

Occidental College Music

Gabi Wayne

Senior Recital in Music Production
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Talk To Me

(co-written/produced with Brenda Jackson, vocals by Brenda Jackson, bass played by Professor David Hughes)

This goal of this track was to make a song that fit into the psychedelic indie pop subgenre. It began with the bassline (composed by Olivia Oosterhout), to which I added percussion in order to establish a consistent groove. One of the biggest challenges of this specific track was finding drum samples that had the right sound. Every sample tended to feel either too electronic or too acoustic; it was difficult to find a middle ground in this psychedelic pop rock area. Once we had laid down the more simplistic percussive elements (bass, kick, snare, hi hat) there was leftover space for the more intricate synth pattern, to add harmonic and rhythmic texture. I utilized seventh, diminished, and ninth chords in the synth loop that repeats throughout. This was the first step in transitioning the track from a traditional pop/rock sound to a psychedelic sound. Likewise, we added guitar chords with a shimmery, dissonant feel: “sparkle chords.” The process of writing the lyrics started to influence the production choices further, particularly the sense of space in the song. These lyrics describe a toxic and convoluted relationship, specifically a snapshot of this dynamic at a crowded party setting. The reverb that we created places the music in a dark, echoey room. This speaks to the mindset of the “characters” in this song; these production choices are a twist on what is often described as the “dreamy feel” of this type of music. Here, the dreaminess is more like dizziness and vertigo.

Highway

(co-written and co-produced with Jasmine Flores and Jacq V)

I wrote this song unexpectedly with two of my coworkers. We began with a simple chord progression on piano, then decided to record it on an electric guitar and run it through several amps and a downsampler to create some texture and distortion. We wanted the bassline to be the main force guiding the rhythm, and for this reason we set the drums a bit more in the background of the mix. The drum fills act as a way to add some energy to the track, especially

in transitions between sections. Another way in which we amplified the mix was through stacking vocal tracks - recording the main melody three times and layering it with higher and lower harmonies. Lyrically, we experimented with having a dialogue between two different characters that exposes two different perspectives of a toxic situation. This proved to be an interesting alternative to traditional storytelling.

Painkiller

(vocals by Brenda Jackson)

My first inspiration for this song came from a kick and snare drum loop. I was inspired not so much by the drum pattern itself, but by the sound and texture of the samples. After I created a bassline and synth chord progression, I experimented quite a bit by chopping up the drum loop. I eventually side chained the other instruments to the kick drum in order to give it more weight in the mix. At this point, I was searching for some element of dissonance to incorporate, and ended up achieving through reversing the audio of the synth loop to give it almost an angular, scratchy sound. In order to provide a contrast between the different sections, I gave the verses a sort of floating feeling while the choruses felt more grounded and rhythmically driven. Lyrically, a primary focus of mine was the “happy vs sad” contrast between the lyrics and melody with the intention of creating a cathartic feeling. I wanted the singing to sound somewhat celebratory, despite the fact that the lyrics reference a moment of giving up on a situation.

Tie Me Down

(co-written with Olivia Oosterhaut, vocals by Brenda Jackson, bass played by Professor David Hughes)

I made this song with Olivia Oosterhaut, starting from just a bass loop. Our goal going into the song was to be very particular with the instruments we chose, and try to create a whole atmosphere with only a few instruments. We wrote the entire melody just based around the bassline and a simple drum pattern. This then called for the addition of guitar and piano chords at selective points in order to fill the mid-range frequencies in the track. Essentially, the song is meant to capture the classic upbeat feel of pop music, drawing inspiration from radio pop of the 2010s. This was a challenge, since it is often easy to deviate from this structure and slip into various subgenres. In the end, the song became centered around a very carefree feeling, maintaining rather simple and candid lyrics.

Strangers

(co-written with Jasmine Flores, co-produced with Edson Higareda, vocals by Jasmine Flores)

The genre of this song completely changed during the process of creating the chord progression. Initially, the synth was a very bright, textured sawtooth lead that gave the music an electronic/house feel. However, as we gravitated toward more dissonant, seventh and ninth chords in the progression, a smoother, darker sound seemed more fitting. This then inspired the heavy bass and drum pattern which energize the mix. The bells and broken string samples were intended to add not only texture to the mix, but also to express instability and discomfort. The lyrics express frustration, anxiety, and confusion toward another individual, in a high-energy and almost chaotic manner that draws from the atmosphere created by the beat. They are meant to resemble unfiltered thoughts coming from someone's mind, similar to the way one writes in a journal.

Call Us Friends

(co-written/produced with Brenda Jackson, vocals by Brenda Jackson)

This track came about unexpectedly - I wrote it with Brenda Jackson and we did not really have anything specific in mind before writing it. The song began with a four bar chord progression, using a full and grainy synth lead. The chord progression exists somewhat between the relative major and minor, starting out in E flat major, yet finishing with a dominant seventh chord, giving it a momentary c minor feel. A key point of development for this song was the drum loop that ultimately gave us direction in terms of writing. Once the chord progression and drum loop had been established, we set the intention of making it feel like there was a sample of another song within this song. The sample at the beginning of the song, "God, I'm Lonely," actually came from a magazine page that was lying around; it is simply meant to add another layer to the music. The sense of movement implemented by the drum loop called for some high-energy lyrics. This lead started with an easily digestible hook, both melodically and lyrically. Lastly, we added to the sense of movement and momentum with several more guitar parts and a keyboard in the chorus. The final hook of the song shows a glimpse of the original creative process, showcasing just the drum loop and vocal melody.