THE VERSIONS PROJECT: EXPLORING MASHUP CULTURE

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To everyone who has encouraged me to never give up, this would have never happened without all of you.
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Music mashups are transformative works of art made up of pre-existing songs. Mashups have broken new ground, not only in music but also in new approaches to art and learning. My research of this form of music has given insight on how our configurable culture is influencing areas of design, commerce, and education. Mashup culture is indicative of where culture as a whole is headed.

My research involved interviewing mashup artists. Artist were contacted online and asked to participate by answering a short questionnaire. Online communities such as music mashup forums and tutorial websites were investigated as well. The data collected combined with a thorough literature review was used to form conclusions on mashup’s role within culture. These conclusions were deployed in two formats: both online and a live presentation. The online presence resulted in a personal blog for the project (located at: http://www.versions.blogspot.com/) as well as involvement with a website, Ideal Mashup, maintained by the content management system Drupal. The live presentation of the research was
performed at Digital Worlds Institute’s Research Education and Visualization Environment (REVE).

INTRODUCTION

A casual listener might dismiss the song “Can't Stop the Pop”\(^1\) as just another upbeat pop hit. However, the song is actually at the cutting edge of media creation. Created by DJ Earworm for his *United State of Pop* series, this work is actually a combination of preexisting songs, specifically the twenty-five biggest hits of 2010 as reported by *Billboard Magazine*. “Can't Stop the Pop” is a mashup, a song that contains two or more songs recombined in a creative way to create a new composition. In this case, DJ Earworm has used his mashup as a commentary on the current state of homogeny in today’s popular music.

With the evolution of the mashup over the past decade, music itself has become both a raw material and a tool for new creation. This new musical form has become increasingly widespread and influential in popular culture. In 2008, mashup artist Girl Talk’s fourth album *Feed the Animals* was one of *Time* magazine’s top ten albums of the year. In October of 2009, the episode “Vitamin D” of the television show *Glee* aired. *Glee* centers on a high school show choir. “Vitamin D” featured the cast blending songs as varied as Bon Jovi's “It’s My Life” with Usher's “Confessions Part II.”

Mashups often rely on unexpected juxtapositions of dissimilar artists. The mashup “ A Stroke of Geine-us” combines an instrumental edit from rock band The Strokes's “Hard to Explain” with the a capella vocals of singer Christina Aguilera's “Genie in a Bottle” In 2004, musician Brian Burton, under the stage name Danger Mouse, released *The Grey Album*. The

\(^1\) [http://djearworm.com/united-state-of-pop-2010-dont-stop-the-pop.htm](http://djearworm.com/united-state-of-pop-2010-dont-stop-the-pop.htm)
Grey Album combines a capella verses from Jay-Z's *The Black Album* with instrumental samples from the ninth album from The Beatles, popularly known as *The White Album*.

Mashups often combine disparate songs in unexpected ways to produce a new, cohesive piece of popular music. These new cohesive pieces often contain recognizable elements of existing songs but reproduce them in unique and creative ways using new sampling and editing sound technologies. Frequently made by non-professional, hobbyist artists who share and disseminate their work online, mashups are a fascinating nexus where changing audio technologies, participation in online communities and popular culture fandom intersect.

In this thesis I present a broad snapshot of music mashup culture. Mashup artists are creating new, transformative works that challenge many aspects of popular culture. First, presenting relevant literature on remix culture as well as examining the historical antecedents of mashups structures my argument. Then, a study of contemporary mashup artists was conducted. Artists were contacted online and asked to participate by answering a short questionnaire. Online communities such as music mashup forums and tutorial websites were investigated as well. This data combined with a thorough literature review was used to form conclusions on the nature of music mashup culture.

It is important to understand that, while mashups grow out of other techniques for resampling and recycling other popular music, they represent a new and distinct genre of music practice. They exist separately from remixes.

Mashups are often confused with remixes. Remixes are alternate versions of songs that already exist. Mashups are distinguishable from remixes because they repurpose multiple songs into a more or less cohesive structure. In a remix samples of other songs may be added but the original work still has some sort of authority. With mashups, no one song truly dominates. But
because the mashup grows out of remix culture, it is instructive to understand the history of the remix form and remix culture.

**Remix Culture and Broader Forms**

Music mashups exist within a larger, evolving subset of new media sometimes referred to as remix culture. Remix culture is multi-faceted and aspects of it can be seen everywhere. Literature on the subject is incredibly diverse as remix culture affects art, commerce, and law. Remix culture is an increasingly significant area of study. This cultural revolution of sampling, remix, and beyond has given rise to consumers of music who are also user-producers.

