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A Musical Analysis of Selections From Contemporary Christian Music Contributing to an Original Composition

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A MUSICAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTIONS FROM CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MUSIC CONTRIBUTING TO AN ORIGINAL COMPOSITION

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Introduction

Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) has recently become a prominent part of our current music culture. According to *Time Entertainment* (Newcomb, 2012), it is a developing genre of music that has grown in popularity as seen by the Billboard charts. In 2011, the bands Casting Crowns and Red debuted in the number two spot on the Billboard 100, and in 2012, the David Crowder Band claimed the same spot (Newcomb, 2012). The growth in popularity of this genre may be attributed to a growth in listenership due to the large number of Christian labels now owned by "mainstream parents" (Newcomb, 2012, p. 2) who help Christian musicians to be heard in a wider market. CCM is a growing trend on the radio that combines lyrics based on the Christian faith with many popular styles of music to appeal to a broader audience.

As a listener of this growing genre, I became interested in studying the musical details within popular CCM songs, because those songs had an ability to reach and hold a wider musical audience. As a music major, I was accustomed to analyzing musical qualities in a given piece of music, but had never taken time to deeply analyze and appreciate popular music I enjoy. Therefore, the goal of this research was to combine my interests with my background in music to investigate the musical characteristics of songs found in CCM that contribute to their popularity.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis was to find musical trends that exist within popular Contemporary Christian Music, and to compose an original song reflecting those musical trends. After reviewing the literature on the subject of Contemporary Christian Music, it was clear that there has not been a lot of research done concerning the musical analysis of this style. Recently however, there have been two studies related to CCM or music analysis, including a dissertation that specifically studied the lyrical perspective of CCM, and an online musical analysis of

Billboard's top 100 (Vago, 2011; Carlton, 2012). This thesis served to combine the ideas of these two recent studies, with both a research and creative component.

Carlton (2012) did not focus research on one specific musical genre, but rather analyzed the top 100 songs from a variety of genres. This thesis focused on the musical qualities of one specific genre of music that had not yet been a focal point of academic study. Contemporary Christian Music, as seen in recent Billboard charts, is leaving a popular impression in the modern age of music, and "any force that has that kind of impact on society deserves study" (Vago, 2011, p. 35).

A benefit of conducting an analysis on music not widely studied is the result of information for future songwriters. The analysis of this thesis provides access to favored musical trends within CCM to help artists compose successful songs to which people will accept. Additionally, a result of this thesis is an original composition to add to the field of Contemporary Christian Music that reflects the current favored musical trends discovered in the analysis. Lastly, the research completed is a valuable stepping stone for further research with CCM or another popular musical genre.

Literature Review

The literature reviewed on the topic of CCM revealed a working definition of Contemporary Christian Music. Soloman (2002) stated that there is "no special Christian music vocabulary" (p. 2), so it would be more appropriate to label the genre as contemporary Christian lyrics, because the lyrics are what make the genre different. Dowley (2011) wrote a book on the history of Christian music that revealed much of the same definition, saying that CCM is usually called inspirational music and that it is a blend of secular style with Christian-based lyrics.

Contemporary Christian Music was further defined by Vago (2011) in a dissertation. The literature review suggested that the word *Christian* defines the difference of this genre, and that CCM is many styles of music with a unified, God-centered content. Christian content refers to lyrical inspirations from the Bible and is not attributed to specific denominations of Christianity. Wuthnow (2003) stated that Christian content in music can also be "a way of finding God's truth" (p. 156). Vago's (2011) findings also revealed that CCM is continuing to grow with no uniform or precise definition, besides the fact that it contains Christian content.

Many sources reinforced the value of researching Contemporary Christian Music. In the book *Open Up the Doors,* Evans (2006) wrote that analyzing Christian music goes beyond just describing the beat of a song. Soloman (2002) stated that CCM is a growing part of the modern music world, and studying it is a way to dig deeper in musical analysis beyond what the average person would realize. Contemporary Christian Music is worth studying not only because it is proving to be favored in the growing musical culture, but also because it is making music history. A recent article from *Time Entertaintment* (Newcomb, 2012) in September of 2012 stated that Christian artists are making history on Billboard, with Toby Mac and Lecrae, two popular Christian artists, claiming high spots in the national music rankings.

There are musical consistencies that exist within every genre of music, including CCM, that contribute to the popularity of a specific song. Popular music is defined by *Webster's New World Pocket Dictionary* (Goldman, 2000) as music that is "of, by, or for people generally" or "very well liked" (p. 250). It is current music that many people enjoy because of favorable musical qualities, which this analysis defines. Also, in the modern music culture, there seems to be a "quest for novelty and the desire for instant gratification" (Soloman, 2002). Something in

popular music instantly pulls listeners in and leaves them gratified. This is also true in the genre of Contemporary Christian Music.

Almost every piece of literature studied named musical criteria of "good" or popular music. Soloman (2012) wrote that "our western ears are accustomed to certain sounds…particular modes scales and rhythms are a part of our heritage" (p. 2). The author also listed flow, unity, and diversity as important qualities all good music should have. Bacchiocchi (2000) specifically focused on the characteristics of a good melody as originally mentioned by composer Aaron Copland, which include rise and fall, satisfying proportions, a climax and resolution, and an emotional response. Musical parameters such as melody, harmony, timbre, and text are most important to analyze, according to Evans (2006), while chord progressions, popular keys, and the form of a song are more important to the creators of Hooktheory, which is a company that helps people learn and teach music through online tools (Carlton, 2012). Baloche (2004) stated important tangible elements of a song include form or shape, lyrics, melody, harmony, and rhythm. Lastly, *Theory for Today's Musician* (Turek, 2007) explained in detail the tangible music theory behind any song and that there are many contributing musical factors that make up an accepted piece of music.

Various sources also gave examples of popular chord progressions to look for, and what chords in a scale tend to be used most often (Baloche, 2004; Carlton, 2012; Evans, 2006; Turek, 2007). A chord is a compilation of notes in a scale played simultaneously, and a chord progression is a series of chords that are in a specific order. A few general chord progressions, according to Evans (2006), include I and IV, I and V, or ii-V-I. Baloche (2004) and Carlton (2012) mentioned that a progression containing the chords I-V-vi-IV is extremely common in the modern pop genre. Baloche (2004) also listed I-vi-IV-V, I-V-ii-IV, and I-ii-IV-V as favored

progressions. These Roman numerals are a part of an analysis technique used by musicians to identify the chord progression in relation to the key of the song.

Research Questions

Several research questions will be addressed in this thesis study. The main research question to address is: What musical characteristics are incorporated into popular songs in the CCM genre? Other sub-questions include: What is musically different or similar within the top 10 songs of CCM from Eastern Iowa radio station Life 101.9 in October 2012? What musically causes the CCM sound to be popular or instantly gratifying? I addressed these questions in the analysis process and discovered many patterns within the music that caused the selected songs to be favored.

Methodology

The methodology of this thesis incorporated ideas and criteria from the literature review concerning the analysis and the approach to creating an original work. I analyzed ten popular songs from CCM in order to further study the musical attributes in this genre. Following the data analysis, I composed an original song for the creative component of this thesis that reflects the musical trends found. The creative process included determining the most common result from every category of analysis and applying each popular pattern to the new song. The ten songs analyzed were the most aired songs on Life 101.9, an Eastern Iowa Christian radio station, for the month of October 2012 (T. Calcara, personal communications, January 14, 2013). Accompanying the creative component is a list of the ten popular songs analyzed, which are considered the sources reviewed for this project.

1. Matt Redman, *10,000 Reasons*, 147 plays
2. Newsboys, *God's Not Dead (Like a Lion),* 147 plays

3. Tenth Avenue North, *Losing*, 144 plays

4. Rhett Walker Band, *When Mercy Found Me*, 140 plays

5. Building 429, *Where I Belong*, 132 plays

6. Jason Gray, *Good to Be Alive*, 91 plays

7. Brandon Heath, *Jesus In Disguise*, 89 plays

8. Newworldson, *Learning to Be the Light*, 87 plays

9. Sanctus Real, *Lead Me*, 84 plays

10. Matthew West, *Forgiveness*, 80 plays

These ten songs were analyzed using a specific analysis structure (Appendix A) gathered mainly from *Theory for Today's Musician* (Turek, 2007), with input from Baloche (2004), Bacchiocchi (2000), Evans (2006), and Carlton (2012). Each week, for five weeks, two songs were analyzed according to the structure of melody, text, chord progressions, rhythm and form. Many of the authors listed above emphasized the importance of melody and chord progressions in the structure of a popular song, therefore, a majority of time spent analyzing was focused on those two larger categories. All of the findings were organized into a chart to easily locate patterns throughout all ten songs. The patterns are further explained in each specific category of the analysis.

