# Making Your Music Productions More *Memorable* and *Interesting*

Presented by Fett
Cacapehon Retreat
May, 2024

# Wanna Follow The Slides On Your Own Device?

www.AzaleaMusic.com/Cacapehon2024

# What's a Fett…?

- Independent producer/engineer, Azalea Studios, Nashville
- Co-founder and owner of Azalea Music Group, Nashville
  - www.AzaleaMusic.com
- Former Technology Editor for *Performing Songwriter* magazine
- Creator & host of Empowering Women In Audio clinics
  - www.EmpoweringWomenInAudio.com
- Coach & mentor
  - www.AzaleaMusic.com/fetts-production-booster-program
- Author
  - *Fett's Mixing Roadmap: A Step-by-step Guide to Mixing In The Studio* (Amazon.com)
- Teacher: online video courses in recording, mixing, mastering, etc.
  - www.AzaleaMusic.com/Programs

# “Stay with me!”

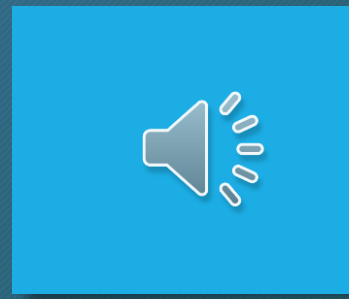
# The Big Shift

- Emphasis shifts…
  - From creating our music entirely for US
    - To express ourselves
    - A mostly *solitary* experience (looking from inside out)
  - To performing and recording our music for OTHERS (i.e., an audience) to hear
    - To engage, entertain, and hopefully *move* THEM
    - To take them on a *journey*
    - To ask them, “Stay with me!”
    - Becomes much about them as it is about us
    - More of a *mutual* or *shared* experience (looking from outside in)

# The Great Challenge

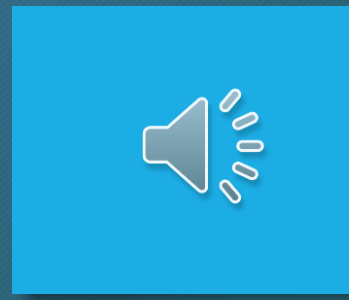
- Challenge becomes…
  - To continue to satisfy our own *creativity* when presenting our music
  - While getting and keeping the end listener's *attention*
  - And ultimately, establishing and maintaining an *emotional connection* with them
  - This is the "why" of making music for others

# Let’s Have a Listen…



- While listening to the song, try to notice…
  - What gets your initial attention?
  - What elements – musically, lyrically, and sonically – are *repeated* throughout the song that make it become “familiar” to you?
  - What elements change during the song that make you want to keep listening?

# Let’s Have a Listen…



- Song Structure
  - Intro
  - Verse 1
  - Long Turnaround 1
  - Verse 2
  - Solo
  - Verse 3 (same as Verse 1)
  - Long Turnaround 2 /Extended Outro

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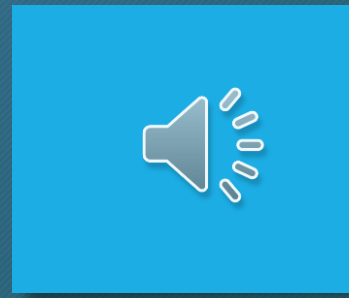
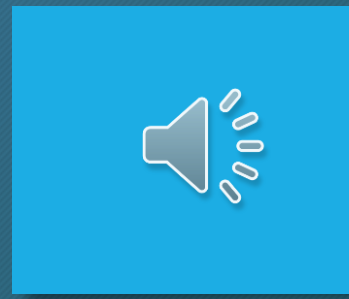


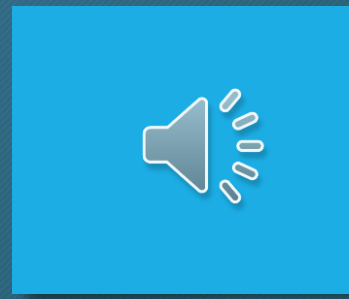
- Intro
  - Suspense / anticipation (make listener “move in” to listen)
  - Instrumentation is sparse, and all piano and horns (and some guitar), but
    - Rest of song is dominated by drums, bass and guitars, while piano, horns and organ switch to support role (variation)
  - Chord progression is only used in this section (variation)

