, Breakdown, Outro

Melody: Melody of vocals – Vocables, parlando, Improvised, transcription
Repetitive, syllabic, based on C Minor Pentatonic scale, moves mainly in steps
3 x 8 bar phrases
Female vocal (English), Male vocal (African/Maninka), Male Vocal (Gaelic)
Range of female vocal – 6th,
Range of male vocal – 10th

Melody of Solos - Slides, glissando, idiomatic (suited to the instrument)
Repetitive, based on 2 bar phrases, uses steps and leaps, wide pitch range
Based on C Minor pentatonic scale (5 note scale)

Mainly diatonic
Drones used, using C and G notes
Modal – Aeolian and Dorian modes

Instrumentation and Sonority:

African – Kora, Talking Drum, Djembe

Gaelic – Accordion, Uilleann pipes, Hurdy-Gurdy, Low Whistle, Bodhran, Fiddle

Western/Electronic – Synthesiser, Drum Machine, Electric piano, male and female vocals, shaker and tambourine

Live instruments: Male and Female vocals, soloists (hurdy-gurdy, low whistle, uilleann pipes)

Texture: PREDOMINANTLY homophony

Monophony (intro) & heterophony (outro) used RARELY

Layers up & down depending on how many loops used/ instruments

Amount of layers varies between sections

Layered textures

Verse 3 - Polyphony

Harmony: Uses loops, ostinatos, block chords, arpeggiated chords, drone, pedal note, static harmony, double stopping**Tonality:** The key is based around C Minor (3 flats – Bb, Eb, Ab), but is mainly modal

Melody is based around C Minor Pentatonic scale (C Eb F G Bb),

Modal – uses C Dorian and C Aeolian modes

C Dorian – begins on 2nd note of scale

(original scale – Bb Major – **C D Eb F G A Bb C**)

C Aeolian – begins on 6th note of scale

(original scale – Eb Major – **C D Eb F G Ab Bb C**)

Technology: Drum machine
28 loops which are layered and mixed for live performers to improvise over the top
Synth sounds – Bass, bells, strings, soft pad (chords)
Multi-track recording
Mixing
Panning
Filter Sweep
Reverb
Delay
Samples

Release: Questions

- 1) What is the structure of the whole piece?
- 2) Describe the dynamics of the piece
- 3) What TYPE of piece is this?
- 4) What is the song about?
- 5) Write down 2 African instruments used in the piece
- 6) Write down 2 Celtic instruments used
- 7) Write down 3 Western instruments used.
- 8) What is the metre at the start of the piece?
- 9) What does the time signature change to when the bodhran comes in?
- 10) Write down 2 of the rhythms used
- 11) What is the texture of the piece? Does it change?
- 12) What is the tonality of the piece?
- 13) What is a loop?
- 14) What is the name of a 5 note scale which is used in the vocal melody?
- 15) Some of the melodies are based on modes. Which 2 modes are used?
- 16) Write down 3 different types of technology used
- 17) Which language are the 3 vocalists singing? (name all 3)
- 18) What year was the piece composed?
- 19) What is the name of the female singer featured in this piece who also wrote the lyrics to the song?
- 20) Why is the band called Afro Celt Sound System?

