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Lana Del Rey

Did Lana Del Rey plagiarise Radiohead? A note-by-note analysis

After Lana Del Rey settles her plagiarism case with Radiohead, composer Ed Newton-Rex shows just how similar their songs Get Free and Creep truly are

Niko Kommenda

Mon 26 Mar 2018 11.30 EDT

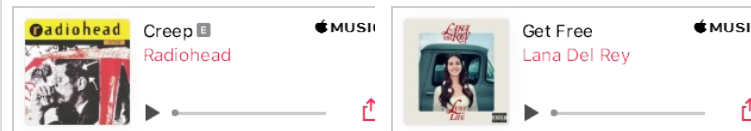


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“Lana Del Radiohead”, the internet scoffed recently, after Lana Del Rey’s song Get Free was found to have more than a passing similarity to Radiohead’s breakthrough hit Creep. It was all there: the moody chord changes, the even moodier, downward-turning melody. Radiohead noticed, and requested that they be added to the song’s credits – a dispute that, [according to Del Rey](#), has been brought to an end.

Creep had, of course, been subject to its own plagiarism dispute in the 1990s, with the songwriters Albert Hammond and Mike Hazlewood added to the credits thanks to a similarity with the hit song they wrote for the Hollies, The Air That I Breathe.

So how similar are Get Free and Creep, and did Radiohead have a legitimate complaint? The Guardian spoke to a professional composer, [Ed Newton-Rex](#), to analyse the pair of songs.



The chords heard in Creep are rare in pop music

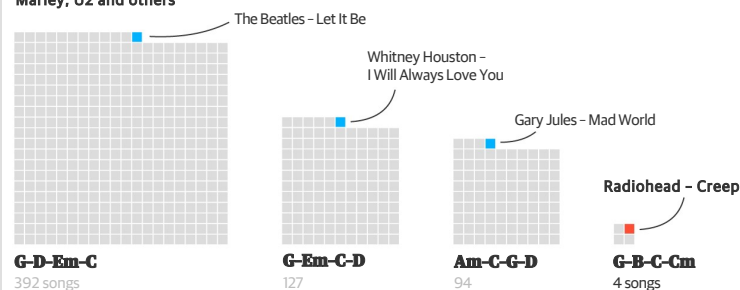
He starts his analysis by pointing out that the two songs use the same sequence of chords to accompany the melody throughout the track.

While this is not unusual in the industry – some chord progressions appear in hundreds of songs – the chords heard in Creep and Get Free are relatively rare in pop music. According to online database Hooktheory, only four out of 17,000 popular hits of the last decades have used this specific sequence.

In a database of more than 17,000 pop songs, the chord progression used in ‘Creep’ appears only four times

The most common chord progressions can be found in hundreds of songs.

G-D-Em-C, for instance, has been used by **The Beatles, Bob Marley, U2 and others**



Furthermore, the songs in question employ those four chords in exactly the same fashion, repeating them throughout verse and chorus with no differences in rhythm whatsoever.

The melodies bear an uncanny resemblance

Many listeners have also claimed that the parallels between the two songs are not limited to the chords. Newton-Rex agrees, noting “the melody is where the similarities become really apparent”.

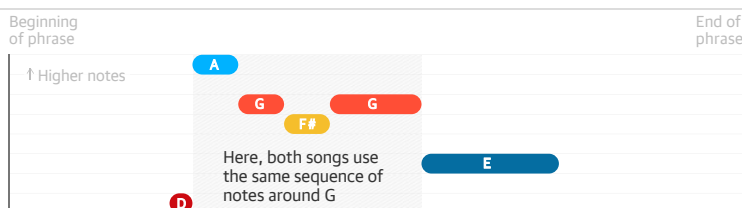
When musicologists assess a plagiarism claim, they will often split the melody of each song into a number of shorter phrases to compare them one by one.

In the case of Get Free, many of the phrases found in the verse and chorus use exactly the same notes as their counterparts in Creep, often in the same order. In other places, the exact set of notes or their order might differ, but the general outline or “contour” of both melodies remains the same.

“When you analyse [the phrases] one by one, you find a pretty astonishing degree of similarity,” Newton-Rex says.

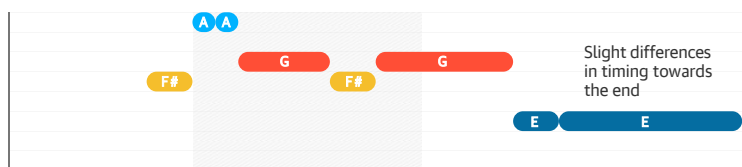
Creep

Radiohead



Get Free

Lana Del Rey



“Get Free” transposed to G

However strong they may be, the parallels between the two songs don’t necessarily imply that Del Rey intentionally copied Radiohead’s work. Del Rey herself said: “I know my song wasn’t inspired by Creep.” Newton-Rex imagines the similarities in Get Free are unintentional, despite calling the two pieces “the most obviously similar pair of songs I’ve heard”.

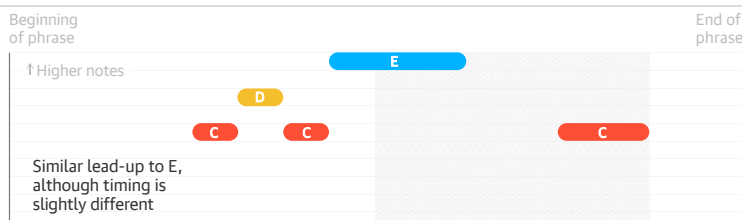
It’s not the first case of its kind

The “Lana Del Radiohead” case is far from isolated. In 2017, Ed Sheeran settled a claim over his hit Photograph after similarities to the Matt Cardle song Amazing were found, and he quietly added the songwriters of TLC’s No Scrubs to the credits of his hit Shape of You. Two years earlier, the same lawyer representing the songwriters of Amazing had won a \$7.4m (£5.1m) settlement against Robin Thicke and Pharrell Williams for the estate of the late soul singer Marvin Gaye – last week the US court of appeal refused a new trial in the case.

So if you’re a songwriter, it might be worth double-checking your melodies if you want to avoid a lengthy, costly legal battle – even if it’s just your subconscious leading you astray.

Amazing

Matt Cardle



Photograph

Ed Sheeran





C C

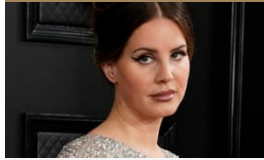
Both songs drop to similar sounding notes, with the same delay

G

"Photograph" transposed to

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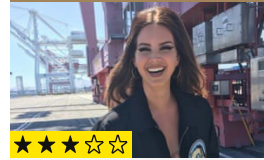
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So how similar are Get Free and Creep, and did Radiohead have a legitimate complaint? The Guardian spoke to a professional composer, Ed Newton-Rex, to analyse the pair of songs.

That's unnecessary, the similarities are blindingly obvious.

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