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**Popular Music in**

**Context**

Set Work 8

Jeff Buckley:

*Grace*

**Jeff Buckley 1966-1997**



Jeff Buckley’s song *Grace* has several features that are commonly found in rock music such as**four beats in a bar**, the use of **verse and chorus** form and the **instrumental** line-up.

* A singer-songwriter and guitarist born in California in 1966
* Both father and son possessed powerful voices with great emotional depth.
* He had an amazing range as a singer and often sang in **falsetto**
* Tim Buckley died of a heroin overdose at the age of 29
* Jeff Buckley died in a swimming accident at the age of 30
* The song '*Grace*' is taken from the album with the same name
* Grace (1994) was the only studio album Jeff Buckley completed
* Jeff Buckley co-wrote the song *'Grace'* with the guitarist Gary Lucas
* This piece is scored for two guitars, bass guitar, drums and synthesiser



**FOLK ROCK MUSIC**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Key Features and Facts** |
| **1** | Refers to the **traditional** music of a country – the folk culture |
| **2** | Often learned and performed **by ear**; songs are **memorised** and passed down through generations – **oral tradition** |
| **3** | The lyrics described peoples’ views on politics and cultural issues, and were sung in a simple and direct style |
| **4** | This led to a **folk revival** in the 1950s |
| **5** | Artists such as **Bob Dylan** and **The Byrds** combined folk with pop and rock influences, creating the genre **folk rock** in the 1960s |
| **6** | **Jeff Buckley’s** music is often described as folk rock though he was influenced by many genres. His one and only album *Grace* is very eclectic in style including Buckley’s own version of Leonard Cohen’s *Hallelujah* and Benjamin Britten’s setting of the *Corpus Christi Carol*. |
| **7** | Although Buckley’s style is diverse much of his music retains the folk tradition of using song as a vehicle for story-telling. |



**Jeff Buckley’s ‘Grace’**

 *‘Grace’* comes from the album ***Grace*** which was released in August 1994, on the same day as Oasis’s ‘Definitely Maybe’, ‘Grace’ was Buckley’s only completed album. It is a **rock ballad** – a slow love song accompanied by a rock band. Buckley regarded this song to be about the way that true love can make it easier for people to accept their own mortality.

There's the moon asking to stay
Long enough for the clouds to fly me away
Though it's my time coming, I'm not afraid, afraid to die
My fading voice sings of love,
But she cries to the clicking of time,
Of time

Wait in the fire...

And she weeps on my arm
Walking to the bright lights in sorrow
Oh drink a bit of wine we both might go tomorrow, oh my love
And the rain is falling and I believe
My time has come
It reminds me of the pain I might leave
Leave behind

Wait in the fire...

It reminds me of the pain I might leave
leave behind...

And I feel them drown my name
So easy to know and forget with this kiss
But I'm not afraid to go but it goes so slow

Wait in the fire...

Some say that the lyrics seem to anticipate his own death by drowning!

 **Stylistic features**

* Use of Power chords
* Emphasis on guitars
* Taking a fairly simple idea and changing it to make it interesting
* Typically **Strophic** in form – verse chorus structure
* Large use of guitar riffs
* Electronic effects used to enhance the sound

**Unusual features for the time**

* The time signature is 12/8, which means four dotted crotchet beats per bar. Most rock songs are in 4/4
* Unusual chord progressions. He chose chords that he liked the sound of
* Considering the song was supposed to be about love, the lyrics are quite morbid!

**MELODY AND WORD-SETTING**

The vocal part has an **improvised** quality and a very **wide tessitura** of over two octaves. Most of the vocal phrases are **falling,** reflecting the melancholy mood of the song. In the example below there are two examples of **glissando**, circle them and mark them clearly.

Opening of verse 1



Most of the word setting is **syllabic** as you can see in the above example.

There are however some long **melismas** to emphasisecertain words such as ‘love’ in the verse and ‘fire’ in the chorus:

Opening of chorus



As mentioned earlier the lyrics reflect Buckley’s bleak outlook on love. There are many examples of **word painting**. Listen to the piece while following the score and indicate below how Buckley highlights these words in the music.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Word** | **Bar/Section** | **Musical Technique** |
| Die | 13 |  |
| Love | 15 |  |
| Fire | 23 |  |
| Leave | 58 |  |

In the **bridge** there is a passage of **vocalisation** – wordless singing – in which Buckley uses **falsetto**. What does this mean? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**STRUCTURE**

Listen to the piece again but this time focus on the structure, it is in **verse-chorus** form. Complete the following structural chart:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Intro** | **Verse 1**  |  | **Intro** |  |
| **Bars 1-7** | **8-19** |  |  |  |
| Instrumental  | Vocal:(‘There’s a Moon’) |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Intro** | **Verse 3** |  |
| **Bars 44-** |  |  |  |  |
| Voice(‘Wait in the fire’) |  |  |  | Voice(Improvisation) |

**INSTRUMENTATION AND TEXTURE**

**Homework:**

The following words are all related to guitar and string playing, some of which are used in *Grace*. What do they mean?

Drop-D tuning

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Flanger

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Delay

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Slide

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Vibrato

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Distortion

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Power chords

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Bending

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 Guitar ‘whisper’

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 Pizzicato

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**TECHNOLOGY/TEXTURE**

To help create a thicker texture the guitar parts are **overdubbed** – this is the re- recording of the same guitar part and then mixed together. The extra vocal parts in the **bridge** section are also produced through overdubbing, this is also known as double tracking.

**EQ** is used throughout but is particularly obvious towards the end of this piece in the vocal parts. EQ is basically adjusting the tone controls so therefore boosting or cutting top, mid or bass frequencies. At the end of the piece the top frequencies are boosted in the vocal parts so that they are clearly heard above the backing.

**TONALITY AND HARMONY**

 The song is in E minor, although the tonality is often ambiguous. Look at the first two bars of the introduction. Notice the use of accidentals alongside the key signature of E minor:



Although it is in E minor the song opens with two chords not normally found in this key (F minor7 and G minor7). Both chords have an added minor seventh. This gives the ambiguous feel to the **tonality** – it is hard to tell what key it is in. The standard I – IV – V chord progressions of rock music are avoided. Instead the chords are more chromatic and move in **parallel motion**.

Can you find other examples of parallel motion chords in the score?

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By using chromatic chords the tonality is ambiguous. **Dissonance** is created by deliberately allowing open E strings on the guitar to sound against an F chord and an Eb chord in bar 20 and 21.

**Main Chord Sequence**

Although the chords for the verse and chorus look and sound complex, and crunchy at times, they are quite simple on the guitar. They use the same chord shape, that just moves up and down the guitar, keeping one or more open strings as a drone. The harmonies come from the ideas played on the guitar, not the other way round. The chords are power chords spread across three frets, played in different ways in each section, making it sound more interesting with different textures.

**RHYTHM, METRE AND TEMPO**

The metre is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

There is frequent use of both **syncopation** and **cross rhythms** throughout.

Indicate in the table using crosses which beat the bass and snare drum play on:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Beat** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| Snare drum |  |  |  |  |
| Bass drum |  |  |  |  |

This type of beat is known as a backbeat and is characterized by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_



AoS 3

**Jeff Buckley: Grace**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Terms** | **Definitions** |
| Ballad |  |
| Verse Chorus Form |  |
| Tab |  |
| ‘Drop-D’ Tuning |  |
| Blue notes |  |
| Hammer-ons |  |
| Pull-offs |  |
| String bending |  |
| Slide guitar |  |
| Glissando |  |
| Melisma |  |
| Syllabic |  |
| Falsetto |  |
| Overdubs |  |
| Word painting |  |
| Tessitura |  |
| Distortion |  |
| Power chords |  |
| Guitar Whisper |  |
| Delay |  |
| Reverb |  |
| Double tracking |  |
| Multi-tracking |  |
| Flanger |  |