# Let’s Have a Listen…



- Verse 1
  - Surprise on downbeat of song (attention-grabbing)
  - Straight-head, consistent drum beat (repetition)
  - 2-chord, 4 – 1 pattern 2x with same bass pattern (repetition)
  - Then 2 - 5 pattern to set up hook line (variation)
  - Dynamics: alternating between continuous playing and stops for hook line (variation, emphasis)
  - Horns and guitar double vocal melody of hook line (emphasis, reinforcement)
  - Varied guitar fills between each vocal line
- Long Turaround 1
  - Repeats chord progression of V1 (repetition)
  - Serves as “connector” to next part of song

# Let’s Have a Listen…



- Verse 2
  - Same essential structure as V1 (repetition), but…
  - Piano plays busier, more prominent fills (variation)
  - Horns, guitar AND piano double vocal melody of hook line (both repetition AND variation at the same time)
- Solo
  - New chord progression (goes up to 2-major - 4 pattern), only place happens in song (variation)
  - No vocal (variation)

# Let’s Have a Listen…

- Verse 3
  - Same lyrics and chord progression as V1 (repetition), BUT
  - Slightly different phrasing of lyrics (e.g., wall-flower, blue-ooze-po-wer held out longer) (variation)
    - *** AVOID CUTTING-AND-PASTING REPEATED SECTIONS WITH THE SAME LYRICS!
- TA2 / Extended Outro
  - Repeats only 1st 2 chords of Verse progression (repetition AND variation @ same time)
  - Introduction of vocal vamp on “keep on, keep on keepin’ on” while 2-chord progression continues (variation over repetition)
  - Addition of BGVs near the end (variation)

# The Method

- Making compelling music for others that they *want* to hear
  1. Make our music *memorable* by reinforcing certain core elements, through REPETITION
  2. Make our music *interesting* by having things change, through VARIATION
     - Give the music and ebb and flow, to allow emotions to do the same
- We have many great devices at our disposal to accomplish repetition and variation
- This is the “how” of making music for others

# The Method (cont.)

- None of this is new and revolutionary
- We naturally employ many of the devices while creating and produce music, without even knowing it
  - Often to keep ourselves interested and not get bored
  - It's interesting to go back and listen to our existing songs / productions with a fresh perspective
- But being CONSIOUSLY AWARE of and USING the devices can be the difference between a good production and a GREAT production
  - Unconscious → conscious → deliberate

# The Method (cont.)

- Doesn’t this stifle my creative freedom?
  - Can I even BE creative while using these devices?
- Isn’t this manipulative, deceptive, or even dishonest to the audience?
- Isn’t this “selling out”?

# The Method (cont.)

- Did you take lessons in playing and instrument or singing?
- Have you expanded your use of chords while playing?
- Have you ever studied music theory or taken a songwriting class?
- Have you ever used EQ, compression, panning, volume or reverb in a mix?
- Using any devices to better connect emotionally with listeners so that they WANT to hear your music is a good thing
- Consciously, deliberately using repetition and variation devices is just using additional tools in your expanded “musical toolbox”

# The Process

- We can use the many devices at our disposal throughout the *entire* music process
  - Creation (songwriting / composing)
  - Arrangement (of instrumentation and vocals)
  - Performance
  - Recording and overdubbing
  - Mixing and mastering
- Ideally each phase should complement, build upon, and reinforce what was done in the previous phase(s)
  - This gives us an impactful, cohesive result for the listener

# Let’s Use An Example Song

- Core elements (order of creation varies by song / writer)
  - Lyrics
  - Melody
  - Chords
  - Rhythm / Dynamics
- How do we increase the impactfulness (and emotional connection) of the song by using repetition and variation?

