

## **5 Seconds of Summer**

National Standards: Pr4, Re 7-9, Cn11

After over a decade of hitmaking and globetrotting, 5SOS is again stepping into the spotlight and making major moves. The group has a unique set of internal contradictions: veterans of the scene but still relatively young, a catalogue of songs they could coast on forever but a desire to push new musical boundaries, and a lineup of individual stars who shine brightest by joining together. Rather than rest on their laurels, 5SOS has once again leveraged the power of major label production to spearhead a new creative and commercial era for the band. Rather than a reinvention, this new chapter is an embrace of everything the band represents and a statement that they have much more music to make.

### **Prepare**

By a show of hands, ask the class how many of them are familiar with 5 Seconds of Summer. As noted in the article, the band has undergone several stylistic shifts. For those familiar, ask how they would describe the band's style/sound. There could be several conflicting- yet entirely accurate- answers.

Next, ask students what other artists they associate with 5SOS. Their early tours with One Direction led many listeners to categorize 5SOS as a "boy band", which carried the assumption that they were a singing group manufactured by a label and had no creative control. Do students share that perception?

Finally, ask the class if they believe artists can truly stay relevant after 10+ years on the global stage. Can students name any artists that continued evolving and pushing the genre forward over multiple decades?

After discussing, read the article as a class.

### *Key points in the article:*

- Now returning with their sixth studio album *Everyone's A Star!*, 5SOS has instilled an expectation for sonic evolution in their fanbase. Although they retain the trademark raucous energy that defined their early work, the seasoned band filters it through a lens of maturity and self-awareness.
- Although many fans and casual listeners associate them with the boyband model (an artificially created group of performers with no input on their own musical direction), 5SOS have written almost all of their own songs. They asserted their creative control even further on their previous album, *5SOS5*, by self-producing and releasing it independently.

- While they remain in the driver's seat creatively on *Everyone's A Star!*, 5SOS have re-enlisted the help of a major label to push the album and tour the way that only a major label can. This should be interpreted as a statement of intent. Rather than sitting back and playing the hits for the rest of their career, 5SOS plan to stay relevant and push the envelope for years to come.

## **Begin**

*Review Vocabulary words from the article below:*

- **Exuberance:** the quality of being full of energy or excitement
- **Rambunctious:** disorderly, boisterous, or difficult to control
- **Dismissive:** feeling or showing that something is unworthy of consideration
- **Pigeonhole:** to form a fixed and often unfair idea of what someone or something is like
- **Naivete:** the quality of being naive; lack of experience, wisdom, or judgment

## **Discuss**

After reading the article, conduct a classroom discussion about 5SOS's music and why they remain a global fixture in pop music. For students who are fans of the band, what era of 5SOS's sound do they enjoy the most? Is it their pop punk roots, arena pop anthems, or moody synth stylings? Why do students think 5SOS have remained popular throughout these stylistic shifts? Which elements of the band's sound change, and which stay the same?

After discussing, listen to the recent single "Boy Band." What lyrical themes do students notice? How do 5SOS address the public's (mis)conceptions? Have students ever heard another song from a famous artist that addresses their public image or identity? Does this self-awareness add intrigue or distract from the music?

## **O&A**

1. Which record label did 5 Seconds of Summer sign with for their latest album?
2. Which famous boyband did 5SOS open for early in their career?
3. When and where did 5 Seconds of Summer form?
4. Which 5SOS album saw the band experiment with moody, synth-driven sounds?
5. Who are the four members of 5SOS?

## **Answers**

1. Republic Records
2. One Direction
3. 2011 in Sydney, Australia
4. CALM
5. Luke Hemmings, Michael Clifford, Calum Hood, and Ashton Irwin

## **Expand**

For a research assignment, have students select another artist who continues releasing new music over a decade into their career. Reports should include a brief history of the artist's career, a description of the artist's musical style and how it evolved (or didn't!), and how their artistic output was received by both critics and the public. Was the artist able to sustain their commercial appeal via radio play and ticket sales? Did they gain or lose popularity late in their career? Did the artist attempt to retain fans of their early albums, or did they shun the success of their previous work in pursuit of something new?

