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Music Technology 2  
Assignment 6: Song Analysis  
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### **Micheal Jackson: Black or White**

#### **Deconstruction & Evaluation:**

- Time: 1991
- History: It is the first single from the album *Dangerous*. However, according to Jackson's record company, this is a rock 'n' roll dance song about racial discrimination.

#### **Duration:**

- The version that I'm analyzing is 3 mins and 22secs. The original version is about 5 mins long.
- The tempo of the song is 115.
- Time Signature is in 4/4
- The song has 17 parts
- From a rhythmic point of view, all 4 to Blues to themes use rhythms placed on the beats, with a binary beat based on the eighth note. In the verses, bridges, and choruses, the themes start with an anacrusis before beats 1 and 4. In the instrumental breaks, the pulse evaluates to the sixteenth note especially percussion. The 4/4 time signature and tempo of a quarter note=115 keep on a dance rhythm.

#### **Dynamics:**

- When it comes to articulation, you can hear every word, content, and vowel that Micheal is saying. His articulation is very tight. The only time you wouldn't be able to hear it if the music is louder in certain areas of the song. For example, the second verse extension; when I first heard this song I thought he was "How do you agree with me, if I saw you kicking dirt in my eye", but he was actually saying, "Don't tell me you agree with me..."
- Song Genre: Rap/Rock/Funk/Soul
- Song/Composer style: Song is in the key of E Major. The writers and producer of this song is Micheal Jackson and Bill Bottrell.
- The volume of the song: In the beginning, starts off metro piano but he has accents in between the words like "boy". Then when it comes to the refrain its at mezzo forte then next verse it goes back to the same format as verse one. Then when verse extension comes that's when he goes forte. The format kind of repeats throughout the song.

- **Accented notes:** He puts them on the most important words in the phrase like in the first verse he puts the accent on “boy” and “happened tonight” or “black or white”. In verse 2, he puts the accent on “my message”, when it goes into verse extension that’s where he put the most stress because he wants to let you know how serious he feels about this situation or situations. When it comes to bridge, it sounds staccato. Then after that the same format repeats.

### **Melody & Harmony:**

- The harmonic progression is mainly based on a guitar riff that includes 2 chords only, in introduction 2 and the breaks:
- **Verse:** Amaj/E EMaj; BMaj/E EMaj; AMaj/E E Maj; AMaj/E EMaj
- **Bridge:** A Maj; A Maj
- **Chorus:** B Maj, B Maj
- **Break 1:** E7(#9), E7(#9), E7(#9), E7(#9)
- **Breaks:** AMaj/E EMaj, AMaj/E EMaj
- The chord progression is simple and includes the tonic chord I (E Major), the subdominant chord IV (A maj) and the dominant chord V (B Major). We can also notice a tonic pedal note (E) in the introduction and the instrumental breaks, with a plagal cadence (IV I), preceding the return of the tonic chord. The composer also uses the E blues chord with an augmented 9th (G) in verse extension. The chords are generally very simple: perfect triads in the bridge and choruses, reversed or not, and sometimes some 7th dominant chords with a blues 3rd (Verse extension 1 &2).

### **Structure:**

Intro 1: Free

Intro 2: 8 ½ bars

Verse 1: 4 bars (A)

Refrain: 2 bars (B)

Break: 4 1/2 bars (C)

Verse 2: 4 bars (A)

Refrain: 2 bars (B)

Break: 8 bars (C)

Verse Extension: 8 bars (D)

Rap/Verse 3: 10 ½ bars (E)

Verse Extension: 2 bars (D )

Pre-Chorus: 6 bars (F )

Break: 4 bars (C )

Ab-Libs: 2 bars (G )

Chorus: 6 bars (H)

