

# R&B Song writing

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Hello! I hope you're feeling well.

Today I'm going to look at famous duets in popular music and we're going to think about what makes them so great.

The most iconic one that I can think of is 'Ain't no mountain high enough' performed by Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell.

Last week we explored the conversational approach to the lyrics of 'Heard it through the grapevine'. We looked at how Marvin was singing directly to his partner, almost as if she was on the other end of the phone.

'Ain't no mountain high enough' takes that idea one step further by featuring 2 protagonists both singing to each other line by line. This creates an actual conversation.

**Marvin: Ain't no mountain high, ain't no valley low, ain't no river wide enough baby.**

**Tammi: If you need me call me, no matter where you are, no matter how far.**

What effect does this have on us as listeners?

Maybe we start to think about the love between the characters in the song. Were Marvin and Tammi Terrell really in love? Do we need them to be in love or is it enough to just escape in the fantasy of it? These types thoughts create a 3<sup>rd</sup> dimension to the song which is all part of the power of the duet.

We also enjoy a richer musical experience within the juxtaposition of Marvin and Tammi's voices, individually on each line of the verse and then joined in harmony for the chorus, unifying them.

How do we relate to the feeling that they create within the song?

It is the sentiment that there is nothing too great or too difficult in this world to keep me from being close to you whenever you need me.

This reminds us of the people that we love and cherish and that we would do anything for them. This is almost a universal sentiment and that is what makes a song like this so iconic.

I would like to invite you to think about other famous duets in popular music and what makes them iconic.

Here are a few other examples that I can think of. Maybe you can add to this list!

- When you believe – Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey
- Knew you were waiting – Aretha Franklin and George Michael
- Endless love – Diana Ross and Lionel Ritchie