Turek (2006) wrote and compiled the book *Theory for Today's Musician* that was referenced thoroughly for definitions of musical terms and concepts throughout the analysis process. The list of musical criteria provided by this book was extensive and guided the detailed analysis. This reference is of great importance to this thesis because of the author's credibility in music theory. Ralph Turek is Professor Emeritus of Music at the University of Akron, and has an extensive background in music theory and composition (Turek, 2013). His textbooks on

music theory are widely used in many college music programs. Turek's detailed descriptions of musical criteria in a song helped define the analysis process of this thesis.

Definitions

Definitions of musical terms, concepts, and explanations of the categories of analysis are included in the detailed findings section of this thesis. However, there are a few abbreviations and definitions regarding the songs that will be useful to understand for this thesis.

An introduction, sometimes abbreviated as *intro* in the findings, refers to the beginning of a song that is usually without singing. *Instrumental* or *instr* refers to a section of music with just instruments and no singing in the song. A verse of a song is represented as V, pre-chorus as PC, chorus as C, and bridge as B. Pre-chorus and bridge are commonly known terms, but are used widely in this study. A pre-chorus is a smaller section of music with set lyrics and melody that occurs right before the chorus as a transition from verse to chorus. It is almost always sung between the verse and chorus of a song, although not every song uses a pre-chorus. A bridge is usually placed in the latter half of a song, and it is a completely new musical section that has new musical attributes which have not already been introduced in a particular song. It is also accompanied with new lyrics and is often a climax point of a song that leads back to something familiar, such as a chorus.

Lastly, a lead sheet and a chord chart are included in the appendices to show the production of the original composition. These two methods of notation are common throughout the CCM genre; eight of the ten analyzed songs had lead sheets and chord charts available online for anyone to access. A lead sheet has a single staff that shows the melody notes and words and provides chord symbols above the staff (Turek, 2007). (See Appendix B for the example). A

chord chart is more of a diagram displaying the melody lyrics in the separate sections of a song, and including the chord symbols above the words. (See Appendix C for the example).

Findings

Melody

The first category of musical analysis is melody, which consists of a variety of subcategories, including range, interval structure, key, dynamics, and number of measures in a phrase of the melody. The existence of melody in a song is described by Turek (2007); "It might not be the egg in every musical omelet, but in most, it's the ingredient that we notice first and savor longest" (p. 113). This statement reveals the importance of good melody structure.

Range.

Range is defined by Turek (2007) as the distance between the lowest pitch to the highest pitch in a song (p. 117). All of the analyzed songs were sung by male lead singers, thus I recorded results in terms of the male voice range on a keyboard, and also included the range for a female voice in Table 1. The female voice range is listed before the backslash and the male voice range is listed after the backslash. Turek (2007) stated "many folk, popular, and traditional songs span less than an octave" (p. 117). During the analysis, I found that all of the melody ranges were actually more than an octave. An octave refers to the span of eight notes between two pitches of the same letter name, such as C3 to C4. The letter refers to the note name (C) and the number following refers to where that note falls on the piano. For example, the commonly used phrase for middle C is C4, because it is the fourth C on the piano, from left to right. The biggest range was in the song *Lead Me*, with 17 notes in between. This means that this particular song ranged over two octaves.

Table 1

Range of the Melody

SONGS	MELODY RANGE
1. 10,000 Reasons (Matt Redman)	D4/D3 - F5/F4
2. God's Not Dead (Newsboys)	D4/D3 - F#5/F#4
3. Losing (Tenth Avenue North)	C#4/C#3 - G#5/G#4
4. When Mercy Found Me (Rhett Walker Band)	Bb3/Bb2 - G5/G4
5. Where I Belong (Building 429)	F#4/F#3 - F#5/F#4
6. Good to be Alive (Jason Gray)	B3/B2 - G5/G4
7. Jesus in Disguise (Brandon Heath)	B3/B2 - G#5/G#4
8. Learning to be the Light (Newworldson)	D4/D3 - G5/G4
9. Lead Me (Sanctus Real)	Ab3/Ab2 - Bb5/Bb4
10. Forgiveness (Matthew West)	C4/C3 - G5/G4

Ranges for the other songs are listed in Table 1. The *b* after a note name symbolizes *flat*, while # after a note name symbolizes *sharp*, such as Bb or C#. Based on the findings for the category of range in a melody, I determined that my composition would need to have a melody that is at least an octave or higher.

Interval structure.

Interval structure is a subcategory of melody because it defines the melody of a song as conjunct or disjunct, and it is important in determining the "singability" (Turek, 2007, p. 118) of a melody. Conjunct refers to a melody that has step-wise motion; essentially, going up or down one note in the scale. An example of this would be from the notes C to D. Disjunct is anything that is not conjunct, or when a melody line skips or jumps in intervals, as noted in *Theory for Today's Musician* (Turek, 2007). An example of this is a jump from the notes C to E; this

interval skips a note (D). Examples of intervals that would be disjunct motion would include 3rds (C to E), 4ths (C to F), 5ths (C to G), 6ths (C to A), or 7ths (C to B).

Turek (2007) wrote that "more conjunct [motions] are generally less challenging to the singer" (p. 118). For this category, I analyzed how the melody flowed and determined if a song had a majority of conjunct lines or disjunct lines. In some songs, such as numbers 1, 5, 6, and 7, the interval structure changed between conjunct and disjunct. For example, in the song *Where I Belong*, the verses were mostly conjunct in the melody, while the chorus and bridge switched to mostly disjunct motion. Overall, 8 out of 10 songs proved to be mostly conjunct in their melody motions, while the other two had an even mix of both with a bit more disjunct.

Table 2

Interval Structure of the Melody

SONGS	MELODY
	INTERVAL STRUCTURE
1. 10,000 Reasons (Matt Redman)	Mostly conjunct in verses, equal conjunct and disjunct in chorus
2. God's Not Dead (Newsboys)	mostly conjunct, rarely disjunct
3. Losing (Tenth Avenue North)	almost entirely conjunct
4. When Mercy Found Me (Rhett Walker Band)	mostly conjunct except Bridge
5. Where I Belong (Building 429)	conjunct in verses, disjunct in chorus and bridge
6. Good to be Alive (Jason Gray)	even mix of both (disjunct in verses, conjunct in chorus)
7. Jesus in Disguise (Brandon Heath)	conjunct in verses, some disjunct in chorus
8. Learning to be the Light (Newworldson)	even mix of both, a bit more disjunct
9. Lead Me (Sanctus Real)	mostly conjunct
10. Forgiveness (Matthew West)	mostly conjunct, subtle disjunct

The process to determine the interval structure of the melody included extensive listening and examining of the musical notation of the melody. This category was not looking at exact structure by recording each note and its interval, but rather, the analysis was focused on general

concepts to easily replicate in the original composition of this thesis. Table 2 shows the general interval structure of each song, using the terms conjunct and disjunct to describe the melody. From the results, the original composition incorporated mostly conjunct motions in the verses and disjunct motions in the chorus and bridge.

Key.

The key of a song is "the scale that predominates in a musical work" (Turek, 2007, p. 784). There are many possible keys and scales that could be used. A scale of a song is defined by Turek (2007) as "an inventory of the pitches that form the basis of a musical composition" (p. 787). The types of scales heard most often in music of this generation are either major or minor. Major scales were heard more in my analysis of the top CCM songs, which suggests that major scales are preferred in the ear of the listener. Only one song was presented in a minor key at the beginning, then switched to the relative major of that key for the bridge of the song, then returned back to the minor key to finish. This song is called *Jesus in Disguise* by Brandon Heath. The determining factor to find the key and scale for this song was the opening chord and the ending chord of the song, which were both G# minor chords. I concluded that this was most likely the key of G# minor, with a switch to B major in the bridge only. The other songs were not as difficult to determine a key and scale. Not every song was in the same key, but some did have repeating keys, such as B major in songs 2, 5, and 7, or G major in songs 1 and 8, or E major in songs 3 and 6. It is clear there was not a lot of variety in keys between songs.