- **Song form:** ABC-ABCD-FCGH
- **Repetition:** It's definitely some repetition within the lyrics and instruments. The bass and the other instruments loops mostly throughout the song until we get to Micheal's verse extension, then goes back when we get into the rap. The lyrics he constantly repeat black or white.
- **Development:**
  - "After the first few day of work on it, we had the heart of the song, the verses, the chorus and all of Micheal," Bottrell said years later, But we had this big emptiness in the middle, and it was like that in our minds for several months". The idea of rap popped into Bottrell's head one morning when he was at home with a lyric inspired by the theme Jackson approached in the song. The producer recorded the rap, in a version he intended to serve as a temporary one, and played the piece for Jackson. "He loved it," Bottrell said. Bottrell's initial plan was to get a real rapper to record this part. He suggested somebody like LL Cool J or Heavy D, who were in the studio working on other tracks on the album. But Jackson insisted they use Bottrell's recording, something the producer was not entirely comfortable with. "You know, I'm a songwriter and producer," Bottrell confessed. " I'm not a rapper and I did not mean to be the white guy who's rhyming over there". The song's main riff, played by Bill Bottrell, is often incorrectly attributed to Guns N' Roses guitarist Slash. Slash's guitar playing is actually heard in the skit that preceded the album version of the song and he did play the main riff during the live performances of the song.

### Texture & Timbre:

#### Production Techniques:

- **Sound**
  - **Distorted Electric Guitar** has a centered panorama with distortion plus light flange
  - **Snare Drum/Intro 1** has left panorama with long gate reverb
  - **Bass Drum** has a centered panorama with no effects on it
  - **Another set of snare drums** that have centered panorama with a short gate reverb
  - **Tech Percussions** has a left and right panorama with a delay in sixteenth notes
  - **Hi-Hat Cymbals** has a centered panorama with no effects
  - **Bass Guitar** has a centered panorama with a light flange effect
  - **Synthesizer Bass** has a centered panorama with a light flange effect
  - **Clap** has a right and left panorama with a long gate reverb
  - **2nd Electric Guitar** has a right panorama with a chorus plus early reflexions effect
  - **Acoustic Guitar** has a right and left panorama with a hall reverb effect

- **Sound effect** has a centered panorama with no effect
- **Electronic Clap** has left panorama with a gated reverb effect
- **Synthesizer Strings** has a right and left panorama with a hall reverb
- **Lead Voice** has a centered panorama with a short reverb plus delay effect
- **Vocals** has a right and left panorama with a short reverb effect

**Key:** E Major is a major scale based on E, with the pitches E, F#, G#, A, B, C#, and D#. Its key signature has four sharps. Its relative minor is C sharp minor and its parallel minor is E minor. Its enharmonic equivalent, F flat major, has eight flats, including the double flat B flat, which makes it rarely used.

## **Lyrics:**

### **Intro 1**

### **Intro 2: (Break)**

**Verse 1:** I took my baby on a Saturday bang  
 Boy is that girl with you, yes we're one and the same  
 Now I believe in miracles  
 And I believe in miracle has happened tonight

**Refrain:** But, if you're thinkin' about my baby  
 It don't matter if you're black or white

### **(Break)**

**Verse 2:** They print my message in the Saturday Sun  
 I had to tell them I ain't second to more  
 And I told about equality and it's TRUE  
 Either you're wrong or right

**Refrain:** But if you're thinkin' about my baby  
 It don't matter if you're black or white

### **(Break/Ab libs and then it modulates) or collision**

**Verse Extension:** I am tired of this devil  
 I am tired of this stuff  
 I am tired of this business  
 Sew when the going gets rough  
 I ain't scared of your brother  
 I ain't scared of no sheets  
 I ain't scared of nobody

Girl when the going gets mean

**(The same beat in the beginning comes back)**

**Verse 3 (Rap-Bill Bottrell):**

Protection

For gangs, clubs, and nations

Causing grief in human relations

It's a turf war on a global scale

I'd rather hear both sides of the tale

See, it's not about races

Just places

Faces

Where your blood comes from

Is where your space is

I've seen the bright gets duller

I'm not going to spend my life being a color

**Verse Extension (Micheal):**

Don't tell me you agree with me

When I saw you kicking dirt in my eye

**Refrain:** But, if you're thinking about my baby

It don't matter if you're black or white

**Bridge:** I said if you're thinking of being my baby

It don't matter if you're black or white

**Pre-Chorus:** I said if you're thinking about being my brother

It don't matter if you're black or white

**(Ab libs)**

**Chorus:** It's black, it's white

It's tough for you to get by

It's black, it's white, whoo (x2)

**Lyric Meaning:**

**“I took my baby on a Saturday bang. Boy, is that girl with you?”:** The word ‘Boy’ in this context at first means the differentiates in gender but, this is a racist term that was to degraded African-American’s back in the day. Listening to the next part, “Yes, we’re one and the same” validates that the male is colored and the addressor of the question is speaking with a prejudice mindset.

