

A large crowd of people is seen from behind, looking towards a brightly lit stage at night. The stage is filled with numerous spotlights and large speakers, creating a hazy, golden glow. The crowd is dense, and many people have their arms raised in the air, suggesting a high-energy concert or festival atmosphere.

S.A.M.

Serving the Song, the Artist
and the Marketplace

CHECKLIST

HIT SONGS DECONSTRUCTED

The #1 Source for Hit Songwriting Analysis and Trends

Instructions

Use the checklist below to evaluate how your song adheres to the Hit Songs Deconstructed S.A.M. (Serving the Song, the Artist and the Marketplace) principle.

- a. Write any notes you may have in the notes section provided at the end of each section.

- b. Keep in mind that this checklist is meant to be referenced throughout the masterclass to keep your song on track with mainstream best practices. However, your song does not necessarily need to adhere to every single item in the checklist, so long as you have a reason for doing so.

SONG STRUCTURE

The way in which sections are arranged within a song's framework. The strategic formulation and ordering of sections is paramount to the song's ability to easily connect with audiences and keep them engaged.

- Is your song structure mainstream-friendly?**
 - ✓ Using general forms that are familiar to audiences will enable them to connect with and follow the song more easily

- Do your song sections occur at or near their respective average pop song occurrence times (i.e. the first chorus generally hits at approximately 20% of the way into the song)?**
 - ✓ This will heighten familiarity and connection value with mainstream audiences

- Are your section lengths cohesive and easy to follow?**
 - ✓ Using the same bar counts across like-sections or half/double length variations will heighten familiarity

- Is your song's length in line with current trends?**
 - ✓ Current streaming and social platforms tend to favor shorter songs

- Does your tempo jibe with the style and vibe of your song?**
 - ✓ Also make sure to pay attention to tempo trends in your genre of choice

- Does your song's key work with the vocalist's range?

- Is your harmonic progression in line with current harmony trends?
 - ✓ Most songs today have just one or two chord progressions, start on the tonic and contain primarily diatonic chords

Song Structure Assessment Notes

(Type your notes below)

SERVING THE SONG

Ensuring the song's melody, hooks, lyrics, arrangement and production all support the song's intended direction, create a unified vibe, and heighten both memorability and engagement.

Melody & Hooks

- Does your song's melody adhere to the K.I.S.S. ME (Keep It Simple, Singable and Memorable) principle? This includes:
 - ✓ Singability
 - ✓ Short phrases
 - ✓ Balance (i.e. tension vs. release, repetition vs. contrast, etc.)

- Is there effective cross-section (i.e. verse – pre-chorus – chorus) contrast in your melodies to heighten engagement? This can be achieved by varying:
 - ✓ Melodic complexity
 - ✓ Melodic direction
 - ✓ Phrase length
 - ✓ Range
 - ✓ Rhythmic flow

- Does your song contain at least one strategically arranged hook?
 - ✓ The vast majority of non-hip hop hits contain at least one standout vocal hook and, in many cases, instrumental hook(s)

Are your vocal hooks effectively showcased in the song? This includes:

- ✓ Hook “dressing”
- ✓ Hook prominence
- ✓ Hook reinforcement
- ✓ Hook foreshadowing

Melody & Hooks Assessment Notes

(Type your notes below)

Lyrics and Rhymes

- Does your song have a universal lyrical theme and subject matter that are relatable to mainstream audiences?
- Is your narrative logical and easy to follow with related developments and a satisfying summation in the chorus?
- Do your song's rhyme schemes unfold in a logical manner (i.e. AAAA, ABAB, ABAB/CCAB, etc.)?

Lyrics and Rhymes Assessment Notes

(Type your notes below)

Arrangement and Production

- Is your song effectively arranged to maintain both familiarity and engagement over the course of the song?

- Does your song's energy unfold across sections in a logical manner that is in line with the energy flow seen in the vast majority of today's hits?

- Does your song's mix and production sound professional, contemporary, and in line with your song's vibe?

- As you work on your song, are you making strategic choices to heighten your song's prosody and emotional connection?

Arrangement and Production Assessment Notes

(Type your notes below)

SERVING THE ARTIST

Ensuring the elements in the mix are believable and relatable to the artist performing the song.

- Is the song believable for the artist and in line with their persona and audience expectations?
 - ✓ If it's not believable for the artist, the listener is not going to be able to connect with the song as well, and the artist will have a harder time performing it

- Does the artist have a signature sound that could be worked into the mix? This can:
 - ✓ Give the artist a unique and clearly identifiable "brand"
 - ✓ Create familiarity for fans
 - ✓ Provide a cohesive thread throughout a body of work that opens the door for the artist to experiment elsewhere while still maintaining familiarity

- Are the elements in the song in line – or at least mostly in line – with the artist's historic body of work?
 - ✓ Including some less common elements for the artist can also help a particular song stand out or push an artist into new, unexplored territory

Serving the Artist Assessment Notes

(Type your notes below)

SERVING THE MARKETPLACE

Creating a balance between the familiar and the unique to appeal to mainstream audiences while standing out from the pack.

- Does your song use instruments, timbres, lyrics, etc. that are in tune with your intended audience?
 - ✓ When possible, try to incorporate current trends into the mix
- Does your song fuse elements from different genres to bolster its crossover potential (i.e. adding a trap beat into a pop song)?
- Does your song contain unique or atypical characteristics that help it stand out from the pack?

Serving the Marketplace Assessment Notes

(Type your notes below)