## **How To Play "Smooth" by Rob Thomas – feat. Carlos Santana**

National Standards: 1-9

Some of the most powerful musical moments come at the intersection of multiple genres when artists combine familiar elements of different styles into a bold new hybrid. This was certainly the case with "Smooth" by Rob Thomas and Santana, a fusion of Latin, pop, and rock that topped the charts for 12 weeks in 1999. Featuring an unforgettable horn arrangement, Thomas' earworm vocals, and Santana's signature soaring guitar licks, "Smooth" is a fantastic addition to any school ensemble's repertoire. Learn the ingredients to this iconic musical fusion and your group will have an instant crowd-pleaser!

### **Prepare**

To start, ask the class if they are familiar with "Smooth." If they are not familiar with it by name, play the intro of the song- the iconic opening bars of the song are sure to jog a few memories. Next, ask the class by show of hands if they are familiar with the work of Santana or Rob Thomas (or Matchbox 20). If they are, ask them to describe the musical style of both artists. What genres do they play? What are some signature elements of their styles?

Next, play "Smooth" in its entirety, encouraging students to listen carefully. Next, instruct students take out a notebook and listen to the song again, taking notes on the instruments they hear, dynamic shifts, and important moments in the song. Then, read the article.

*Key points in the article:*

- By the late 90's, it had been nearly three decades since Santana's last top ten hit. At the suggestion of his label, Santana sought out a collaboration with Rob Thomas of Matchbox 20 for his next album. Thomas and his collaborator wrote the song "Smooth" and submitted a demo, and Santana insisted that Thomas sing it on the record. The result was explosive, with "Smooth" topping the charts.
- True to Santana's Latin music origins, "Smooth" features a dense arrangement with drums, bass, guitar, piano, several aux percussionists, and a 13-piece horn section. The parts largely follow traditional Latin styles; the drum kit plays sparsely to make room for all the additional percussion, the piano plays a classic montuno part, and the bass follows the dancers' feet instead of emphasizing the downbeat.
- Although the arrangement on the record features a large ensemble, "Smooth" can be adapted to smaller groups. With a bit of creativity, a drummer can incorporate several of the record's percussion parts into their playing. Likewise, the horn section can be as small as a single trumpet, trombone, and tenor sax. Even bands without a horn section can make do since the piano part often doubles the horns.

## **Begin**

Review vocabulary words from the article below:

- **Foray:** a short visit, especially with a known purpose
- **Unison:** identical parts performed at the same time
- **Montuno:** an ostinato or repetitive figure played by the piano in a repeated section
- **Prominent:** noticeable, remarkable, attention-grabbing
- **Vamp:** a repeating musical phrase or chord progression that can be played indefinitely, often used as a backdrop for a solo

## **Discuss**

After reading the article, conduct a classroom discussion comparing their notes about “Smooth” with the article’s analysis. Did their observations match the author’s assessments of the song? Did the author point out any important elements that students missed on their initial listen?

Next, conduct a class brainstorm about how to adapt “Smooth” to their lineup of instruments. Although it is unlikely that your ensemble will have the full array of instruments on the record, the article lists several options for substitutions and adaptations. If your group features multiple vocalists, could the background singers play conga, guiro, or another handheld percussion instrument? If no horn line is available, could the keyboard player create a synth horn sound to substitute? If the group does not have an electric guitarist, could a sax player approximate Santana’s lead parts?

## **Q&A**

1. Rather than emphasizing the downbeat as in rock music, what does the bass follow in Latin music?
2. Santana came to prominence in the ‘60s after a legendary appearance at which music festival?
3. What is the most prominent instrument in the horn section of “Smooth?”
4. Rob Thomas was the singer and songwriter for which famous band?
5. How many weeks did “Smooth” remain at #1 on the *Billboard* charts?