**“Yes, we’re one and the same”:** They are both are different colors, they are both the exact same, in harmony and unity.

**“Now, I believe in miracles. And a miracle has happened tonight”:** As Micheal is telling the addresser, he hopes that this created a shift in culture and in rights.

**“I ain’t scared of no sheets”:** When I first heard this I was wondering, what does he mean? Is this something sensual? No, sheets refer to the KKK.

**“Protection for gangs, clubs and nations. Causing grief in human relations. It’s a turf war on a global scale”:** Young people are often stereotyped to be part of gangs and often go to clubs. Through they still do need protection from everyday danger, they are often unnoticed and left vulnerable, as governments focus their money on fighting wars, hence the metaphor of being a small “turf war”.

**“I’m not going to spend my life being a color”:** MJ points out that color or race separates the world but the world prefers that the world not be that way. Instead of MJ does not want to be looked at by his skin, but who he is.

**“Don’t tell me you agree with me. When I saw you kicking dirt in my eye”:** MJ rebukes the critics telling them to not act like they’re on his side when in fact they’ll just use any chance they get to back-stab him.

**“I said if you’re thinking of being my brother. It don’t matter if you’re black or white”:** MJ is saying that he doesn’t pick his friends based on their skin color as it doesn’t matter. Continuing the theme of racial equality.

## Ariana Grande: thank u next

### Deconstruction & Evaluation:

- *Thank U Next* is easily Grande's most sonically consistent effort to date, even if that means some of the album's sleek R&B tracks tend to blur together. Aside from a wealth of trap beats and finger snaps, the album's most notable characteristic is the recurring use of orchestral flourishes. Let alone with Grande's positive message with her catchy melody within the chorus.
- Release Date: November 3, 2018
- Written by: Victoria Monet, Ariana Grande, Tayla Parx, TBHits, etc.
- Produced by: Social House & TBHits
- Vocal Producer: Victoria Monet & Ariana Grande
- Background vocals: Victoria Monet & Tayla Parx

**Duration:** It features elements of synth-pop in its production. The song is written in the key of B-Flat minor in common time with a tempo of 108 beats per minute. Grande's voice ranges from a low A-flat (to the 3rd) to a high E flat (to the 5th). The song is based around a chord progression of G flat maj7- F7/A-B flat m7- D flat7/ C flat.

### Dynamics:

- **Accented notes:** When she puts accents on certain words, ariana adds this zig zag type of noise. Especially, words like "Patience" and "Amazing" in the pre-chorus. In the chorus, she puts stress on the "next" to let you know that she's moving on to bigger and better things.
- The volume of the song doesn't go any higher than mezzo forte, her voice dynamics doesn't change. The only thing that changes is the tones of her voice on certain words.
- When it comes to articulation for Ariana Grande, sometimes it's difficult to understand because sometimes it's clear like within this song, but other times it's very muddy or rushed.

### Melody/Harmony:

One of the first that strikes about this song are the unexpected chromaticism in the bass: G Flat, A, B flat, C flat. This creates a huge amount of character and tension. The D flat melody line "is pulled towards two additional tonal centers", creating a tension and a feeling of being away from your harmonic home. Unsettled, uneasy, uncomfortable harmony— and this is a song talking about painful previous relationships. Also, note melodic similarities between the verse and pre-chorus". Does this help add to the mood of searching, alongside the ambiguous harmony? This part is depending on the listener.