(Capo 4th Fret) **A Little Too Late** – Tom Prasada-Rao, Nancy Moran & Fett

A E D A
(Verse 1) Every time I see you smile, I hear your mother laughing
D A E
I see her hair come falling down like rings around the moon
D A E A
For all you know the world is right, (and) the sun will rise tomorrow
D A E A
So I'll pack up all my sorrows, for when you leave me too

A E D A
(Verse 2) Every time you turn away, I feel your mother trouble
D A E
Like she did the last time that I held her long ago
D A E A
I don't know how to tell you, all the things that need explaining
D A E A
But I'm all through complaining, I know she had to go

D A
(Chorus) Some people learn, a little too late
E A
Some people bend, some people break
D A
Some know just when, to make their escape
E A
Some people learn, a little too late

E E(no3) E(no3no5)
(Bridge) I'd take it back if I could, hold my breath and knock on wood
D A E
Clean my act up really good, if anyone could tell
E C(no3) E(no3no5)
You've got her dimples on your face, you've got scars I can't erase
D A E
It's not your fault, it's not your place, to take it on yourself

A E D A
(Verse 3) Every time you talk to me, I hear your mother asking
D A E
Why it couldn't be just like the way it was before
D A E A
Why do people fall in love, and some fall even further
D A E A
Why even bother, she doesn't live here any more

Countermelody:

D A
(Chorus) Some people learn, a little too late — I'd take it back if I could, hold my breath, knock on wood
E A — and I'd clean up my act really good
Some people bend, some people break — Because you have got scars, and they can be erased
D A — but it isn't your fault, no, it isn't your place
Some know just when, to make their escape — Some people bend, yes, and some people break
E A — Some people know when to make their escape
Some people learn, a little too late — Some people learn… a little too late

E E(no3) E(no3no5) E D
(Tag) Some people bend, some people break…
E A
Some people learn… just a little too late — Oh, some people learn

# The Devices - Musical

- Musical things we can repeat and vary in any section of song
  - Chords
    - Core progressions, inversions, voicings and registers
  - Rhythm
    - Drum and percussion patterns, beats & loops, guitar strums
    - Feel / groove / pocket
    - Vocals
  - Dynamics
    - Stops, holds, pushes and pulls
    - Crescendos, ritards, staccato, legato

# The Devices – Musical → Tonal / Sonic

- ARRANGING is the “musical bridge” between creation and production
  - Musically, determining what instruments and voices participate
    - WHAT they play or sing
    - WHEN they play or sing
  - Production-wise, deciding what to DO with those parts once they exist
- Arrangement is rarely 100% determined in advance
  - Not static, but evolutionary
  - Iterative

# The Devices - Tonal / Sonic

- Tonal / Sonic things we can repeat and vary in any section of song
  - Instrument choices
    - Guitar body style
    - Drum kit and percussion woods
    - Acoustic piano, organ, Wurli, Rhodes, etc.
  - Instrument patches, settings, etc.
    - Guitar amps
    - Virtual instruments
  - Choice of singers
    - Vocal tone and ranges
    - Male and female, adults and kids

# The Devices - Production

- Production-related things we can repeat and vary in any section of song, and any stage (recording, mixing, mastering)
  - Frequency ranges
    - Dark, boomy, smooth, warm, bright, crisp, airy
  - Stereo panning
    - Static
    - Moving
  - Volume levels
    - Static
    - Moving
    - On / off (muting)
  - Effects
    - Spatial (esp. reverb and delay)
    - Textural. SFX (e.g., “telephone voice”)
    - Dynamics (esp. compression, limiting & transients)