## **Answers**

1. The dancers’ feet
2. Woodstock
3. The trumpets
4. Matchbox 20
5. 12 weeks

## **Expand**

If working to play “Smooth”, and before the next meeting of the ensemble, have students learn their individual parts as decided in the earlier brainstorm session. At the beginning of the first rehearsal, listen to “Smooth” as a class one more time before attempting to play it. Discuss the form of the song and make sure students know the changes.

Next, set up instruments and play the song. Stop after each playthrough of the song to discuss any changes that need to be made and clear up any questions the class may have. Once the ensemble is comfortable with the song and has successfully played it multiple times, record one final play-through (a phone camera recording will do just fine).

After rehearsal, make the video accessible to students and have them watch it before the next meeting. Start the next rehearsal by watching the video together and having a class discussion. How does the song feel overall? Is the arrangement effective? Does the band nail the tempo and dynamics of the song? Does it feel like anything is missing? If so, discuss how to adapt. Repeat this process for as many rehearsals as it takes to nail the tune!

## **Slow Down Strategies**

National Standards: 1-9

Much of a musician's early practice is sure to revolve around keeping a steady tempo, and rightfully so! Maintaining the intended pulse of a song is essential to expressing the desired emotions of any piece. But who says the intended tempo of a song can't change intentionally? Throughout time, composers have used changes in tempos to create drama and energy. Shifts in tempo creates surprise, and musicians can use this as a tool to create impact. Teach your students to harness this head-turning technique today!

### **Prepare**

To prime the class for the concepts outlined in the article, conduct a classroom discussion about how songwriters, composers, and producers use changes in a piece of music to great effect. Ask the class if they have ever heard a song that contained a tempo change. Did it create surprise? How did the artist set the listener up for that surprise?

Next, ask the class what elements of a song an artist can change to create a dramatic effect. Answers might include key changes, dynamic/volume changes, and adding new instrumentation. Then ask the class if they have ever heard a song with a tempo change. What effect did it have on the song? How did it feel as the listener? After discussing, read the article as a class.

*Key points in the article:*

- Although it is often taken for granted, the tempo of a piece of music is absolutely foundational to its emotional impact. While some songs might work well at a range of tempos, others rely on a particular tempo to create the desired effect. Either way, changing tempo in the middle of a song will always be a surprising and dramatic move.
- Although the vast majority of songs (at least in the world of popular music) stay at the same tempo throughout, it is not unprecedented to hear massively popular songs implement tempo shifts. Chappell Roan's "Good Luck Babe" and F.U.N.'s "We Are Young" are examples of modern smash hits that use different tempo changing strategies.
- There are several key strategies for slowing down a song's tempo: gradual slowdowns, sudden slowdowns, and snapback slowdowns. Each of these produce a different effect on the song but are equally impactful when used thoughtfully.

### **Begin**

*Review Vocabulary words from the article below:*

- **Gravitas:** a Latin word meaning weight or heaviness; an air of importance
- **Tension:** a sense of unrest in a piece of music; anticipation for what comes next
- **Ritardando:** a gradual slowdown

- **Shorthand:** a method of abbreviating words or terms for quicker communication
- **Subtle:** not loud, bright, noticeable, or obvious in any way

### Discuss

After reading through each example in the article (gradual, sudden, and snapback), stop and play an excerpt of the musical example listed in that section. Ask students to raise their hands when they hear the slowdown happening. Discuss the effect that it has on the song. Why do students think the artist chose to include it in the song? Is it effective? Can students name any other songs that use that particular type of slowdown?

After reading each section and hearing the listed examples, ask students which type of slowdown they enjoy the most. Why is it their favorite? How would they describe the emotional impact of that technique on the song?

### Q&A

1. According to the article, choosing a tempo is like choosing the size of your \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Which slowdown technique feels like the music is stretching like a rubber band before snapping back to its original shape?
3. What are the potential reasons to change tempo listed in the article?
4. The sudden slowdowns in The Easley Brothers' "Shout" are drawn directly from which genre of music?
5. Which type of slowdown is often followed by a stop, either because it happens at the end of a whole piece, or just a section or movement with a different character?