### Structure:

- The structure of this song has a typical pop song approach. Verse, Pre-Chorus, Chorus, Verse, Pre-Chorus, Chorus. Thank U Next has an AB-ABC-ABCD form.
- Variety? There's a lot of this in the song, especially within voice and music. It never changes, its in one big loop almost.
- Development: Tommy Brown did interview with *Billboard* on the making of "Thank U Next". This is what he said about the making of the song:
  - **"Thank u, next" had to be special with that being Ariana's first No. 1 hit and debuting on top of the Hot 100. Did this record start the forming of an album?**
    - I don't really remember the order. All I know is we were in there with a whiteboard. We were in the studio, and they needed something to write to. I'm a really collaborative producer within my camp. Mikey of Social House played me this chord progression, and I told him to speed it up. I took it and played it for the girls. As soon as I did that, they start going crazy and said, "We should do a song called 'thank u, next' since [Ariana] always says it." [Ariana] didn't want anyone to hear the song yet, with the guys in the other room next door.
    - The song is the first one I was nervous to marry the track to. The vocals had been done for a day or so, then Ariana asked, "So, when are you going to finish 'thank u, next?'" I was like, "Today's the day." We went in and arranged the whole song. We played it for her, but there was one note that was wrong before the chorus. None of us could hear it but her. We had to open up the beat session and find the one missing note and replace it. There were multiple versions of the song. [Ariana] was like, "Should we put the names in or should we not?" I told her to do the different versions, but I always felt like we were gonna end up with the first.
  - **What was Ariana's mind-set in moving so quickly from Sweetener to thank u, next?**
    - We were talking and it was a tough time with everything that was going on, especially with Mac Miller's death, and everything else. We had been in New York, and I texted her, "I think your next album is going to be your biggest album." She goes, "What makes you say that?" Then I said, "I just have a feeling." She answers, "OK, you want to start working in October?"
    - I came up with a few friends and I think it was more us getting in the studio and having fun and doing therapy verses, rather than being like, "Hey, you want to get in here and actually do an album?" We were just writing songs about everyday life and things that were going on. I thought,



"These songs are actually kind of good." We had a solid foundation of what we wanted to do.

- **What differences do you notice in Ariana's creative process from working with her at the start of her career through now?**

- I like how involved she is. I like how she tells her story. She comes in and writes. A lot of artists just go and have the song already prepared for them. With her, she comes in with concepts, ideas and lyrics.

Verse 1: 8 bars (A)

Pre-Chorus: 9 bars (B)

Chorus: 8 ½ bars (C)

Verse 2: 8 bars (A)

Pre-Chorus: 8 bars (B)

Chorus: 9 bars (C)

Post-Chorus: 3 ½ bars (D)

Bridge: 8 bars (E)

Pre-Chorus: 8 bars (B)

Chorus: 8 bars (C)

Post-Chorus: 8 bars (D)

### **Texture & Timbre:**

Production Techniques: Retro effects on the keyboard

Keyboard type of bass, but not a 808 kit. But, it does have an 808 vibe.

This song has numerous amount of tech percussions from kicks, drum loops, vinyl clap, and more. They also add another keyboard layer using the same chords, but a different pattern while recording on Protools. This from the actual producers who created the song within an interview from Genius.

I found another video by Beat Academy and he broke down the chorus of this song. He recreated the song in Ableton, I don't which version. He makes this 808 patterns for the song. He also was using a lot of loops to form that 808 patterns. By playing with the EQ, he manipulated the bass to make it bouncy. When I listen to the breakdown of it, it sounds like the melody was played using a distorted organ, they clean up the sound and brought up the pitch just a half step to have that driving melody that makes the song.

### **Key:**

- D Flat Major is a major scale based on D flat, consisting of the pitches D flat, E flat, F, G flat, A flat, B flat, and C.

- This is a song playing the relative minor of D flat major which is b flat minor. Its parallel minor, D flat minor, is usually replaced by C sharp minor, since D flat minor features a B flat in its key signature and C sharp minor only has four sharps, making it rare for D flat minor to be used. C sharp minor, its enharmonic, with seven sharps, has a similar problem. Therefore, D flat major is often used as the parallel major for C sharp minor.

