

Composition 3 – “Until I Bleed Out” Reflection

With this arrangement task, I didn't want to wander in the land of music for too long, searching for the best song, so I quickly settled on the legendary song by The Weeknd because I wanted to edit the ending phrases and see what I could do to somehow arrange for instruments against a MIDI and a voice... and because I love its harmonies, c'mon.

I got to work on it with passion but hadn't realised just how useful proper lead sheets were, because I watched a video of a YouTuber who has arranged the piece for piano and played it well and decided that was a good reference to go from. Below is the video I took chord inspiration from:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uU-CSLzNfc&pp=ygUcdW50aWwgaSBibGVIZCBvdXQgbGVhZCBzaGVldA%3D%3D>

I chose five instruments of varying capabilities to work with to get the most balanced and realistic MIDI replication I could. The flute for its high register and breathy sound. The violin for its high pitch and dark lower register. The (Bb) clarinet for its rich soundscape and signable tones. The trombone for the sharp attacks and powerful note prolonging. And the double bass for the deep low tones that only it can reach.

Come the last day of formal classes, Alice teaches me a variety of new things. Some of which includes how effective lead sheets are and 'horizontal and vertical' way of thinking about harmonising. My arrangement originally sounded what she called "weak" which now I completely understand her motive behind her words. She told me to look up and find a lead sheet with jazz chords layout and at first copy them, then adapt in your style.

I went home and figured out the first few chords. Once I listened to it, I was amazed at just what a difference that process made the music sound, not forgetting it sounded completely unified while progressing from one chord to another. I then had a field day catching out any 'weak' chords and glorifying them to a more professional sounding arrangement.

Another of the tips Alice gave had to do with the beginning 11 bars. She recommended I play with syncopation and slurs to put off the feeling that the song is in a strict timing during those bars, as is in the first phrase (before the silence). In that silence, she wondered if a *pf*<*ff* before the silence would be beneficial to the piece, and I considered it effective. And the last advice from her included the fact that the clarinet and trombone sound best when not using vibrato, so I removed it from their line and added 'molto' to the remaining three instruments to help the vibrato sounding MIDI as heard in the song.

Looking now towards the end of the song, the other instruments are asked to be silent. This was written with the hope to eliminate any sound some players who want to give out harmonic echoes at the end of their playtime might perform. This was done to aid the quieter ending with the flute giving off its last echoes before fading away, otherwise it wouldn't sound faithful to what's written if the clarinet and trombone echoes as well.

Revisiting the end of the song, it continues onward with reverbed harmonies until the very end where it has a sound that I am not a fan of. So, I branch off completely, ending the song slowly, with a single melody in the double bass then in the clarinet before a quiet, deep, and long undertone from both instruments to finish my arrangement.

Then I focus on editing things like dynamics, range of instruments, and slurring to help the players feel better when playing the arrangement, all while minimising notation errors like two quaver rests when it could just be a crotchet rest (and there were a lot of instances of that happening).

Then I did the finishing touches by removing the useful chords I had written in at the bottom of the systems.