Musical Analysis Proves Britney Spears Is Not Like J.S. Bach!

This amazing insight brought to you by:

Matt Snively
Tam (one t): Lies! All lies, I tell you!

Matt (two): Nope, it’s all true. First, let’s find a system of comparison.

Tam: Since Bach and Britney were both musicians at one point in time, why not compare songs they wrote?

Matt: Great idea! …but how?
Basis For A Musical Comparison Between An Early Eighteenth Century Composer And A Former Teen Pop Star

Tam: No comparing melodies, as they’re too varied and complicated.

Matt: Popularity? Bach didn’t have CDs or the radio and his manager didn’t want to share him, so no.

Tam: I got it! Compare harmonies of their songs!

Matt: Perfect! Back in Blach … er, Bach’s day they had fewer allowed progressions.

Tam: I know, I’m just that awesome aren’t I?

Matt: Shut up.
Hey Hey It’s a Chord Diagram

Matt: Well, first we need a system that can analyze chord progressions. And a list or diagram of what Bach’s valid chord progressions were.

Tam: Didn’t you see something like that a few years ago?

Matt: Right, I did. Now where … ah, here it is: (good thing I got permission)
Tam: Now that we have a diagram like that, how can we use it to analyze harmony?

Matt: Well, we could do it by hand, but that would be really slow.

Tam: Hey, didn’t you see a lot of diagrams like that in your Theory of Compo-whatever course?

Matt: Right, with the automata! I could make one of those to analyze a chord progression.

Tam: Again, I’m awesome.

Matt: Get over it.
(several hours later)
Matt: Well, here’s your basic chord DFA.

Tam: That’s a lot of lines, but I still haven’t found what I’m looking for.
Matt: And what do you mean by that?

Tam: They’re all root position chords. What about first or second inversion? And don’t get me started on the fact that you’re missing seventh chords entirely.

Matt: Complain all you want, but I won’t get fooled again. If you want any of that, you do the work.

Tam: Fine, fine. So what now?
Matt: Now we compare, using our newly-created automata and a couple of chord progressions from our fine musicians.

Tam: Ooh! I have Britney’s classic hit, “Oops, I Did It Again” right here, and I already have the first few chords analyzed.

Matt: That should be enough. I’ve gone through and randomly picked a well-known Bach piece to feed in, in this case Prelude VIII in Eb minor from his famous Well-Tempered Clavier.

Tam: I wish I could play that one.

Matt: Dream on.
Matt: Let’s start with Bach. The first few measures of his piece go i-iv-vii°-i, which is a bit unusual for him. Still, it does accept it.

Tam: Neat! I hope Britney passes, though I have more than a feeling that she won’t.
Tam: Okay, her progression goes i-V-i-II-III-V. Does that work?

Matt: Sadly, no. I won’t ramble on about why, just trust me that it doesn’t.

Tam: Darn. Well, that was educational. Now I know that Britney Spears didn’t write the same music as Bach.

Matt: And knowing is half the battle.