For the composition, I settled with B major, because 3 out of the 10 songs (the majority) were written in the key of B major. There was no other key that was displayed more than twice. Table 3 lists the keys of each song and their scale, whether major or minor.

Table 3

Key and Scale of the Melody

SONGS	MELODY
	KEY AND SCALE
1. 10,000 Reasons (Matt Redman)	G Major
2. God's Not Dead (Newsboys)	B Major
3. Losing (Tenth Avenue North)	E Major
4. When Mercy Found Me (Rhett Walker Band)	Eb Major
5. Where I Belong (Building 429)	B Major
6. Good to be Alive (Jason Gray)	E Major
7. Jesus in Disguise (Brandon Heath)	G# minor/B Major
8. Learning to be the Light (Newworldson)	G Major
9. Lead Me (Sanctus Real)	Db Major
10. Forgiveness (Matthew West)	C Major

Dynamics.

The next subcategory of melody in this analysis is dynamics, which refers to the changes in volume in a piece of music (loud or soft). I used the dynamic markings of piano to fortissimo. Piano, or soft, is notated as *p* in a piece of music. Mezzo-piano, or *mp*, is slightly louder than piano, but still on the softer side. Mezzo-forte, or *mf*, is a medium-loud sound, while forte, *f*, is loud. Fortissimo, *ff*, is used to describe a sound that is even louder than forte. In this analysis, only these specific dynamics needed to be defined. Dynamics depend on the human ear to determine these specific volume levels, so they are somewhat relative. Because of this, I used my own ear to determine these dynamic markings.

Listed in Table 4 are the dynamics for each song. Beside the specific dynamic markings I listed each section of a particular song that was at that dynamic level, according to my judgment after listening to each song multiple times.

Table 4

Dynamics of the Melody

SONGS	MELODY
	DYNAMICS
1. 10,000 Reasons (Matt Redman)	mp/mf - intro, verse 1, verse 2, end of verse 3, ending f - chorus 1, chorus 2, chorus 3 p - start of verse 3 ff - chorus 4
2. God's Not Dead (Newsboys)	f - intro, C1, C2, C3, C4, Ending mf - V1, V2, PC1, V3, PC2, B3 mp - B1, B2, ending p - beginning of C3
3. Losing (Tenth Avenue North)	mp - Intro, V1, V2, PC, 1/2 C4 mf - C1, V3, V4, PC2, B, C2 f - C3, 1/5 C4
4. When Mercy Found Me (Rhett Walker Band)	mp - V1, PC, V2 mf - Intro, C1 f - C2, B, Instrumental, C3, ending
5. Where I Belong (Building 429)	mp - Intro, V1, C3 f - C1, C2, B, C4, ending mf - v2
6. Good to be Alive (Jason Gray)	mf - intro, V1, PC1, instrumental, V2, PC2, B1, B2 f - C1, C2, C3, C5 mp - C4
7. Jesus in Disguise (Brandon Heath)	mf - intro, V2 mp - V1, B1, ending f - C1, C2, C3 with B2
8. Learning to be the Light (Newworldson)	mp - intro, V1, PC1, B mf - C1, V2, PC2, C2, C3
9. Lead Me (Sanctus Real)	mp - intro, instrumental, C3 mf - V1, C1 f - V2, C2, B, C3.5, ending
10. Forgiveness (Matthew West)	mf - intro, instrumental1, V2, instr2, end mp - V1, V3, ending f - C1, C2

The dynamics of the final composition were determined by comparing the dynamics of every section of each song. I noticed a majority of introductions, first verses, and first pre-choruses were listed at an *mp* dynamic marking. Because of this, the dynamic marking for introduction, first verse, and first pre-chorus in the composition was marked at as *mp*. As the

songs progressed, they increased in volume; the majority of the instrumental passages, the second verses, and the second pre-choruses were at the dynamic of *mf*, which is slightly louder than *mp*. As a result, the dynamic marking for those sections of the composition was *mf*. The choruses in most songs were under the dynamic marking of *f*, which was usually the loudest point in the song. For the composition, I determined that each time of repeating the chorus would be *f*, along with the bridge and the ending. Only one song, *10,000 Reasons*, reached a level higher than the average *f* (*ff*) which was not enough to incorporate *ff* as a dynamic marking in the final composition.

Number of measures in a phrase.

The number of measures in a phrase refers to where the melody line naturally ends, or where a singer has to breathe for the next phrase. The definition of a phrase is a bit subjective, but Turek (2007) quoted a separate resource as a potential definition; a phrase "is the portion of music that must be performed…without letting go or, figuratively, in a single breath" (p. 168). I used this technique to determine the phrase length for each song. I repeatedly listened to the songs to decipher the artists' intent for the number of measures in a phrase.

Table 5 illustrates that the majority of the songs had four measure phrases. One song presented an eight-measure phrase, and this could be correlated to the tempo of the song being much faster than any other song analyzed. Faster tempos allow for more measures to be sung in one breath. A few other songs had only two measure phrases; this could be for a variety of reasons determined by an artist, but the conclusion from this section is that a four-measure phrase is most widely accepted in this genre. Therefore, it was easy to decide that the composition was going to contain four-measure phrases.

Table 5

Number of Measures in a Phrase of the Melody

SONGS	MELODY
	# OF MEASURES IN PHRASE
1. 10,000 Reasons (Matt Redman)	2 (added 2/4 measure in verses)
2. God's Not Dead (Newsboys)	4
3. Losing (Tenth Avenue North)	8
4. When Mercy Found Me (Rhett Walker Band)	4
5. Where I Belong (Building 429)	2
6. Good to be Alive (Jason Gray)	3 (or 2 with pick-ups)
7. Jesus in Disguise (Brandon Heath)	4
8. Learning to be the Light (Newworldson)	4
9. Lead Me (Sanctus Real)	4
10. Forgiveness (Matthew West)	4

Text or Lyrics

The next major category in the analysis process was text or lyrics. This covered only two subcategories about the text of a song. The subcategories were text painting and origin of the text.

Text painting.

Theory for Today's Musician defined this concept as "a composer's attempt to depict the meaning or emotional pitch of the words through music" (Turek, 2007, p.650). In other words, the text of a song directly relates to the melody in a way that would express the word on the page in a musical form. One example of this, which occurred in the song *10,000 Reasons*, was with the word *Lord*. This word appeared in the chorus of this particular song, and each time it was sung, it was higher than the previous note and one of the highest notes in the chorus. A reason it could be higher would be because *Lord* is often viewed as higher, or above. A better example of text painting was shown in the song by the Newsboys. *Explode* and *arise* were two words in

their verse lyrics that were significantly different because of their large interval. Each word jumped up a perfect 5th in the melody line, most likely to give the listener a musical example of *exploding and arising, because both of these words create the image of going up.*

Only two other CCM songs had any hint of this concept. These were *When Mercy Found Me* and *Learning to Be the Light*. These songs included text painting by showing the meaning of the words *broken*, *hopeless*, and *crashing down* as the melody went down the scale, which is an example of how text painting can be used going the opposite direction. The remaining songs displayed no text painting in their lyrics. Turek (2007) made a statement about text painting: "today's popular songs…make less use of such subtleties" (p. 650). This statement proved true with the majority out of the ten songs having no text painting, and therefore there is no inclusion of text painting in the final product of the composition. Table 6 shown includes the results from each song in the category of text painting.

