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Popular Contemporary Music
9 December 2014

In the last several years popular music has seen an influx of genre mixing especially in regards to the mixing of electronic music with more popular genres such as rock or hip hop. This influx has lead to the rise of the relatively new genre know as "EDM" or "Electronic Dance Music". Electronic Dance Music as a name for a genre may seem as if it is an umbrella title designed to cover any and all music created on a computer that can be danced to, but EDM has actually gained a style and flavor of its own. The sound associated with EDM has grown popular and in some cases even seen air time on the radio. On top of the newfound airtime many EDM artists have even seen the Billboard Top Charts, which is in my opinion a very new phenomenon in the music world. A shining example of a recent successful artist and song is: *Calvin Harris - Blame ft. John Newman*. The song *Blame* features the musical stylings fitting with the EDM genre with vocal stylings that are soulful but have a repetitive pop-like flair in the chorus. This combination has lead the song to have a position of 23(at the time of the writing of this paper) on the Billboard Top 100 with a peak position of 19 overall.

The song takes the rough form of a verse-chorus based song with musical interludes following the chorus's. The song additionally has a bridge followed by another chorus/outro at the end of the song. All of that combined makes the structure of the song as follows:

Verse - Chorus - Musical Interlude - Verse - Chorus - Musical Interlude - Bridge - Chorus This format fits the style and purpose of the song very well because it allows for a mix of musical expression during the musical interlude as well as lyrical expression and storytelling in the verses and chorus's. This structure is typical of EDM because it balances a danceable format that fits the needs of the house roots of the style while still accommodating the pop roots allowing for a story to be told in the meantime. In my opinion those two aspects define what is

needed to make a relatable yet danceable electronic song. Without the addition of a lyrical story many people would not be able to look past the musical repetitiveness that is the foundation of much electronic music.

The lyrics of the song tell a story of a mans regret and sleeplessness over his interaction with a women who is an old friend. Below are listed the three main verses from the song.

Verse 1:
Can't be sleepin'
Keep on waking
Without the woman next to me
Guilt is burning
Inside I'm hurting
This ain't a feeling I can keep

Verse 2:
Can't you see it?
I was manipulated
I had to let her through the door
I had no choice in this
I was a friend she missed
She needed me to talk

Verse 3:
Oh, I'm so sorry, so sorry, baby
Yeah (I'll be better this time, I will be better this time)
I got defense
Oh, I promise (I'll be better this time, I will be better this time)

The lyrics serve to make the song easy to relate to, because the situation of which the song is about is one that many people have found themselves. The addition of a repetitive chorus makes the song singable for the average joe listening on the radio which also strengthens the songs popularity. One of the major factors that goes into determining the popularity of a song is it's ability to get stuck and remain stuck in your head for as long as possible. We all know a song like

that and will know more to come. You will be riding in the car and just start singing the words to some song that you don't even remember the title or artist of, all you will know is a few lines but they will be enough to have you hooked. Below is a copy of the chorus from the song.

Chorus
So blame it on the night
Don't blame it on me
Don't blame it on me
Blame it on the night
Don't blame it on me
Don't blame it on me

Blame it on the night
Don't blame it on me
Don't blame it on me
So blame it on the night
Don't blame it on me
Don't blame it on me
Don't blame it on me

Overall I find the lyrical content to be minimalistic yet filled with emotion. The feelings that are evoked while listening to the song can be powerful if you can even somewhat relate to the lyrics, but at the same time you don't need that personal connection to get caught up in the chorus and sing along or want to shake your hips during the musical interludes.

EDM as a genre grew out of genres such as progressive house and big room house with a mixture of "pop", but now has reached a point where it has grown into it's own genre and has been labeled a such. Thus the birth of EDM as we now call it. Five or ten years ago EDM would have been considered a sub genre of house music, but now it has become mainstream and grown exponentially since roughly 2010. Some may argue that EDM and all electronic music genres are

still sub genres of house as a whole, but I feel that Is an oversimplification of the layout of electronic styles as we know them today.

There is a great amount of room for genre crossover when dealing with EDM songs because EDM is a genre that has plenty of room for remixes. The lyrical content can be used to create a cover in another style. This has been popularized recently on youtube with musicians and groups recording their interpretation of popular songs on the web. On the opposite end of the musical spectrum, electronic artists thrive off of each other by sampling, remixing and learning from each other. Because of this I feel that any song in the EDM genre is open for a cross genre adaptation that would be relatively popular.

Technology is the key factor to what has allowed this song to become popular. As an electronically produced song technology was involved in its making from start to finish. The vocals would have been recorded onto a computer, edited on a computer and mixed on a computer. The music would have been created by synthesizing or sampling each instrument in the arrangement followed by a digital layout of the songs form. Finally the vocals would be overlaid on the computer and the whole song would be mixed and mastered in the box. This is the typical process for creating electronic music in the 21st century. I say that speaking from personal experience as someone who produces electronic music. Though this process may be typical, it is not a rule. Many producers still incorporate physical instruments or analog gear into their music as it was done in the previous decades when creating electronic music. The song *Blame* would have been created in the manor described above with little to no incorporation of physical instruments and little recording except for the vocal track. This in many ways is

beneficial to the creative freedom of the artists because the limitation of what an artist can do based on their physical equipment is lifted because of modern musical computing.

In the years to come technology will continue to play an increasing role in the creation, distribution and reception of all music genres and forms. I would argue that in the next twenty or so years we will be able to completely synthesize the human voice on a software level and create vocal software programs that are capable of creating a full vocal layout for a song that could pass as equivalent to an actual recording of the human voice. Some may fear that this will replace the job of the vocalist, and I might agree in some cases. But on the other hand it will also open doors for artists to be able to express themselves in ways that they never have before. It will open up possibilities for those who cannot sing to tell the stories that they wish to tell musically. I feel that the increase of technology in the music industry has caused some controversy in the past because for every new technological advance someones job may be at risk, but at the same time a new job has opened we as an industry just need to learn that the times are changing and that we should embrace the technology and use it to our advantage.

Overall the song *Calvin Harris - Blame ft. John Newman* is a testament to the future of modern music and how technology has shaped the industry. It shows how genres like house and pop can merge to create a new genre (EDM) that is both danceable and singable for the average listener. The industry as we knew it years ago has changed, technology has advanced and become more widespread than ever. We need to learn to embrace these changes and allow them to influence or music in positive and creative ways. I feel that we are heading in the right direction if songs like theses are to be a large portion of the future of popular music.