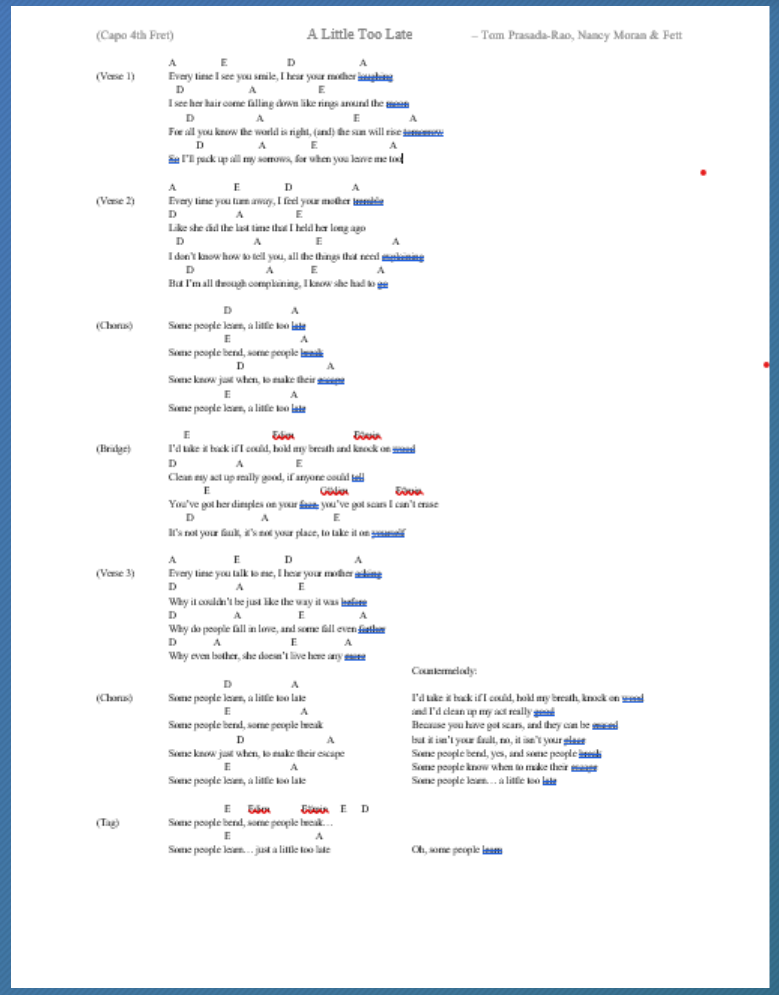
# The Devices - Production

- Give the production “somewhere to go”
  - Not everything in from downbeat to last chord
- Bring in instrumental and vocal elements gradually as song progresses
- TAKE OUT instrumental and vocal elements gradually as song progresses (and/or replace them with different ones)
- Make choruses “brighter” through
  - Change of EQ on all vocals and certain instruments, and existing reverb
  - Addition of higher-end instruments like tambourine, higher stringed instruments

# The Devices - Production

- Make choruses “bigger” through
  - Change in reverb settings (or entirely different reverb)
  - Doubling of lead vocal and/or instruments
  - Addition of harmony vocals
- Make bridge “dramatic” by
  - Making it even bigger than chorus (using same techniques, i.e., pile it on!), or
  - Making it really small via “breakdown” (removing of MOST instruments and vocals, back to core elements)
  - Panning doubled lead vocal hard left and right
  - Panning doubled, single instrument hard left and right, with lead vocal dead center

# Continuity, from creation through production



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E ~~E♭m~~ ~~D♭m~~
(Bridge) I'd take it back if I could, hold my breath and knock on wood
D A E
Clean my act up really good, if anyone could tell
E ~~C♯dim~~ ~~D♭m~~
You've got her dimples on your cheek, you've got scars I can't erase
D A E
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Countermelody:

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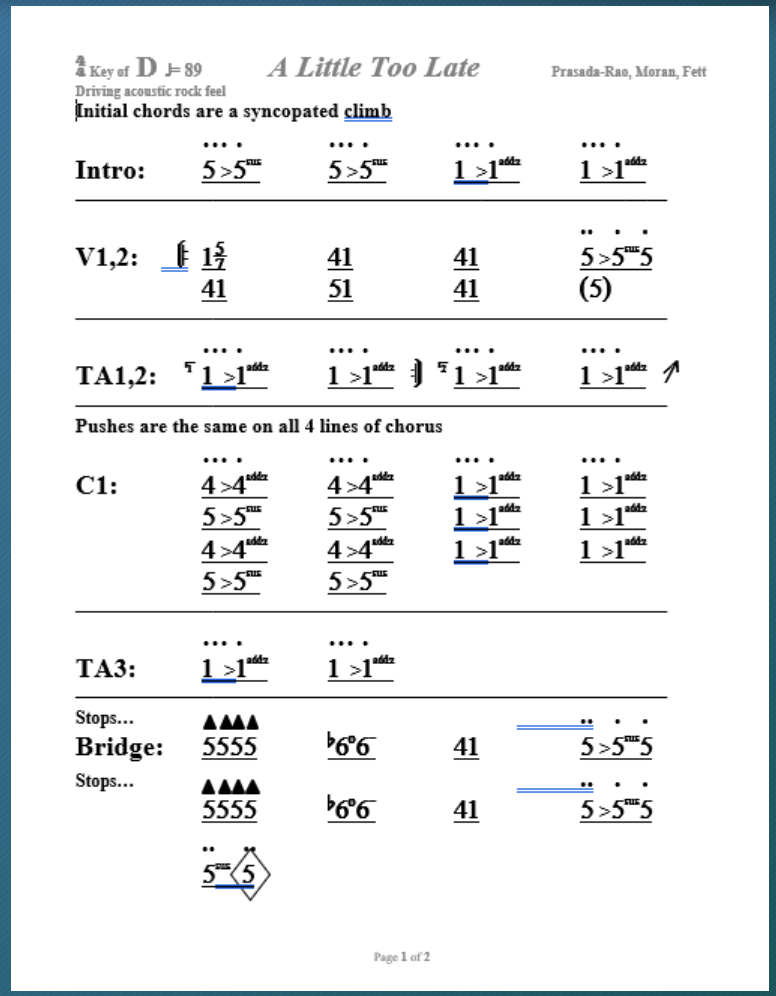
Oh, some people learn



Key of D ♩= 89 ***A Little Too Late*** Prasada-Rao, Moran, Fett
Driving acoustic rock feel
**Initial chords are a syncopated climb**

**Intro:** 5 >5 | 5 >5 | 1 >1 | 1 >1

**V1,2:** 1 5/7 / 41 | 41 / 51 | 41 / 41 | 5 >5 5 / (5)

**TA1,2:** 1 >1 | 1 >1 | 1 >1 | 1 >1

**Pushes are the same on all 4 lines of chorus**

**C1:** 4 >4 / 5 >5 / 4 >4 / 5 >5 | 4 >4 / 5 >5 / 4 >4 / 5 >5 | 1 >1 / 1 >1 / 1 >1 | 1 >1 / 1 >1 / 1 >1

**TA3:** 1 >1 | 1 >1

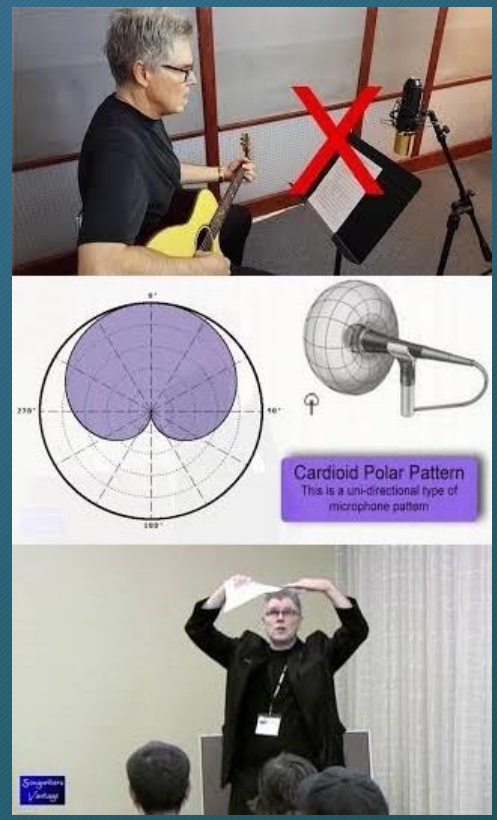
Stops… **Bridge:** 5555 | ♭6°6 | 41 | 5 >5 5

Stops… 5555 | ♭6°6 | 41 | 5 >5 5

5 5

# Want to go a LOT deeper than this…?

- *Fett's Online Courses*
  - *100% o*nline
  - Available anytime, from anywhere
  - Video-based, self-paced
  - All materials are 100% downloadable
    - For LIFETIME access
- *Available at [www.AzaleaMusic.com/programs](www.AzaleaMusic.com/programs)*
  - *Recording Turbo-charge (very comprehensive)*
  - *Layering*
  - *Mixing Mastering*
  - *Ninja Mastering*

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