Table 6

Text Painting in the Lyrics

SONGS	TEXT OR LYRICS
	TEXT PAINTING
1. 10,000 Reasons (Matt Redman)	Chorus = "Lord", "Your", "His" is a higher note
2. God's Not Dead (Newsboys)	Verses = "explode", "arise" jump up a perfect 5th; Pre-Chorus = "overcome" is step-wise up
3. Losing (Tenth Avenue North)	None
4. When Mercy Found Me (Rhett Walker Band)	Verse 1 = "broken", "hopeless" go down Verse 2 - "free" goes up, then up the octave
5. Where I Belong (Building 429)	None
6. Good to be Alive (Jason Gray)	None
7. Jesus in Disguise (Brandon Heath)	None
8. Learning to be the Light (Newworldson)	Verse 1 and Bridge = "crashing down" goes down
9. Lead Me (Sanctus Real)	None
10. Forgiveness (Matthew West)	None

Origin.

The second subcategory in the *Text or Lyrics* section was the origin of the lyrics. For the context of the CCM genre, I was anticipating finding a mixture of original lyrics, Biblical lyrics, or poetic lyrics for this analysis. Original lyrics are lyrics written specifically for the song, Biblical lyrics are words taken directly from verses in Scripture, and poetic lyrics are setting a poem to music. After the analysis, I discovered that only one song, *10,000 Reasons*, included lyrics that were directly inspired by a verse from the Bible. It also incorporated original lyrics to support the verse. Every other song provided original lyrics, which were most often written by the artist themselves. Because of this, the choice for this category was easy; I needed to write my own lyrics for the new composition. It seems originality is in popular demand in the CCM genre. Table 7 shows the results and reveals the songwriters for each song.

Table 7

Origin of Lyrics

ONGS	TEXT OR LYRICS
	ORIGIN
10,000 Reasons (Matt Redman)	Original - Matt Redman and Jonas Myrin (Inspiration from Psalm 103:1)
God's Not Dead (Newsboys)	Original - Daniel Bashta
Losing (Tenth Avenue North)	Original - Jeff Owen, Mike Donehey, Ruben Juarez
When Mercy Found Me (Rhett Walker Band)	Original - Jeff Pardo and Rhett Walker
Where I Belong (Building 429)	Original - Jason Ingram and Jason Roy
Good to be Alive (Jason Gray)	Original - Brandon Heath, Jason Gray, Jason Ingram
Jesus in Disguise (Brandon Heath)	Original - Brandon Heath, Lee Miller, Ross Copperman
Learning to be the Light (Newworldson)	Original - Joel Parisien and Thomas Salter
Lead Me (Sanctus Real)	Original - Chris Rohman, Jason Ingram, Matt Hammitt
. Forgiveness (Matthew West)	Original - Matthew West; based on a true story

Chord Progressions

The third category of analysis was chord progressions. Like text and lyrics, this category only contained two subcategories: Roman numeral analysis and cadences. This category was one of the main focuses; the information gathered here was critical in determining what a listener liked to hear in a song and how that is shown through the musical skeleton. A chord progression is defined as a succession of chords, because "any two chords that move toward the tonic…are said to 'progress'" (Turek, 2007, p. 76), or move forward in a series of chords within a key. Carlton's (2012) experiment analyzing popular songs for their chord structure revealed the chords that were most frequently used and in what order they were used to create a successful progression. One example found was the common progression of I-IV-V-I. This is the same concept I applied to my analysis, first by analyzing the chords then noticing the order in which they were played. The technique used to accomplish this is explained in the next section.

Roman numeral analysis.

This is a method of analyzing the chord structure in a piece of music using Roman numerals. To describe how this process works, I will take the key of C as an example to demonstrate the relationship between the numerals and the chords they represent. Firstly, the C chord in the key of C consists of a triad of notes named C, E, and G. This is a major chord, and in this particular key, it is a reference point for every other chord in the key. The C chord in the key of C is called the *tonic* chord because it is the most stable chord of the key and "the end point of most compositions have that scale [tonic] as their basis" (Turek, 2007, p. 748).

In a major scale such as C, three triads are major and labeled as upper-case Roman numerals (I, IV, V), three are minor and labeled as lower-case Roman numerals (ii, iii, vi), and the last one is diminished, (a chord with two minor third intervals that sounds unsettling), and it

is also labeled with a lower-case Roman numeral followed by a diminished symbol (vii°). A diminished chord was never seen in this analysis. The tonic chord or C chord is labeled as Roman numeral I. Roman numeral ii would begin with the next note in the C Major scale, D. The pattern would progress in the same way until the next C, which again is the I. There are seven chords in a major or minor key, and the example in C Major is spelled out below.

C D E F G A B C

I ii iii IV V vi vii° I

In this C major scale example, the I chord, the IV chord, and the V chord are all major chords and are used most often. This was true of the most played songs in October 2012 from Life 101.9. A common chord progression moves from I to IV to V to I, sometimes with other chords in between, or sometimes with other chords as substitutions (Baloche, 2004). This is the set standard in music progressions, but this is by no means the only way to create a song. Besides those main chords, the vi chord and the ii chord were often placed in between the major chords, or they replaced one of them to create a different sound. There are many examples of this throughout each song, but a significant one is when the vi chord is used in the chorus of *Good to Be Alive*. As seen in Table 8, the chorus of this particular song contained a I chord, followed by a V chord, then followed by a vi chord. The natural progression after a V is to return to the I, or the tonic, because chords naturally progress to the most stable chord of a key. This time, the vi chord replaced the I chord to create a deceptive cadence (explained in further detail in the next section). The vi chord is the second most stable chord in a scale, according to Turek (2007), but this progression still created a sound of deception for the ear, because the listener was anticipating a move back to the tonic. This progression was used often throughout these ten songs as a way to make the chord structure more interesting.

Table 8

Roman Numeral Analysis of the Chord Progressions

SONGS	CHORD PROGRESSIONS
	ROMAN NUMERAL ANALYSIS
1. 10,000 Reasons (Matt Redman)	C = IV I V vi IV I V7 IV vi IV V vi IV V IV I (IV I) V = IV I V vi IV I V vi IV I V vi IV I V7 I (IV I) B = same as chorus Coda/Ending = IV V vi IV V IV I (extended chorus)
2. God's Not Dead (Newsboys)	V = vi7 Vsus I ii7 I IV PC = V(add 4) vi7 V(add 4) IV C = V vi7 V(add 4) vi7 Intro/Instrumental = vi7 V I vi7 V I ending = vi7 V I
3. Losing (Tenth Avenue North)	V = I IVsus2 PC = V IV I C = V I IV6 I B = I9
4. When Mercy Found Me (Rhett Walker Band)	Intro = I IV I V IV I V V = vi7 IV I V iii7 vi7 IV I V PC = IV ii7 C - IV I V ii7 IV I V vi7 (or just V) B - IV vi7 ii7 V Instrumental - IV I V vi7 IV I V Ending - same as chorus, ends on V
5. Where I Belong (Building 429)	Intro = vi2 IV7 V = vi2 IV7 Vsus C = I V vi IV B = IV/IV IV I V Ending - same as chorus, ends on I
6. Good to be Alive (Jason Gray)	Intro = I V vi IV I V = same as Intro PC = V vi IV V C = IV I V vi Instrumental = same as intro B = I V6 vi IV (same as intro)
7. Jesus in Disguise (Brandon Heath)	G# minor Intro and verse = iv7 VI i7 VII (or V/III) C = VI iv I VII (or V/III) VI vi III VII (or V/III) iv VI I B = III iv i VII (or V/III) ending = i B Major for C and B? C = IV ii vi V IV ii I V B = I ii vi V
8. Learning to be the Light (Newworldson)	Intro = I V = I V vii/vi7 vi7 I IV I

	PC = ii V ii vi7 V C = IV I vi7 V IV I Vsus V IV I III7 (or V7/vi7) vi7 I IV Vsus V I vi7 IV B = V vi7 IV V7/V V I V vi7 ii7 V I
9. Lead Me (Sanctus Real)	Intro/Instrumental = I V = I vi7 I vi7 V C = I Vsus V IV vi7 V I B = ii7 IV I V ii7 IV I V
10. Forgiveness (Matthew West)	Intro = I IV I IV V1 and 2 = I IV I IV I IV Instrumental/Transition = I IV vi V C1 = I IV ii I IV I V3 = I IV vi IV C2 = I IV ii IV I I IV I IV (ending) I

The complicated nature of this category related to the complicated process of analysis. This section of the analysis took the longest to complete because of the amount of listening required and the amount of variance between artists. There were no two songs exactly alike, but almost all of them followed the typical chord progression mentioned earlier, starting with the tonic or I chord, moving to a IV or V, then moving back to the tonic. The progressions for each song also included many variants in between the major chords to make their song unique.

