The Leader in e-Safety Education

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READ ALOUD

Original Mix with Dynamic Jam

My name is D.J. and Electronic dance music is my jam. Every weekend, I play top music hits at the Sock Pop in Sock Puppet Nation. My friends enjoy listening to popular songs. But when I mix my own music, the audience is electrified. I use a digital tool called a Launchpad to lay tracks. A track is a recorded layer of sound. A song can have several tracks (sort of like a triple decker cheeseburger with extra toppings). Here are the basic steps that I follow to create original sounds.

Drum Beat: The drum beats form the backbone of the electronic song. Rhythm and tempo can speed up or slow down the song. I record a few seconds of drum beats and set it on a loop. A loop means that the recording will play over and over again without stopping. Drum beats include bass drum, hi-hat, or other percussion-like instrument sounds. Pulsing drum beats make people want to stand up and dance!

Bass: Next, I add bass. Bass is a deep vibrating tone that compliments the drum beat. You can feel the bass from your head to your toes. Big bass and drum beats charge a room with energy.

Synthesizer (or "Synth"): An electronic tune gives the song its unique sound. I record a sequence of musical notes and change them around throughout the song to keep the music interesting.

Vocals: Vocal means "voice." Electronic dance music does not usually have many lyrics. I use a few thoughtfully chosen lyrics to express a feeling or a message through music.

Effects: An electronic sound artist uses effects to change the qualities of different sounds. Sometimes the bass sounds like "womp-womp-womp" and other times it is grimy. Grimy means that the sound has a distortion effect that sounds more like "romp-romp-romp." While the tracks loop around, I use the launch pad to rearrange the synth sound and change the pitch of the vocals.

Drop: One of my absolute favorite techniques is to make the pitch and tempo build up to a high point and add a perfectly timed drop. A drop is a well-timed silence that adds a dramatic effect. Usually, after a drop, I create new sounds or let ReMix take center stage and work her electronic magic.

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READ ALOUD

Transforming Electronic Sounds with ReMix

I'm ReMix. My claim to fame is transforming recorded sounds into something new and unexpected. I collaborate with D.J. to keep the audience on their toes. As sound artists, we each have our own style of musical expression. We have agreed to work together and publish our work as a team. This way, we can build on the creativity of one another.

A small part of a song, called a sample, is enough to re-create a whole new sound. For example, I can take five seconds of a drum beat from one song and record it on a track. I can take a few of the lyrics from the vocal track of another song, the guitar riff from another song, and add my own bass, synth and effects. The result is an entirely different work. Music lovers everywhere enjoy the original music of their favorite artists. However, some people prefer a remix over the original version of a song. This could take away from the value of the original work.

Digital tools give us the ability to mix new sounds from existing recordings. These recordings are easy to get hold of. We can download MP3s from digital stores like iTunes and Google Play. Although we pay for a digital copy of a song, we need to be mindful of how we use the music. Sound recordings are protected by copyright. One question that others often ask me is "How much of a sound recording can you remix in a song without violating copyright?"

D.J. and I have decided that before we mix new sounds with copyrighted recordings, we will get permission from the owner. We respect the original work of recording artists. We also understand the value of building upon the creative work of others. As recording artists ourselves, we understand that mixing sounds takes time and effort. Another option that we have is to look for music that has a built-in license. As performing artists, we play songs in public places like the Sock Pop in Sock Puppet Nation. We also publish our work on a sound-sharing site called SoundCloud. SoundCloud is a place where music makers share their songs online.

Rumor has it that a remix falls under fair use, but I know a few artists who have received takedown notices on their SoundCloud profile. Although a sample may only be a few seconds long, it is enough to form an entirely new song that contains parts of an original work. The original artist, music publisher or record company can exercise their copyrights and file a claim. Musical remixes seem to be in a grey area. The line between derivative work and fair use seems a bit blurry. What do you think?

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VOCABULARY

Copyright Holders

Songwriter/Composer – The original author of song lyrics, sheet music and musical arrangements.

Sound artists – Creators and composers of musical sounds and recordings such as electronic dance music. Sound artists also rearrange existing recordings using technology.

Performance artist – The singer or musician who performs the music.

Music publisher – A songwriter or composer gives the copyright of their music composition to a publishing company in exchange for royalties.

Record label – A company that promotes and distributes sound recordings (CDs, MP3, etc.). Record companies pay music publishers for the rights to copy and distribute sound recordings.

Copyright Terms

Derivative work – A new work that is based on one or more existing original works; a new version such as a movie based on a book, or a book based on a song.

Transformative work – A new work based on an original that changes the meaning, message, or nature of the original work.

Licensing – Permission that a copyright owner gives to someone else that is usually restricted by copyright law. For example, a song writer might allow a business to use the song in a commercial.

Types of Licenses

Mechanical license – Permission to record a song that somone else wrote (no video).

Synchronization license – Permission to record a song that someone else wrote and use it in a video.

Master license – Permission to use a recording that someone else made.

Performance license – Permission to publically perform a song that someone else wrote.

Print license – Permission to reprint sheet music or song lyrics that someone else wrote.

Grand performance license – Permission to perform a song that someone else wrote in a dramatic work.

Lingo

Mashup – A piece of music created by digitally overlaying an instrumental track with a vocal track from a different recording. (Merriam-Webster)

Remix – A new or different version of a recorded song that is made by changing or adding to the original recording of the song. (Merriam-Webster)

Samples – A part of an original recording used to make a remix.

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