## **Lyrics:**

### **Verse 1:**

Thought I'd end up with Sean  
But he wasn't a match  
Wrote some songs about Ricky  
Now I listen and laugh  
Even almost got married  
And for Pete, I'm so thankful  
Wish I could say, "Thank you" to Malcolm  
'Cause he was an angel

### **Pre-Chorus (1):**

One taught me, love  
One taught me patience  
And one taught me pain  
Now, I'm so amazing  
Say I've loved and I've lost  
But that's not what I see  
So, look what I go  
Look what you taught me  
And for that, I say

### **Chorus:**

Thank you, next (next)  
Thank you, next (next)  
Thank you, next  
I'm so f\*\*\*ing grateful for my ex  
Thank you, next (next)  
Thank you, next (next)  
Thank you, next (next)

I'm so f\*\*\*in'---

**Verse 2:**

Spend more time with my friends  
I ain't worried 'bout nothin'  
Plus, I met someone else  
We havin' better discussions  
I know they say I move on too fast  
But this one goin' last  
'Cause her name is Ari  
And I'm so good with that (So good with that)

**Pre-Chorus (2):**

She taught me love (Love)  
She taught me patience (Patience)  
How she handles pain (Pain)  
That s\*\*\* amazing (Yeah, she's amazing)  
I've loved and I've lost (Yeah, yeah)  
But that's not what I see (Yeah, yeah)  
'Cause look what I've found (Yeah, yeah)  
Ain't no need for searching, and for that, I say

**Chorus:**

Thank you, next (Thank you, next)  
Thank you, next (Thank you, next)  
Thank you, next (Thank you)  
I'm so f\*\*\*ing grateful for my ex  
Thank you, next (Thank you, next)  
Thank you, next (Said thank you, next)  
Thank you, next (Next)  
I'm so f\*\*\*in' grateful for my ex

**Post-Chorus (1):**

Thank you, next  
Thank you, next  
Thank you, next  
I'm so f\*\*\*in----

**Bridge:**

One day I'll walk down the aisle  
Holding hands with my mama  
I'll be thanking my dad  
'Cause she grew from the drama  
Only wanna do it once, real bad  
Gon' make that s\*\*t last  
God forbid something happens  
Least this song is a smash (Song is a smash)

**Pre-Chorus (3):**

I've got so much love (Love)  
Got so much patience (Patience)  
I've learned from the pain (Pain)  
I turned out amazing (Turned out amazing)  
Say I've loved and I've lost (Yeah, yeah)  
But that's not what I see (Yeah, yeah)  
'Cause look what I've found (Yeah, yeah)  
Ain't no need for searching  
And for that I say

**Chorus:**

Thank you, next (Thank you, next)  
Thank you, next (Thank you, next)  
Thank you, next  
I'm so f\*\*\*ing grateful for my ex  
Thank you, next (Thank you, next)  
Thank you, next (Said thank you, next)  
Thank you, next (Next)  
I'm so f\*\*\*in' grateful for my ex

**Post-Chorus (2):**

Thank you, next  
Thank you, next  
Thank you, next  
Yeah, yee  
Thank you, next  
Thank you, next  
Thank you, next  
Yeah, yee

## **Lyrics Meaning:**

**“Thought I end up with Sean, but he wasn’t a match”:** Ariana and Big Sean started dating in August 2014 and broke up in April 2015, due to both of them having conflicting tour schedules. However, it was also rumored that they had broken up over Sean’s lyrics on his 2015 song “Stay Down”.

**“Wrote some songs about Ricky, Now I listen and laugh”:** Ariana and Ricky Alvarez first became involved in April 2014 after becoming a backup dancer for her. They first kissed publicly in June 2015 during Ariana’s performance in 2015 PRIDE. They were also seen kissing again during Ariana’s infamous doughnut that she did not purchase---- confirming their relationship. They broke up in July 2016. The phrase “listen and laugh” could mean she’s reflecting on the good times or the bad times with him.

**“Even almost got married. And for Pete, I’m so thankful”:** On May 23, 2018, Ariana and Pete Davidson were spotted sporting matching tattoos, which confirmed they were dating.

**“Wish I could say, “Thank you” to Malcolm. ‘Cause he was angel”:** Ariana Grande and Mac Miller started dating in August 2016 and broke up in May 2018. Even after breaking up, they decided to stay friends. Mac Miller died on September 7, 2018, from an accidental overdose of fentanyl and cocaine.

**The entire Pre-Chorus (1):** Ariana could be saying she learned patience from Pete Davidson as they were both criticized for rushing into a relationship. She could be saying she learned to love from Big Sean, who was her first notable boyfriend. Lastly, she could be saying she learned pain from Mac Miller, who was dealing with drug addiction during their relationship and whose death was hard on her. After Miller’s May 2018 DUI charge, a fan blamed Ariana for breaking his heart, in which she responded to how their relationship was “toxic” and how it was overwhelming for both of them.