Other symbols seen in Table 8 represent details related to chord structure. When the number 7 is listed after a Roman numeral, it is a 7^{th} chord and consists of four notes instead of three. The 7^{th} note adds another dimension to the sound. The 7^{th} note in a C-E-G chord would be B because it is 7 notes up from C in the C major scale, and from C to B is an interval of a 7^{th}.

When the abbreviation *sus* is seen in Table 8, it represents a suspension in the chord. The textbook definition of a suspension is "when a pitch is…sustained prior to its stepwise resolution to a more stable tone" (Turek, 2007, p. 148). It is a note that is carried over, usually to help in transitions between chords and also for a desired sound of conflict and resolution. The suspended note creates conflict in the chord while also providing a preview for the chord to come, and the following chord resolves the suspension.

Lastly, there are a few backslashes included in Table 8 to represent chords that have secondary dominance. A dominant chord is another name for the V chord in a key, such as the G chord in C Major. A secondary dominant chord is a chord that is dominant in a different key, or a "chord that momentarily serves as a dominant" (Turek, 2007, p. 787). This means that in the key of C, V/iii represents the V chord in the key of the iii (E), which is a B Major chord. Basically, the backslash represents a chord that doesn't normally belong in the key of the song.

This category was challenging to apply to the composition because of all the possible combinations of chord progressions revealed in each song. Using Table 8, I went through each section of a song to see what was most commonly used. For example, the I chord, or tonic chord, was used often in introductions; therefore, I wanted to apply a tonic chord in the composition's introduction as well. From there, I used my creative judgment to find the chord progressions I liked, while also staying fairly consistent with the patterns already established in the ten analyzed songs. Below is a list of the chord progressions used in the composition.

Introduction = I-IV-V-I

Verses = I-IV-V I-IV-Vsus I-IV-ii (add 4) vi-V-I-ii-V

Pre-Chorus = ii-vi vi-V-I-V

Chorus = IV-I-V IV-I-I-vi-V IV-I-V-vi IV-V-(I)

Instrumental/Ending = same as Introduction

Bridge = V-V-I V-I-V V-vi-V7

The *add 4* listed after the ii chord in the verses means that the fourth note of the C# scale (which is the ii in B major) is F# and should be added to the chord. A few songs applied this in their progressions and I enjoyed the sound.

Cadences.

With the help of Roman numeral analysis, I determined where specific cadences fell in each song. According to *Theory for Today's Musician,* a cadence is "a point of melodic and/or harmonic repose, often created through a slowing or a pause in motion and serving as punctuation between phrases" (Turek, 2007, p. 780). There are four main types of cadences that I examined in each song, although some songs did not display cadences of each type. The four cadences were plagal, authentic, half, and deceptive.

A plagal cadence is a "conclusive cadence" (Turek, 2007, p. 786) using the chords IV-I. This is also known as the "Amen" (Turek, 2007, p. 97) cadence because it was used most often at the end of hymns to sing *Amen* at the conclusion of a song. There were many plagal cadences throughout the ten songs analyzed, and only two songs lacked plagal candences. After comparing all of the plagal cadences found, I noticed that many occurred at the end of a verse, in the middle of a chorus, or in the middle of a bridge. Table 8 can be examined to see where a IV-I is listed in those specific spots. The composition incorporated the plagal cadence in the chorus.

An authentic cadence uses V-I as a conclusive repose to a musical thought (Turek, 2007). It is authentic because it ends on the tonic chord, the most stable chord of a song. In the analysis, authentic cadences were similar to plagal cadences in the sense that only two songs did not incorporate them. Reasons for this were not explored in this thesis, but it was unusual to not have at least one authentic cadence displayed in a song, because they are "the most common and conclusive" (Turek, 2007, p. 96) of the cadences. Most authentic cadences were incorporated into the introduction, the middle of verses, instrumental sections, ends of choruses, and endings. See Table 9 for the complete list of cadences.

Table 9

Cadences of the Chord Progressions

SONGS	CHORD PROGRESSIONS
	CADENCES
1. 10,000 Reasons (Matt Redman)	Plagal - after each verse and chorus (C-G) Authentic - after each phrase in verses Half – none Deceptive - in verse, end of 1st phrase
2. God's Not Dead (Newsboys)	Plagal - None Authentic - First half of verses, Instr./Intro, ending Half - from V to PC, from PC to C Deceptive - First half of PC, C
3. Losing (Tenth Avenue North)	Plagal - mid-verses, mid-PC, end of C Authentic - mid-C Half - None Deceptive – None
4. When Mercy Found Me (Rhett Walker Band)	Plagal - None Authentic - None Half - intro, V (mid and end), B, instrumental Deceptive - into V, mid-V, C, mid-instrumental
5. Where I Belong (Building 429)	Plagal - in mid-B Authentic - V to C, mid-C, B to C Half - none Deceptive - mid-chorus
6. Good to be Alive (Jason Gray)	Plagal - mid-C, intro/instr to V Authentic - None Half - None Deceptive - mid-C, mid-B
7. Jesus in Disguise (Brandon Heath)	Plagal - (mid-C and mid-B) Authentic - end of C, ending Half - None Deceptive - feels deceptive in V and mid-C to C (V/III or VII to VI)
8. Learning to be the Light (Newworldson)	Plagal - mid-V Authentic - end of C and B Half - end of PC, mid-C, mid-B Deceptive - mid-V
9. Lead Me (Sanctus Real)	Plagal - mid-B Authentic - V to C, mid-C, B to C Half - none Deceptive - none
10. Forgiveness (Matthew West)	Plagal - intro, V1 and 2, end of C, V3 to C2, ending Authentic - Instrumental to V2 and C Half - None Deceptive - in transition, V3

I attempted to incorporate these common placements of authentic cadence into the composition; the only one that is not a strong authentic cadence occurs in the middle of the verses. Otherwise, every other common placement for the authentic cadence was successfully written into the composition.

Half cadences are different than the previous two because they end on anything but a I chord; usually it ends on the V chord of a key. Turek (2007) said "it implies continuation rather than finality" (p. 98). The half cadence describes the nature of ending on a chord that is not resolved; it feels half finished. For this analysis, I found only three artists used half cadences in their songs. Half cadences were not a popular cadence to incorporate in these ten songs, but when they appeared, they were used in transitional settings, such as verse to pre-chorus, and in the middle of a bridge. Both of these common placements for half cadences were used in the composition. I also used the half cadence in the middle of the verses, and once at the end of the chorus to add personal creativity to the composition.

Lastly, there is deceptive cadence. Deceptive cadence also has a title that hints at its purpose: deception. Turek (2007) explained that "a deceptive cadence is one in which V moves (deceptively) elsewhere than the anticipated I" (p. 99). Usually, this is demonstrated with a V-vi progression. The V chord, as mentioned earlier, begs to be followed by a I or tonic chord, but when it is followed by a vi chord, it surprises the listener by deceiving their ear. It creates a unique sound that many artists used. In fact, only two songs did not have any deceptive cadences. When such cadences did appear, they were mostly in the middle of sections, such as the middle of a chorus, pre-chorus, verse, or bridge of a song. It was challenging to incorporate all of these instances into the composition, but I successfully included deceptive cadences in the middle of the chorus and the middle of the bridge.

Rhythm

Rhythm is a large, fundamental category in musical analysis that concerns the duration of musical sound. The subcategories for rhythm were time signature, tempo and melody.

Time signature.

This subcategory has a few different names, such as time signature or meter, but is defined as "the grouping of a steady succession of pulses into patterns of accented and unaccented beats" (Turek, 2007, p. 8). There are a few different types of meter, but there was no need to analyze past simple meter during this process because the result was unanimous. Each of the ten songs analyzed contained 4/4 meter, which is translated as four, quarter-note beats in each measure of music. Nine of ten songs used 4/4 as their only meter, while *10,000 Reasons* included three measures of 2/4, along with the majority of 4/4 in the song. The tempo 2/4 is translated as two, quarter-note beats for every one measure. Because of these results, it is reasonable to conclude that 4/4 is a common time signature in CCM, and therefore, it is necessary to include 4/4 as the time signature of the composition.

