

" Music is alive, just like we are - it needs to breathe" - Victor Wooten.

RULE #1 -

- don't worry about the rules.

TOOL #1 -

- use your ears.

(This effectively sums up the basic requirements for contemporary arranging)

Now - let's get to it ...

Understand that you are creating a chart that is about being "a band." a chart that uses the voice as instruments - instruments that bend, twist, pluck, draw, howl, grunt, scoop, wail, boom, sparkle, shimmer, crash, honk, float, soothe and distort.

You are developing a bridge between the human voice and percussion - authoring a musical conversation without reservation.

CHALLENGES THAT WILL MAKE YOU WANT TO QUIT. -

- **Doubting that you are musician enough.** Just start. Build where you stand.
- Picking a range/key, suitable to the intended performer/s.
- Getting stuck on the intro
- Chords/notes that you hear and NEEDED to use, but are lower than grunting giant turtles in the Mariana Trench, but that's what you want!
- Chords/notes that you hear and NEEDED to use, but are higher than a screeching Barn Owl in a windstorm, but that's what you want!!
- Hyperfocusing on a problem area
- Key changes
- Writing rhythmic groove without making it square
- Writing rhythms that are cool, but still easy to read
- Creating singable lines / parts
- Avoiding clutter
- Accepting dissonance and contradiction
- Getting too caloric/ not rich enough
- Not keeping things simple/being too simple
- Fitting things into 4 parts?
- Being afraid to ask for help and find inspiration when you are stuck.

SKETCH -

Shape your chart.

- What flavour do you hope to capture?
- Who is the audience?

- Is this a piece to build an artist's body of work, or a 'public' one off?
- Is there a style you can learn from? (Jazz, classical, grunge, gothic metal, Western swing, house, industrial, k-pop ... etc. etc. etc.)
- Tracking an original recording?
- Reinventing an old/new narrative?
- *** NOTE * RESPECT AND LEARN ABOUT THE GENRE YOU ARE BORROWING FROM** - This is a cardinal rule of musicians - DO IT JUSTICE ! It is YOUR job to do your homework, and set the performer up for success. GO DEEP. You will get better at this sophistication as you go along. Take your time and learn.

DEVICES & TACTICS

- **GROOVE** -
 - set your core feel - establish bass groove and contrapuntal rhythms
 - choose which voices will establish percussion elements
- **MOTIF** -
 - Patterns and structure - longer flowing lines vs. Shorter rhythmic punches. - there needs to be a logic for the "filler" parts that enhance the groove and the melodic motion. Motifs can be elements that reflect through the chart.
- **EMOTIONAL LOGIC** - aka - Parsody - How the flow of a line, the peaks and valleys, complement the lyrical intention. Each line is making it's own statement.
- **CHORD SHAPING** - Are the chords expanding and contracting to make their own contribution to the narrative?
- **CHORD LOGIC** - does the chord sound like you intend it to feel? Does it relate to the chords that came before it, and that follow it, in a musical conversation?
- **ALIGNMENT** - The overall flow of the lyric, the flow of each part, their relationships to one another, the chord expansion and contraction, major and minor interplay.
- **BUILDING BLOCKS** -
 - *Articulation* - Voice - Consonants and percussion
 - *Tone* - Voice & Vowels forms / modification/ internal modifications
 - *Space* - Rests & note durations
 - *Phrasing and flow* -
 - *EARS* - LISTENING!

If you are new to arranging, keep it simple.

- Pick an easy song. Listen to it. Over and over and over.
- Transcribe each line you hear, note for note.
- Are there horns? Strings? Harmonies? Guitar lines? Write them down.
- Assign the most interesting parts to a voice part, and start making your own puzzle out of the pieces you have plucked from the original piece.

Remember - all great learning follows this path -

- IMITATION, ASSIMILATION, INNOVATION