### Answers

1. Canvas for a painting
2. Snapback slowdowns
3. It is typical of the style you are in, it fits the idea of the story you are trying to tell, or even that you just hear it
4. Gospel
5. Gradual slowdowns

### Expand

As an additional assignment, have students find another song that features a slowdown or tempo change and write a short report on it. Does the slowdown follow one of the three methods listed in the article? Is the effect similar to how the author describes it, or does it vary? Why did the artist incorporate that slowdown into the song? Would the song be as impactful without it? Have students present their chosen songs and analyses to the class.



## **Releasing Music**

National Standards: 10-11

With the proliferation of affordable home recording software, more music is being recorded today than ever before – likely by one or more students in your own class! Luckily for them, it is no longer necessary to have a record deal to release music. It has never been easier for artists to release their own music independently, but the process still requires careful consideration and planning. Share these crucial tips with your class today and help ensure a successful release!

### **Prepare**

To start the lesson, by a show of hands, ask if anyone in class has recorded or produced their own music. Follow up by asking how many students have released their music online via YouTube, Soundcloud, or any other streaming services, etc. The number of hands will likely drop. For those who have recorded music but haven't released it, ask why. Are they unsure of the process? Are they unsatisfied with their songs or recordings? What do students think are the necessary steps to release a song? After discussing, read the article as a class.

*Key points in the article:*

- It has never been easier to record and produce your own music, and as a result, it has never been easier to release music independently. The basic elements required for a release are simply: a recording of a song you love and a cover image to go along with it.
- There are many digital platforms where musicians can upload their music, although some of them require a distributor. Popular options for self-uploading music are YouTube and Soundcloud. For services like Spotify, Apple Music, and Tidal, artists will need to get through distributors like DistroKid or CDBaby.

Although it is not required, musicians should copyright their music and register with the organizations that help collect streaming revenue. Likewise, developing a marketing strategy for a release is helpful for musicians trying to grow a following.

### **Begin**

Review vocabulary words from the article below:

- **Fidelity:** the quality of sound reproduction in audio
- **Align:** to be in a state of agreement
- **Copyright:** a legal term used to describe the rights that creators have over their literary and artistic works
- **Engage:** to interact with on an online platform
- **Venue:** a place where events of a specific type are held

## **Discuss**

After reading the article, ask the class if any of the information in the article surprised them. Was the list of steps in the article longer than they expected for an independent release? Were they aware of all the different organizations listed in the article? After reading the article, do they feel more intimidated or empowered to self-release their music?

For any students who have released their music before, which of these steps did they follow? What was their experience with it? Was it time-consuming or quick? Difficult or simple? What advice would they give to other students who want to do the same?

## **Q&A**

1. Which organizations collect money for copyright holders?
2. Who are three popular distributors who can put your music onto streaming platforms?
3. What fashionable trend in artist websites should musicians be wary of while pursuing endorsement?
4. How many songs are contained in an EP?
5. What do brands look for in an artist's social media presence beyond number of followers

## **Answers**

1. Performing Rights Organizations (ASCAP or BMI), the Mechanical Licensing Collective (The MLC), and SoundExchange
2. Distrokid, CDBaby, and TuneCore
3. Minimalist sites with large photos and little else
4. 3-5
5. Engagement (ratio of likes per post to total followers)

## **Expand**

For an assignment, have students create a hypothetical (or real!) release plan. Students should create a fictional artist name, decide on a musical style, come up with a fictional song title, and create an image to accompany the song. Depending on the level and focus of the class, you might even decide to assign the creation of a real song. Once students have those base elements, they should compile the following elements:

- A release date
- Select a distributor for their music and research the steps to sign up with that company, including membership/subscription costs
  - o Should include a short description of why they chose that distributor
- Research and list the steps for copyrighting a song, including any associated costs
- Select a Performing rights organization to register with
  - o Should include a short description of why they chose that organization
- Research and list the steps for registering with the Mechanical Licensing Collective and SoundExchange
- A brief promotional plan for their song