Tempo.

Tempo is the second subcategory of rhythm that was examined for this analysis. Tempo is simply "the speed of the beat" (Turek, 2007, p. 761). Tempo is recorded in beats per minute (bpm). The tempos for each of the ten songs are shown in Table 10. No song repeated an exact tempo of another, but there were some similar speeds between songs. For example, songs 5, 9, and 10 all have tempos in the area of 90-96 bpm. For this analysis, since each song was written in 4/4 time, the bpm always represents the speed of the quarter note.

Table 10

Tempo

SONGS	RHYTHM
	TEMPO
1. 10,000 Reasons (Matt Redman)	Quarter note = 73
2. God's Not Dead (Newsboys)	Quarter note = 128
3. Losing (Tenth Avenue North)	Quarter note = 153
4. When Mercy Found Me (Rhett Walker Band)	Quarter note = 88 (country rock)
5. Where I Belong (Building 429)	Quarter note = 91
6. Good to be Alive (Jason Gray)	Quarter note = 110
7. Jesus in Disguise (Brandon Heath)	Quarter note = 84
8. Learning to be the Light (Newworldson)	Quarter note = 78
9. Lead Me (Sanctus Real)	Quarter note = 96
10. Forgiveness (Matthew West)	Quarter note = 90

To determine the tempo of the composition, I took the average of all the tempos, which equaled 99bpm. As the composition process began, this tempo was the goal. Once the melody was set in place, the tempo originally set at 99bpm felt too slow to be engaging for a listener. Therefore, the tempo was set to 116bpm, which was still between the slowest and fastest tempos gathered from this analysis.

Melody.

The rhythm of the melody line was evaluated by identifying specific rhythms used in a song. Baloche (2004) simply defined rhythm as beat, while Turek (2007) stated that "rhythm constitutes the durational aspects of music's sounds and silences, along with their accentual patterns" (p. 760). Rhythms in these songs consisted of eighth notes, quarter notes, half notes, whole notes and/or syncopation. Quarter notes are notes that get the beat in a 4/4 song, eighth notes are divided into two notes for every 1 quarter note (1 eighth note equals ½ beat), half notes are held out for the duration of two quarter notes together (2 beats), and whole notes are the

length of four quarter notes lasting one whole measure. Syncopation is a concept that combines a variety of notes to create an off-beat feel. The notes previously described can be played or sung on the beat (4 beats in a measure), or on the *ands* of a beat (the space in between the beats in a measure). For example, a measure of 4/4 meter is divided into four quarter-note beats; 1, 2, 3, 4. Syncopation emphasizes the spaces in between the beats, or off-beats, such as 1+2+3+4+. If there were only notes written on the *ands* of a beat, it would create a syncopated rhythm, or off-beat sound.

In terms of this analysis, each song incorporated eighth notes as the primary rhythm in the melody line. Eight out of ten songs also used syncopation as a main rhythm, usually while incorporating eighth notes. The use of quarter notes was the next rhythm displayed most with three of ten songs. Only one song, *Learning to Be the Light*, used a note of a smaller duration: the sixteenth note. Because no other song included sixteenths, it was not significant to incorporate into the original composition. However, the composition does include a majority of eighth notes, quarter notes, and syncopation, which reflects the patterns of the songs analyzed.

Table 11 lists all the rhythms found in a particular song. The bolded rhythms illustrate which rhythms were used most often. *See paper* was written on the chart as a reminder to refer to the rhythms drawn out on the separate analysis papers. As part of the analysis, I wrote the rhythms by hand if there were combinations, and every song included combinations of the different rhythms discussed.

Table 11

Rhythms Used in the Melody Line

SONGS	RHYTHM
	MELODY
1. 10,000 Reasons (Matt Redman)	**eighth notes, quarter notes**, half notes, and syncopation (see paper)
2. God's Not Dead (Newsboys)	**eighth notes**, quarter notes, half notes, and **syncopation** (see paper)
3. Losing (Tenth Avenue North)	**eighth notes, quarter notes**, half notes, and syncopation (see paper)
4. When Mercy Found Me (Rhett Walker Band)	**eighth notes**, quarter notes, half notes, whole notes and **syncopation** (see paper)
5. Where I Belong (Building 429)	**eighth notes**, quarter notes, half notes and **syncopation** (see paper)
6. Good to be Alive (Jason Gray)	**eighth notes**, quarter notes, half notes, **syncopation** (see paper)
7. Jesus in Disguise (Brandon Heath)	**eighth notes**, quarter notes, **syncopation** (see paper)
8. Learning to be the Light (Newworldson)	**sixteenth notes, eighth notes, syncopation** (see paper)
9. Lead Me (Sanctus Real)	**eighth notes, quarter notes,** half notes, **syncopation** (see paper)
10. Forgiveness (Matthew West)	**eighth notes, syncopation** (See paper)

Form

Order.

The last major category of the analysis process was form. The form of a song is the order of separate sections in a song. Simply put, the form is "the shape of the song" (Baloche, 2004, p. 47). The only subcategory for form was order, specifically referring to the order within a song, such as where the chorus is placed in the overall order of events. Just as with chord progressions, none of the orders were the same between the songs. Most of them included similar structures, but there are no two exactly alike, as seen in Table 11.

Table 11

Order Within a Song

SONGS	FORM
	ORDER
1. 10,000 Reasons (Matt Redman)	Intro, C, V1, C, V2, C, Instrumental, B, V3, Cx2, ending
2. God's Not Dead (Newsboys)	Intro, V1, Instrumental (4 measures), V2, PC, C, V3, PC, C, Bx3, Cx2, ending
3. Losing (Tenth Avenue North)	Intro (2 measures), V1, V2, PC1, C, V3, V3, PC2, C, B, C, 1/2C, 1/2C
4. When Mercy Found Me (Rhett Walker Band)	Intro, V1, PC (2 measures), C, V2, C, B, Instrumental, C, ending
5. Where I Belong (Building 429)	Intro, V1, C, V2, C, B, Cx2, ending
6. Good to be Alive (Jason Gray)	Intro, V1, PC, C, instrumental, PC, Cx2, B, Cx2, B
7. Jesus in Disguise (Brandon Heath)	Intro, V1, C, V2, C, B, C (partial), B, ending
8. Learning to be the Light (Newworldson)	Intro (mini), V1, PC, C, V2, PC, C, B, C
9. Lead Me (Sanctus Real)	(Intro-4 measures on Db), V1, C, (Instrumental-2 measures on Db, V2, C, B, C, tag line C as ending
10. Forgiveness (Matthew West)	Intro, V1, instrumental/transition, V2, instrumental, C1, V3, instrumental, C2, ending

There are some major similarities between songs that were worth noticing. Each song contained an introduction, but the length varied between songs. Each song also contained verses and choruses, but again, the number and length of each varied. Nine out of ten songs had bridge sections, while seven out of ten included instrumental endings. Only half of the songs included a pre-chorus.

In the final composition, I tried to include as many sections as possible from the list of each song, while also incorporating my personal tastes in the order. I took each section to see where it fit in the order of the majority of the songs. For example, following an introduction, most songs included a verse right away, while one song went straight to the chorus. Using this technique, I rearranged the order of the composition to best reflect the typical orders found in the analysis as a whole. The following list is the order for the composition.

Introduction, V1, PC, C, Instrumental, V2, PC, C, B, Cx2 (twice through), ending

Other Comments

The final category in the analysis process was created to note anything else in the songs that did not fit into a preceding category but was still worth mentioning. I used this section to include new ideas that no other song had or for overall comments and reactions about a particular song. I referred to these comments when composing to see if additional incorporations were necessary in the composition.

Table 12 displays the few comments from this category. From these, I incorporated close harmonies into the composition, specifically 3rds, based on the comment from song 2, *God's Not Dead.* Also, song 10, *Forgiveness*, presented a recognizable melody line sung on just the *oh* vowel. I applied the same concept to the composition as well, including a line of *hmm* to open and close the song, and during instrumental sections.

Table 12

Other Comments

SONGS	OTHER COMMENTS
1. 10,000 Reasons (Matt Redman)	
2. God's Not Dead (Newsboys)	Harmony very present and close (3rds or 5ths)
3. Losing (Tenth Avenue North)	
4. When Mercy Found Me (Rhett Walker Band)	
5. Where I Belong (Building 429)	Very typical song overall, except secondary dominance chord in B
6. Good to be Alive (Jason Gray)	
7. Jesus in Disguise (Brandon Heath)	Only minor key so far; Major key in Bridge; Very unusual rhythms and chord progressions
8. Learning to be the Light (Newworldson)	Very swing style rhythm on 16ths; lots of secondary dominance
9. Lead Me (Sanctus Real)	Lead singer uses falsetto to get to Ab and Bb 4 (Ab and Bb 5 for women)
10. Forgiveness (Matthew West)	Use of strings; based on true story; uses just voice for a recognizable line (ohs)

Reflection on the Creative Process

Writing a song based on popular trends was quite challenging. It limited freedom of creativity and incorporating the trends felt constraining at times. It was also frustrating to compose and complete a song in the small time frame of this project. I wanted to present my best effort, and producing my best took more time than expected over the course of this thesis.

This being said, I am surprisingly satisfied with the final product. There are things that I would change given a substantial amount of time (which could be the subject of a later project), but overall I feel this song accurately reflects my creativeness and the popular trends of the current CCM genre.

There were many obstacles in this semester and this thesis that drew me away from working on the composition. I was less motivated to work when I was distracted or became disappointed with the progress. At first, the only motivator was the deadline, but the more I composed, the more the little accomplishments along the way motivated me to finish strong.

In the past few years, I had attempted to compose an original work on my own, but each time failed due to lack of perseverance and self-confidence. Songwriting is a passion I have pursued in the past, but it never progressed because of a lack of practical composing strategies. I still have past melodies in my head, which actually aided the melody of the chorus in the final composition. This thesis guided me in the production of a complete song while also forcing me out of my comfort zone. In the past I have not had confidence in my own musical ideas and thus I never shared them. For this reason, I am thankful for this project as the final push to have confidence in myself as a musician and in my work as a songwriter. I do not know if this is something I will continue to pursue freely, but if I do, I will always have the necessary resources to create a solid musical foundation.

Future Research

It is unknown if the musical trends found in the analysis are unique to the CCM sound or if the many similarities in the ten analyzed songs are found in other musical genres. With future research, these results could be expanded to compare many other musical genres to the same standards. The analysis portion of this study created a foundation for more in-depth research on CCM and an outlet for future research to compare musical aspects of CCM with another genre. This data set was only a sample of research that could still be done on this genre, such as examining the entire country's trends with this particular genre or applying this analysis to other genres of music. It may be useful to assess how the musical trends in CCM compare with any other popular genre of the modern age. Additionally, future research could involve surveying how artists choose the key of a song and why listeners respond well to certain keys over others.

Summary

This thesis presented a musical analysis of a sample of the CCM (Contemporary Christian Music) genre, based on the ten most aired songs of October 2012 on the Eastern Iowa radio station, Life 101.9. The purpose of this thesis was to provide analysis for a genre that had not been widely studied while also producing a song that accurately reflected the common and desired musical trends of the listeners of CCM. The findings led to a creative process that was both overwhelming and rewarding. This creative process led to the completion of an original composition to add to the CCM genre of music that reflected the trends already established.

The analysis process showed trends in some areas of musical analysis, such as time signature, rhythm, and chord progressions. But this research also revealed that not every song is exactly the same, such as with tempo, key, and the form within a song, and that many variants in these musical areas are accepted by the listening audience. Despite the many similarities

between the songs of this analysis, there is still room for creativity within each song, which is also displayed effectively in the final composition.

The product of this thesis besides the musical analysis was an original composition. The creative process was a struggle, due to the necessary trends to incorporate, but it was also a chance to express personal creativity within the limits of the example songs. If this study were to be done again, I would allow for more composing time and more room for personal creativity. The trends found acted more as boundaries in the creative process rather than guidelines; creativity would not have been limited if the trends were treated as guidelines for composition.

Contemporary Christian Music is worth studying because of its favored musical characteristics found (such as 4/4 meter, songs in major keys, and the stable chord progressions) and because it is a growing genre in the music industry. Because CCM is not widely studied academically, this thesis provides a more academic and analytical perspective to a growing genre of music, while also contributing an original song to the genre. On a personal level, this thesis was significant for building my self-confidence as a musician and composer. In my past, attempts at songwriting were quickly abandoned, but this thesis proved I could complete an entire song. As a result, I am prepared for future composing with more self-confidence and a solid foundation of musical characteristics to incorporate from the analysis. Lastly, if published, these findings could assist other musicians in composing new and successful songs for CCM.

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Appendix A

Analysis Evaluation Form

MELODY

1. Range (lowest note to highest note) =

2. Interval Structure

    - conjunct? (stepwise motion) disjunct? (skips and jumps)

3. Key and Scale =

    - Major? Minor?

4. Dramatic Shape

    - Dynamics? (soft or loud) (pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff) Be specific with where each change in dynamic level occurs:

    -How many measures in a phrase in the melody line?

5. Text or Lyrics

    - Text painting? (part of the melody that literally reflects the word being sung; if the lyrics talk about going up, then the melody line would also go up)

    -Original lyrics? Poetic lyrics? Biblical lyrics? List author of lyrics, poem, or a Bible verse when necessary.

CHORD PROGRESSIONS

1. Write the Roman Numeral Analysis below for the whole piece, labeling specific sections.

(Verse, Chorus, Bridge…etc.)

2. Comment on cadences (chord progressions that end a phrase or section of music).

-Plagal (IV-I), Authentic (V-I), Half (ends on V), or Deceptive (V-vi)

RHYTHM

1. Time Signature or Meter (how many beats per measure of music) =

2. Tempo (how many beats per minute of music) = _____ bpm

3. Melody line is majority eighth notes, quarter notes, half notes, whole notes, or syncopation (notes played off the beat)? If it is a combination, draw out rhythm here:

FORM

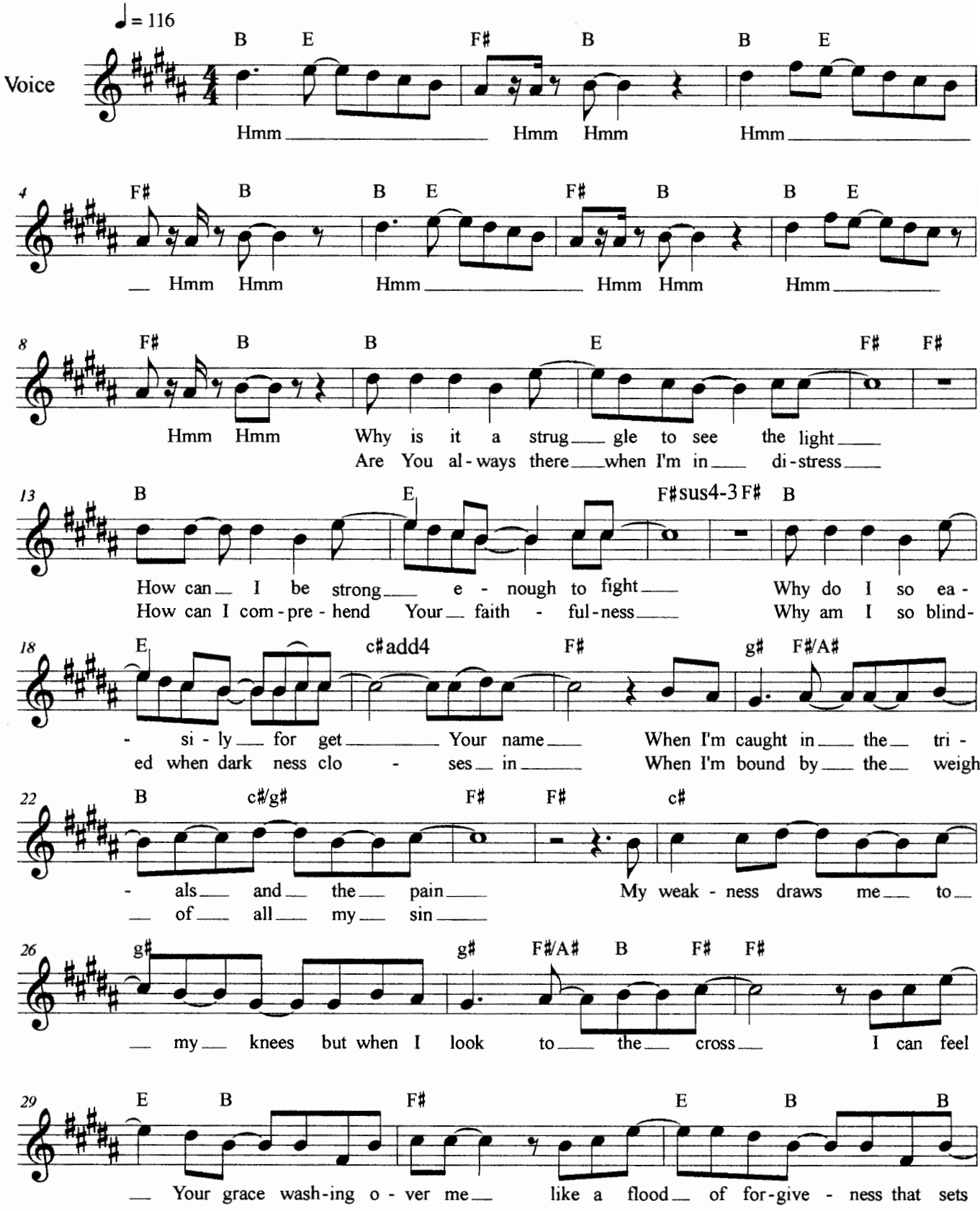
1. Write the order below, identifying verse as V, chorus as C, bridge as B, also including introductions, instrumental sections, and endings.

