

Hip-hop

- KIZZY Hey. Are you playing *Cwestiynau* in your set tonight?
- ED I am indeed. *Cwestiynau* – ‘questions’ – I’m definitely playing that tonight.
- KIZZY Good, I love that track.
- ED Great. Thank you, Kizzy. It’s a really personal song. At the time, I’d lost some members of my family and I was just trying to make sense of it all and trying to find my way in life. I think it’s really important to put personal experiences into your music. I think it helps to create a powerful message. So, that’s exactly what I did.
- KIZZY Totally agree. Tell me about how you composed the track.
- ED I specialise in hip-hop and the beatboxing aspect of hip-hop, so that’s exactly where I started. I laid down a vocalised beat. So, once I’ve got the beat into my software I’m able to separate the beat into different sounds.
- KIZZY That gives you more control I presume.
- ED Exactly. It gives me more control. For example, I can equalise the bass drum, I can compress the snare, I can equalise the hi-hat, any type of sounds really. The next thing I wanted to do was lay down the bass line. So again, the bass line is myself singing in a low register.
- Manipulation is a big part of hip-hop and it’s a big part of what I do. So, the next step was to utilise a plugin that creates a sub bass effect on my voice, so that means it creates a nice big sound. I then compress the bass line to make sure that it doesn’t swallow up all the bottom end of the mix, and then I copy the bass line and I apply what we call distortion to make an even bigger sound.
- KIZZY It feels really atmospheric.
- ED Perfect. That’s exactly the sound I was after. The next bit was a bit more tricky though. I really wanted to sing on the song but I don’t really consider myself much of a singer.

Bitesize

KIZZY You sound alright to me.

ED I'm glad you think so. So, what I did was listen to the bass line and then I worked out a sequence of notes that I was able to sing on top of the bass line. I then created layers of singing to create a choir effect. And then I further enhanced this by adding plug-ins, so delay, reverb, phaser – it creates a really big atmospheric sound and it's especially evident in the introduction of the song. Check this out.

Once I was happy with the music, the final piece to the puzzle was the lyrics. You'll never guess what I did. I decided to walk up a mountain, a pair of headphones on and have the music on repeat, sit on the top of the mountain and just write the lyrics as they came to me.

KIZZY If it works for you.

ED Absolutely. I think you've got to be really comfortable and confident especially when writing lyrics. You need to be in the right headspace, and for me sitting on top of a mountain was the perfect space.

KIZZY Ed Holden, Mr Phormula, award-winning hip-hop artist, freestyle champion and expert mountaineer. Who knew?