

Why Sampling Isn't Stealing — Medium

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“Culture always builds on the past.”

Atlanta, Georgia 2006, this was the year T.I. emerged into greatness as the “King of the South.” At anytime you could find at least one of our many hip hop radio stations playing a song off of his Grammy nominated platinum album *King*. I'm 13 years old in the passenger seat of my Dad's car rapping away the lyrics of “Why You Wanna”. At that time I probably didn't take much to lyricism, let alone the origin of the track itself, I just knew that it was hot! My dad turns around looks at me and begins to laugh, “Yall's generation don't even know... That right there is my music. That's what we were listening to years ago. That ain't new.” He is referring to the use of two songs being sampled: the chorus of “Why You Wanna”, derived from the beginning of Q-Tip's verse in A Tribe Called Quest's “Find A Way” set upon a keyboard chord of Crystal Water's “Gypsy Woman.”

Two years later I'm sitting in a class amongst other high school aged students in a summer multimedia program at the University of Florida watching the “world's first open source documentary” *RiP!: A Remix Manifesto*. *RiP!* examines “the changing concept of copyright” from music to movies. This film absolutely blew my mind, it was the next modern day divide and I took a stance, I chose [CopyLEFT](#).

Sampling is simply lifting a section of an audio piece to include it in a new song. As the internet emerged, sampling grew in popularity and outdated copyright laws made it difficult to sample music. Most of your favorite artistes songs, in all genres of music, are sampled from previous songs and it has been going on for years. Some people believe that sampling is stealing and that creativity and development of music should never emerge from prior creations.

Sampling is a form of art, a contribution to music's predecessors and not a form of stealing. More musicians and producers are getting criticized for the use of sampling as a lack of creativity. Also the new “genre” of mixing and remixing is growing and it should be respected for its craft.

There needs to be a balance. Even though this is still an on going issue non profit organizations such as Creative Commons allows the use of shared information, from music to documents with “some rights reserved” allowing creators to give their own stipulations on how others can utilize their information.

Shouldn't sampling be taken more as a sign of respect instead of a form of theft? Now I challenge you to take a moment to visit [whosampled.com](#) and search your favorite artist or song, you might be surprised.