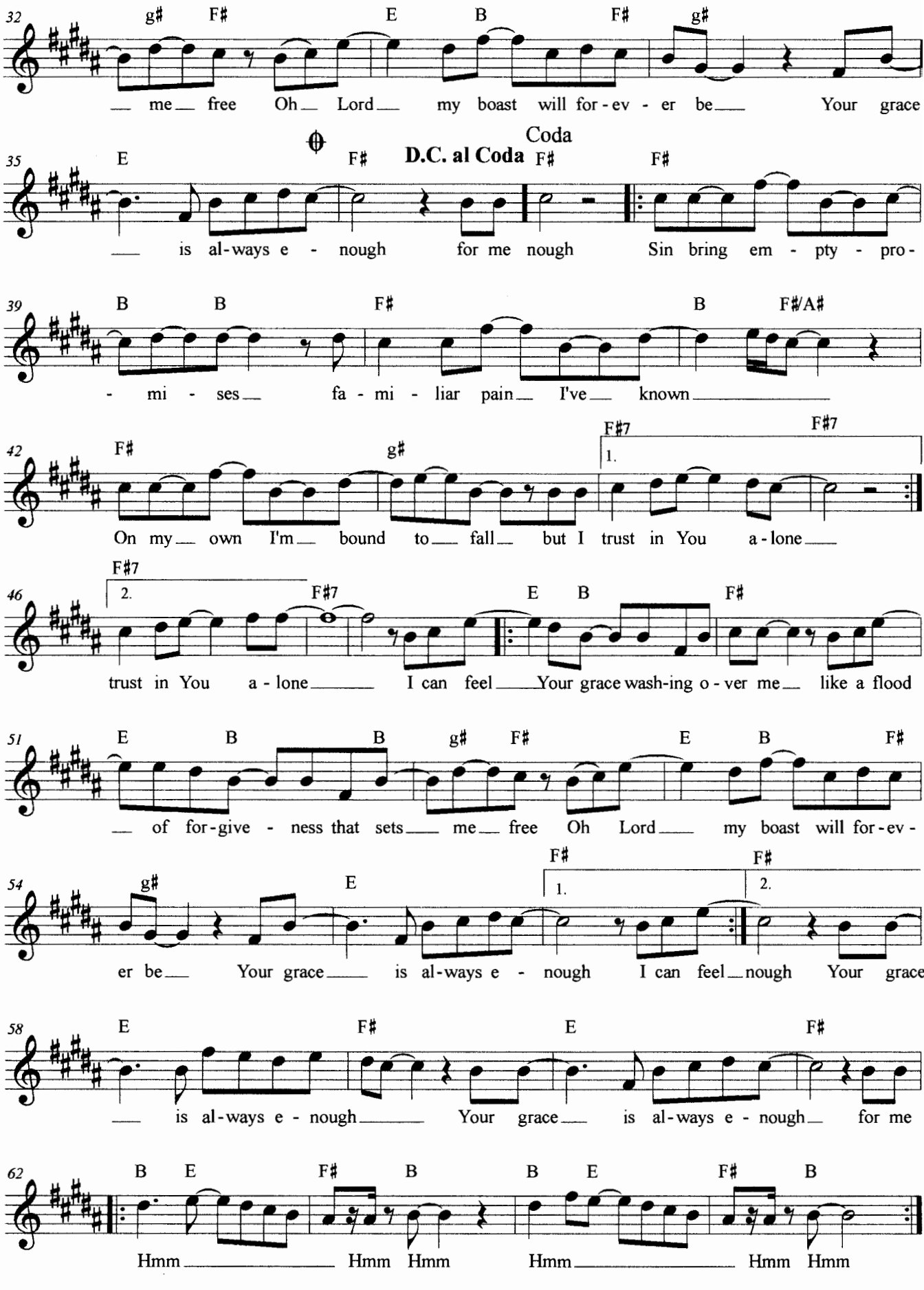
OTHER COMMENTS:

Score

I Can Feel Your Grace

Ashley Williamson




32
g# F# E B F# g#
me free Oh Lord my boast will for-ev-er be Your grace
35
Coda
D.C. al Coda
E F# F# F#
is al-ways e-nough for me nough Sin bring em-pty-pro-
39
B B F# B F#/A#
-mi-ses fa-mi-liar pain I've known
42
F# g# F#7 F#7
1.
On my own I'm bound to fall but I trust in You a-lone
46
F#7
2.
F#7 E B F#
trust in You a-lone I can feel Your grace wash-ing o-ver me like a flood
51
E B B g# F# E B F#
of for-give-ness that sets me free Oh Lord my boast will for-ev-
54
F# F#
1. 2.
g# E
er be Your grace is al-ways e-nough I can feel nough Your grace
58
E F# E F#
is al-ways e-nough Your grace is al-ways e-nough for me
62
B E F# B B E F# B
Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm Hmm

I Can Feel Your Grace

B Major; ♩ = 116

Intro (x4)
B E F# B
Hmm…

Verse 1
B E F#
Why is it a struggle to see the light?
B E F#sus4-3
How can I be strong enough to fight?
B E c#add4
Why do I so easily forget Your name
g# F#/A# B c#/G# F#
when I'm caught in the trials and the pain?

Pre-Chorus
c# g#
My weakness draws me to my knees
g# F#/A# B F#
But when I look to the cross…

Chorus
E B F#
I can feel your grace washing over me
E B B g# F#
Like a flood of forgiveness that sets me free
E B F# g#
Oh Lord, my boast will forever be
E F# (bridge) (instrumental)
Your grace is always enough……..for me

Instrumental (x4)
B E F# B
Hmm…

Verse 2
B E F#
Are You always there when I'm in distress?
B E F#sus4-3
How can I comprehend your faithfulness?
B E c#add4
Why am I so blinded when darkness closes in
g# F#/A# B c#/G# F#
when I'm bound by the weight of all my sin?

Pre-Chorus

Chorus

Bridge (x2)
F# B B
Sin brings empty promises
F# B F#/A#
Familiar pain I've known
F# g#
On my own I'm bound to fall
F#7 (2nd time add measure of F#)
But I trust in You alone

Chorus (x2)
E B F#
I can feel your grace washing over me
E B B g# F#
Like a flood of forgiveness that sets me free
E B F# g#
Oh Lord, my boast will forever be
E F# (repeat Chorus)
Your grace is always enough…
E F#
Your grace is always enough…
E F# (ending)
Your grace is always enough…….for me

Ending (x4)
B E F# B
Hmm…