

Research Assessment # 10

Date: 11/19/2020

Subject: Tame Impala's "Elephant"

APA Citation:

Kevin Parker, "Elephant" Lonerism, Perth, Australia, 2012.

Assessment:

Kevin Parker's use of classic psychedelic rock effects and modern techniques have evolved, and in cases like "Elephant" they truly shine. The aggressive drums and blown out guitar effects create a grungy sound, and the simple changes in tone throughout the song ensure that it is a dynamic and entertaining experience.

As soon as the song begins, listeners are assaulted with low, distorted guitar and bass-heavy drums. This simple combination creates a rumbling rage within its listeners, however this feeling is soothed shortly after with the introduction of Parker's voice. Although, in this instance, the song is not centered around the vocals, which is usually not the case. In "Elephant", the volume of the vocals is quite low in comparison to most music, giving more focus to the movements of the guitar and drums. The choice to do this also creates intrigue in the listener: What exactly is he saying? Catching occasional glimpses of the song's true meaning encourages deeper listening. This is something that I find extremely appealing, and something that I plan to implement into my own music. It also, coincidentally, helps with my inability to sing!

Another interesting aspect to the song is the almost orchestral interlude in the middle of it, which takes a whole new perspective on the piece. Parker's introduction of synths during this section is very interesting: rock and roll has not traditionally been combined with elements such as this, however he does so very well. This aspect of the song is another thing I would like to carry into my own musical creations this year. Interludes allow music producers the space to experiment and explore their sound creatively, as well as the opportunity to bring in unexpected

elements, like the synths that Parker puts to use in “Elephant”. Interludes can have great effect upon the emotional progression of the song by changing previously established patterns or repetitions. An example could be focusing on different aspects of the chord progression, like accentuating different notes compared to previous sections, or changing the underlying bass line in order to introduce new colors throughout. Doing so also opens up new opportunities to make changes *following* the interlude, which surprises the listener and makes the song more interesting to listen to. This is a phenomenon which is known as “setting and breaking the pattern” which takes advantage of the natural human tendency to pick up on repetition. Breaking this repetition surprises the ear and catches the attention of the listener, creating a more dynamic listening experience.

To conclude, certain elements of Tame Impala’s “Elephant” make it an especially unique and entertaining song to listen to. This song demonstrates a strong willingness to experiment, along with obvious mastery of the production process and creative expression. Throughout my time in ISM this year, the use of interludes and subtle vocals will contribute to my creative process and music production.