

Afro Celt Sound System: 'Release' from the album *Volume 2: Release*

Section A: Musical contexts

To understand more about 'Release' it is helpful to explore the wider context – how music from around the world was making its presence felt in Western popular culture in the 1990s. Afro Celt Sound System's first album, *Volume 1: Sound Magic*, was recorded at Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios in 1995 when they were invited along with many other artists to be involved in a week of collaboration and recording. They have also played at WOMAD festivals around the world.

- 1 Find out what WOMAD festivals are and list five other artists or bands who have performed at them.

Write your answers here:

WOMAD festivals are

.....

Five other artists or bands who have performed at WOMAD are:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

- 2 Art and dance from around the world are also celebrated at WOMAD festivals. On the internet, find an example of African art and an example of Celtic art. Print off (or copy the images to this document) the images and compare the use of colour and patterns writing down your answers here

3

What is 'interlace' in art? What cultures used interlace in their art? Give an example of how two or more cultures use a musical element (such as melody, harmony or rhythm) in similar ways.

Write your answers here:

Interlace is

Cultures that used interlace in their art:

- 1
- 2
- 3

A musical element that different cultures share is _____.

Explain the similarities in how they use this element:

- 4 Dance and music are very important in many aspects of African life. Find out what events include dance and music as a key element in West African countries.

Write your answer here:

- 5 Which of the following is usually most important in African music?

- harmony
- melody
- rhythm
- tonality

- 6 Which of the following indicates a musical texture in which more than one instrument is playing the same melodic line, but slightly differently?

- heterophonic
- homophonic
- monophonic
- polyphonic

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Section B: Features of African and Celtic music in 'Release'

1 Fill in the table below to place the instruments under the correct headings:

African	European folk	Irish	Western pop

Instruments:				
accordion	bass guitar	bodhrán	drum loops	fiddle
hurdy gurdy	kora	samples	shaker	synthesiser
talking drum	tin whistle	uilleann pipes		

2 List the instruments in their order of appearance from the start of the track to 2:33 (they are not all used up to this point).

Write your answers here:

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

3 How is the sense of anticipation and excitement built up in the first two and a half minutes of this track?

Write your answer here:

4 What is a musical 'collective' and how does this differ from a normal band?

Write your answer here:

5 Give definitions of the following terms:

a drone _____

b ostinato _____

c overdub _____

d riff _____

e sample _____

**Afro Celt Sound System: 'Release' from the album
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In this section you will compare features of 'Release' by Afro Celt Sound System with 'M'lonam' from *Beautiful Wasteland* by Capercaillie.



1. Listen to both tracks one after the other carefully and then complete the following boxes, listing both **similarities** and **differences** you can hear between the two works. One example of each has been given to get you started: *They both include drum/percussion loops. The first voice heard in 'Release' is male, but the first voice heard in 'M'lonam' is female.*
2. Discuss your findings in class with your teacher.

Hint: think about the musical elements in your answers: pitch, melody, texture, tempo, sonority (timbre), instrumentation, harmony, rhythm and metre.

Similarities:

- Both tracks contain drum/percussion loops.

Differences:

- The first voice heard in 'Release' is male, but the first voice heard in 'M'lonam' is female.

- 3. Thinking about what you discovered and learned in questions 1 and 2, decide **for yourself** which of the two pieces you prefer and why. This weighing up of the quality and effectiveness of both pieces is called **evaluation**, and you need to support your choice with good musical reasons. This will be expected in question 9 of the listening paper. For example, you might prefer 'Release' because you like the long, gradual build-up of texture and dynamics at the beginning of the track.

I prefer the piece by

My reasons for choosing this piece over the other are: