



TRACKNOTES
FEEDBACK REPORT

SAMPLE REPORT · NAMES & DETAILS CHANGED

COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS · SINGLE TRACK

Box in the Attic

rootsy storytelling rap, sample-based

A warm, organic, sample-led rap record. A full read on how it is landing, where the mix is getting in its own way, and what you could look at before it goes to master.

ARTIST

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SERVICE

Comprehensive Analysis · £100

STAGE

1st draft

THE READ

This already sounds like a record rather than a draft: warm, unhurried, and sampled with real taste. Almost everything I would look at is *crowding rather than writing*.

Overall its hanging together really well! Where it loses a bit of its power is in the crowding. The sample is arriving as a finished mix of its own, with its own bass and its own room baked in, so it is sitting alongside your drums and your voice rather than underneath them. The result is a record that feels slightly hemmed in when it should feel like a room you can walk around.

The vocal is the other place I would put attention. It is a lovely, conversational delivery, but it is sitting a touch back on the verses and the level is jumping around more than the performance is, which pulls you out of the story every so often. None of this is unusual for a 1st draft. Six sections follow, with a short list at the end if you would rather just work from that.

01

THE SAMPLE BED

The source material is great. It is dusty without leaning on lo-fi as a gimmick, and the slight wobble in the loop gives the whole track a nice pulse. It sounds like something found rather than something made, which is exactly right for a song about a box in an attic.

The one thing you might look at is how much the loop is carrying. Because it came to you as a finished mix, it has its own low end and its own room in it, and both are now competing with things you added afterwards. Rolling off the very bottom of the sample and letting your own bass come through down there is usually the single biggest win in this kind of production. You barely hear the difference on the sample itself, and you get the bottom of the record back.

There is also a boxiness that builds whenever the horns come in, clearest around 1:14, somewhere in that lower-middle region where warmth turns into cardboard. A small, narrow cut there would open it out. The hiss I would leave alone, personally, it is part of the character, and chasing it tends to take the top off the horns with it.

02

DRUMS & LOW END

The drums have a nice loose feel and the upright bass is a lovely choice, but the two of them are chasing the same space down low. Because the bass is walking, the kick keeps winning and losing depending on which note is under it. The bar before the second verse, around 1:48, is where I noticed it most, the kick more or less vanishes for a couple of hits.

The usual approach, if you fancy it, is to let the kick own the very bottom and let the bass live just above it, taking a little weight out of the bass and putting a bit of its body back higher up so it still reads as big on small speakers. A very light duck on the bass under each kick is the other option, though on a track this organic I would keep that subtle, or skip it entirely if it starts to sound mechanical. The snare I would not touch, it sits beautifully.

03

THE VOCAL

This is the focus of the song, so it is worth the most attention. The capture is good, close and dry with no obvious room sound on it, and the delivery is relaxed enough that it does not want much processing to feel present. What it wants is evenness.

At the moment the compressor is doing quite a lot of work on the loud lines, and the quieter ones sound like they step back a little as a result. Something you could try: level the takes by hand first, line by line, so the vocal is already fairly even before anything is compressing it, and then let the compressor shape the tone rather than rescue the balance. Two gentle stages tend to sound more natural than one working hard, but that is preference as much as anything.

On tone, the low notes of the voice are a touch chesty against a bed that is already warm, and the consonants are a little soft, so the words work slightly harder than they need to. Easing off around the chest region and lifting the presence a shade would bring the storytelling forward without making it sound produced. Two plosives are worth a manual pass if you have the session open, at 0:41 and 2:07.

04

SPACE & DEPTH

You have a dry voice sitting on top of a sample that already contains a room, and the two rooms are not quite agreeing. I would not reach for a big reverb here, it would soften the words and this song cannot afford that. A short plate with the low end rolled off it, or a single slap delay tucked well under, is usually enough to put the voice in the same building as the beat. Worth trying both and keeping whichever one you stop noticing.

One quick check while you are in there: the loop is very wide, and when I collapsed the track to mono some of the hats and a bit of the horn detail thinned out. That usually means the two sides of the sample are working against each other slightly. Pulling the width in a touch, or keeping the bottom of it centred, makes it more dependable on a phone or a big system, and you lose nothing on headphones.

05

ARRANGEMENT &
DYNAMICS

Structurally this is sound. The loop is varied enough with the filter opening and closing that it never feels static, and the drop to just bass and voice at 2:34 is the best-judged moment in the track. The only thing to be aware of is that the jump coming out of it is quite a leap in level, and a mastering chain will flatten some of that. If you wanted to protect the drama, it is usually better to bring the loud side down than to push the quiet side up.

OFF THE BRIEF, BUT WORTH SAYING

You did not ask for arrangement notes, so take this as optional. The story comes through well, and the last verse is where it pays off, but the mix treats that verse exactly like the first two. Storytelling records usually earn something extra at the end, and it does not have to be new writing: the horns up a touch, the hats dropped out, or the vocal a shade drier and closer would all read as the camera moving in. A mix decision doing narrative work, rather than another overdub. Only if it appeals.

06

BEFORE IT COMES
TO MASTER

Roughly in the order I would tackle them, and the first two are the ones that would actually change how the record feels:

- 01 **Give the bottom end to one thing.** Roll the very low end off the sample and let the kick and bass share it between them.
- 02 **Even the vocal by hand, then compress.** Level the lines first so the compressor is shaping rather than rescuing.
- 03 **Take the cardboard out of the horns.** A small cut in that lower-middle region where the sample builds up.
- 04 **Have a listen in mono.** Narrow the loop until the hats and horns survive the collapse.
- 05 **Leave me some headroom.** No limiter on the stereo bus, peaks somewhere around -6 dBFS, 24 bit at whatever rate you worked at.

Take all of it with a pinch of salt where it is a creative call rather than a problem. This is a good record and it is closer than you think.

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