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The Kiwileles HOMEGROWN SONGBOOK



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in this issue... Outreach Singing, Musical Futures, musical irony, Singspiel: The Birds, the Dalcroze Eurhythmics Approach in action and more ...

In the book, *The evolution of emotional communication*, Altenmuller *et al* suggest that emotional responses of basic emotions (e.g. happiness, sadness, anger, fear) are 'remarkably invariant across listeners of different ages' (2013, p.277). Juslin and Sloboda found that 'the ascribed emotion of a music performance could be well predicted from a fairly small set of characteristics, relating to pitch, speed, intensity, and articulation etc.', and that these characteristics are also used to evaluate emotions in a person's speech (2011, p.84). But in *Expression of emotion in music and vocal communication: Introduction to the research topic*, Bhatara, Laukka and Levitin agree that emotions resulting from incongruent songs (containing incongruent interaction between music and lyrics) are more complex than basic emotions, due to the ironic context from which they are experienced (2014, p.212).

"Incongruent interactions transform meaning from what might be gleaned from listening to either the music or the lyrics alone...incongruent interactions make messages more poignant and can serve as an anthem for social movements...however, incongruent interactions run the risk of listener misinterpretation" (Herrmann and Herbig, 2016, p.72). For example, incongruence can be found in a track entitled *Perfect day* (Reed, 1972). *Perfect Day* was written in 1972 as part of the album *Transformer*, and is an excellent example of the use of musical irony. Arguably any meaning derived from this song is not fully revealed until the outro at 2m37s, when the lyric 'You're going to reap what you sow' is repeated four times, accompanied by a new harmonic structure utilising chords descending in perfect fourths. Until the last four lines, the narrative is driven by a romantic encounter; supportive, positive and emotive by nature. The outro however contains a darker negative message, the causal lyrics implying consequence of action. Incongruence between sections is evident here as the subtext of the latter part of the song alludes to a premise that the singer's day is made 'perfect' from an addiction to opiates.

FUNDAMENTALS

Instrumentation is fairly typical of a rock ballad of this period and consists of piano, bass, drums, vocals, keyboards (played by David Bowie), a brass section, and a string section. The tempo is 145bpm over a 12/8 feel. Interestingly, the key for the verse is Bb minor but the key for the chorus (e.g. 51s) is Bb major; a parallel transposition. The form is: 2-bar intro, 8-bar verse, 5.5-bar chorus (with a 2/4 bar at the end), verse, 5-bar chorus, 3-bar instrumental, and a 1.5-bar outro. The chord sequence of the verse mainly ascends in perfect fourths supporting the 'positive' nature of the verse of the song, and interestingly, descends in perfect fourths during the outro twist, or 'negative' part of the song. Here it could be argued that the direction of the harmony directly reflects the mood of the lyrics; up for happy and down for sad! Strings enter halfway through the first verse (31s) and the dynamic increases dramatically during the first chorus. The second verse is denser, with counter melodies heard by the strings and rhythmic hits doubled by the bass player and pianist. After the second chorus an instrumental section is heard (2m22s), led by the piano and a violin section playing on the front of the beat, to the point of rhythmic discomfort, perhaps alluding to the change in mood coming up.

VOCALS

Lou Reed's vocals are often flat, and vocal delivery is light, relying heavily on production to bring the vocals up in the mix. Reed's sound could be described as frail and the mood is nostalgic during the verse, which becomes strong in the chorus with the use of multiple vocal layers. During the verse the vocal sound is quite dry compared to the chorus where a substantial amount of reverb is added. This change in production style supports the shift in tonality as the key moves from minor to major; the dynamics increase and vocals strengthen. One might argue that in the lyric 'You made me forget myself, I thought I was someone else, someone good' also infers a dramatic mood shift brought on by a 'high', followed by a string led glissandi, almost interpretable as 'oh no' at 1m47s.

SURPRISE

The meaning of this song was a surprise. In *Sweet anticipation*, David Huron states, "The phenomenon of 'surprise' represents a failure of expectation. From a biological perspective, surprise is always a bad thing. Even when the surprising outcome turns out to be good, failing to anticipate the outcome means that the brain has failed to provide useful information about possible futures. Predictive failures are therefore cause for biological alarm. If an animal is to be prepared for the future, the best surprise is no surprise" (Huron, 2006, p.21). From a phenomenological perspective, my lived experience of listening to *Perfect Day* after my hermeneutical epiphany, is quite different from my initial listen – the variation in tonality and harmonic movement has much more significance, and the lyrics far more sobering. The surprise that I felt gave salience to my perception of this track, and has continued to do so every listen since.

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