

Chapter 4: The Sonic Collage Assignment: Aesthetics, Affect, and Critique in Audio Sampling

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5. “English E.C.” by Rachel

Rachel’s “English E.C.” plays the music of Ellie Goulding underneath quotes taken from interviews with Payton Head, the University of Missouri student body president who led protests leading to the resignation of University System President Tim Wolf in 2015, and Jonathan Butler, the student activist whose hunger strike initially sparked the protests that would unite students across the Mizzou campus, including the university’s football team. Goulding’s feminine voice is mournful, supportive, and uplifting under the voices of the two young Black men who are discussing the issues of systematic racism on their campus, the lack of institutional leadership, and their own actions to bring about a more equitable and just future. Several of my students who had been paying attention to the story on the news found this depiction of events illuminating because it invited them to empathize with the students in a way traditional media stories did not; however, the use of a white British female musician whose songs focus on romantic relationships combined with the heavy-handed editing of Black male voices did invite questions of appropriation and cultural stereotyping for some students already invested in the unfolding events.

Transcript

[Throughout, the background audio transitions between Ellie Goulding’s “Hanging On,” “Burn,” and “High for This,” often highlighting a specific lyric of Goulding’s in pauses between other speakers]

John Butler: Honestly, it should have happened earlier. . . . It really should have never gotten to this point.

Payton Head: A lack of response . . . The lack of leadership . . . A lack of concern . . . To acknowledge what is happening on this campus will help in healing the campus culture. . . . Saying over and over and over that we feel unsafe, and we feel uninvited.

[Ellie Goulding’s “Burn”: “We got the fire, and we’re going to let it burn”]

John Butler: Just being negligent . . .

[Ellie Goulding’s “Hanging On”: “You know we can get away because I’m calling your name.”]

[Ellie Goulding’s “High for This”: “You do know what’s in store, but you know what you’re here for.”]

Payton Head: I have nothing to say

[Ellie Goulding’s “High for This”: “Hold tight for this ride.”]

John Butler: A lot of people know how corrupt the system is.

[Ellie Goulding’s “Hanging On”: “Every day I feel this pain.”]

[Ellie Goulding’s “High for This”: “We don’t need no protection.”]

John Butler: From day one people thought I was a dead man walking.

[Ellie Goulding’s “Hanging On”: “But you just turn and walk away.”]

John Butler: I had someone right the N-word on my wall.

[Ellie Goulding's "Burn," "Hanging On," and "High for This" are layered over each other]

John Butler: I felt unsafe since the moment I stepped on this campus.

Payton Head: It's systematic. It's institutional.

[Ellie Goulding's "High for This": "I swear, I'm right here. Don't be scared. I'm right here."]

Payton Head: To have adequate—adequate resources to bring light to some of these issues: systematic oppression.

[Ellie Goulding's "Burn": "'Cause we got that fire fire fire . . . Yeah we got that fire fire fire"]

Payton Head: This is a national issue that we need to address as a whole. . . . Decisions that were made . . . verbally assaulted . . . What we have a problem with is the world not understanding . . . That's not a single isolated incident. . . . and we are not blaming . . . the ineffective leadership that has been in place . . . Yelled the N-word at me multiple times.

John Butler: This was not a light decision.

[Ellie Goulding's "Burn": "Music's on, I'm waking up, we stop the vibe, and we bump it up. And it's over now, we got the love"]

Payton Head: It's very intense

John Butler: And for me, it's just I've always not felt welcome.

[rapping by Tinie Tempah from Ellie Goulding's "Hanging On"]

Payton Head: Mental and emotional issues . . . these different backgrounds.

[Ellie Goulding's "High for This": "Don't be scared. I'm right here."]

John Butler: I have been physically in altercations

Payton Head: Students are hurting right now.

[Ellie Goulding's "Burn": "And we're going to let it burn burn burn burn"]

[rapping by Tinie Tempah from Ellie Goulding's "Hanging On"]

Payton Head: Who are marginalized and minoritized

John Butler: Who have not felt welcome . . . not felt welcome . . . not felt welcome

Payton Head: It is unsafe.

John Butler: I am truly committed to this change.

[Ellie Goulding's "Hanging On": "To you and me."]

Payton Head: Some of the conversations that have to start in the future . . . progress.

[static]

Payton Head: And it goes to the nation as well. . . . We can be a catalyst. . . . We have been calling for leadership.

John Butler: The harder we fight, the greater the reward.

Payton Head: We can move forward together.

John Butler: When people know what to do

[*Ellie Goulding's "Burn" fades out*]

Works Cited

EllieGouldingVEVO. "Ellie Goulding - Burn." Online video clip. *YouTube*. YouTube, 7 July 2013. Web. 22 Nov. 2015.

Goulding, Ellie. "Hanging On (Feat. Tinie Tempah)." *Halcyon*. Polydor Records, 2012. CD.

Goulding, Ellie. "High For This (The Weeknd Cover)." Prod. Xaphoon James. *Halcyon*. Polydor Records, 2012. CD.

LatestNews. "'I Felt Unsafe': Mizzou Student Who Went On Hunger Strike Speaks Out on CNN." Online video clip. *YouTube*. YouTube, 9 Nov. 2015. Web. 22 Nov. 2015.

MSNBC. "University of Missouri Student Body President Speaks Out." Online video clip. *YouTube*. YouTube, 10 Nov. 2015. Web. 22 Nov. 2015.

Notes

*Each of these sources were cut up multiple times throughout my track, which forms a total of over 10 samples.

*Audio manipulation effects used: dance edge compressor, ducker, bass boost, fade out, male radio voice effect, echo, volume and tempo change, and static sound loop.