**Chorus:** Ariana is thankful for all of her failed relationships and how they helped her grow as a person.

**Verse 2:** The “better discussions” are a reflection of Ariana’s increasingly positive mental state. On her August 2018 album, *Sweetener*, she confronts her emotions following the May 2017 bombing at her Manchester concert. In her July 2018 *ELLE* cover story.

**Bridge:** Ariana Grande and Pete Davidson got engaged after about a month of dating, but now she realizes she doesn't want to rush into marriage. Ariana also applies the theme of gratitude to her own father, Edward Butera who divorced her mother, Joan Grande, when Ariana herself was only 9 years old. The "song is a smash" line could be Ariana predicting the song would be a hit, which it was, "thank u, next" debuted and stayed at #1 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 for 7 weeks.

## Stevie Wonder “You and I”

### Deconstruction & Evaluation:

Written, produced, moog bass, synthesizer, and pianist by Stevie Wonder.

Release date: October. 28, 1972

Associate Producer: Malcolm Cecil & Robert Margouleff

Mastering Engineer: George Marino

Song Genre: Soul

### Melody & Harmony:

Wonder uses voice leading to link distinct key areas together by means of modulation, and specifically how the interplay between the two key areas result in some very thoughtful re-harmonizations of the pentatonic melody. In the tender piano ballad “You And I”, Wonder introduces the protagonist whose feelings of hope for an enduring relationship with his lover are tempered by nagging feelings of doubt. This conflict is further emphasized through his use of expressive chords and modal borrowings.

### Structure:

Verse 1: 6 bars (A)

Hook 1: 2 bars (B)

Verse 2: 5 bars (A)

Hook 2: 5 bars (B)

This song is ABAB song form.

**Key:** F# Major scale

**Instruments:** this song has moog bass, piano, drums, and rhodes.

### Lyrics:

#### Verse 1:

Here we are on earth together  
It's you and I  
God has made us fall in love, it's true  
I've really found someone like you

Will it stay, the love you feel for me?  
Will say that you will be by my side  
To see me through  
Until my life is through?

### **Hook 1**

Well, in my mind  
We can conquer the world  
In love, you and I  
You and I, you and I

### **Verse 2:**

I am glad  
At least in my life I found someone  
That may not be here forever  
To see me through  
But I found strength in you

I only pray  
That I have shown you a brighter day  
Because that's all I am living for  
You see, don't worry what happens to me

### **Hook 2:**

'Cause in mind  
You will stay here always  
In love, you and I, you and I  
You and I, you and I

In my mind  
We can conquer the world  
In love, you and I  
You and I, you and I

In this song, Wonder preserves the G flat major/ E flat minor pentatonic collection in the melody, but unexpectedly harmonizes this collection with the parallel key of E flat major-- modulating not to the relative key ( a closely- related key) but to the chromatic submediant key (VI). As this key area crossfades, each pitch of the pentatonic motive during the hook represents a tension against the chords leading to E flat. In G flat for the first time in the song is now a dissonance, forming an eleventh against the F min 7 chord. After the expressive descending leap to E flat, which again implies a second voice leading strand that does not continue to its expected resolution (the D in parenthesis notes the theoretical continuation of its path), the melodic line ascends from i back to 3 in the second half of the measure. Over the Bflat7, the melodic note



Gflat forms a dissonant flat thirteenth that uncharacteristically steps up to Aflat, the chordal seventh, instead of pulling down to F.

**Vocals:** There is a tension that is created in the repeated harmonic pattern primarily through modal borrowing of the predominant IV and ii with their minor equivalents, iv and ii\*. This modal shift, already identified as a favorite device of Wonder's, is realized through the voice leading of scale degree 6 to flat 6. Moving along a progressive stable-to-unstable continuous beginning on the consonant tonic chord G flat major, the chords become increasingly darker over the tonic pedal. The arrival of flat 6 at the end of the two measure pattern, represented harmonically as the choral flat 5 of the unstable ii\* 4/2, marks the emotional and dissonant apex of the pattern before the welcome release into next cycle.