Encountering issues of copyright are inevitable when discussing remix culture. While the focus of this investigation is on artistry and the creative process, legal issues are often inextricable from the larger narrative. For example, many mashup artists have to release their creations for free over the Internet to avoid threats of lawsuits. This affects both the creation and distribution of this art form. Therefore, major areas of contention and dispute are set within this larger context.

Mashups have broken new ground, not only in music but also in new approaches to art and learning. My research of this form of music has given insight on how our configurable culture is influencing areas of design, commerce, and education. For example, the Ushahidi project is an open source project that combines crowdsourcing with mashup technology. Ushahidi works by collecting reports sent in by email or text message and placing those reports on a Google Map. Data mashups are applications using and combining preexisting data such as a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed and an application programming interface (API) to create some new service or interaction. Yahoo! Pipes is a web application that lets users easily
create data mashups. The application provides a graphical user interface (GUI) to easily aggregate RSS feeds and edit data.

EARLY ANTECEDENTS

Mashups have roots that stretch deep into the history of popular music, even as the contemporary mashup is a form of music that arose within the last ten years. In order to understand mashup’s unique situation within remix culture, it is instructive to look at the history of popular music that gave rise to the form.

Though the mashup is unique in the ways in which it blends existing songs together to produce a novel but cohesive whole, it is not without antecedent in popular music. In *Audio Mashup Construction Kit*, Roseman, also known as DJ Earworm, offers a brief history of mashups to accompany his mostly instructive texts. Roseman cites Dickie Goodman and Bill Buchanan's novelty records as early predecessors of today's mashups. Called break-in records, these were made by splicing snippets of popular music and adding in their own comedic dialogue. A popular example was 1956's “Flying Saucer.”

The Beatles have also contributed to early mashup culture. Liam Maloy's “‘Stayin’ Alive in Da Club’: The Illegality and Hyperreality of Mashups” identifies works consisting of prerecorded manipulated tape loops created by The Beatles as being another early mashup ancestor. Examples of this kind of work include “Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite and “Revolution #9.”

Many relate Beat Generation figure William S. Burroughs’s cut-up technique to this kind of manipulation. Burroughs practices this technique, which involves taking a prepared text and

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2 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oxx8WZZD0Q
physically cutting it up and rearranging it to create a new work. Though Burroughs popularized the technique beginning in the late 1950s, it had been practiced in some form at least as early as the Dada artists of the 1920s. Burroughs himself cited The Waste Land, a poem by T.S. Eliot that incorporated newspaper clippings as an early example of cut-up technique.

Negativland is another frequently cited early contributor to mashup culture. Filmmaker Craig Baldwin created Sonic Outlaws (1995), a documentary about the controversy surrounding Negativland. The film itself uses scavenged and repurposed film stock to illustrate the narrative. The band was sued by U2’s record label over the use of unauthorized sampling as well as the album artwork, which made it appear that consumers were buying an album by U2 entitled “Negativland.” One song in the album used found recordings of popular radio disc jockey Casey Kasem. The selection featured Kasem losing his temper while introducing a U2 song. Kasem was unaware he was being recorded. Negativland edited and rearranged Kasem’s rant to incorporate it with extensive sampling of U2’s “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For.”

**Hip-hop**

The genre of hip-hop is often cited as being particularly relevant to mashups. Hip-hop has always relied on sampling. Sampling is taking a selection of music, known as the sample, and using it in another work. Samples can be as small as isolating a single drumbeat or they can be as expansive as inserting a whole chorus into a new work. The Disc Jockey or DJ also rose to prominence with hip-hop. Early hip-hop in particular relied heavily on the skills of DJs to create impressive sounds. DJs became an icon, representing the whole scope of hip-hop. Eventually, DJing became its own art with its own subculture.

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3 http://www.negativland.com/
Hip-hop is a story still being told. Jeff Chang's *Can't Stop Won't Stop* is the defining text about the birth of the movement. Chang, a hip-hop journalist, uses an engaging accessible tone. *Can't Stop Won't Stop* begins in the South Bronx, New York in the summer of 1977. We then move with Chang to the streets of Kingston, Jamaica. Chang relates hip-hop's formation with the birth of Rastafarianism.

Sampling has been a key component of both dub and hip-hop. “Don't Stop That Funky Beat: The Essentiality of Digital Sampling to Rap Music” written by law student Jason H. Marcus also recounts the shared history of dub and hip-hop. He then moves into sampling as a postmodern art form. Like many other authors, he talks of sampling in terms of collage and deconstruction. More interestingly, he mentions the idea of rap artists using sampling as a way of paying homage to earlier African-American artists.

Many early hip-hop records can be seen as almost proto-mashups. In “The Apolitical Irony of Generation Mashup: A Cultural Case Study in Popular Music” Michael Serazio views mashups as having firm roots within hip-hop. Serazio mentions Aerosmith's “Walk This Way,” the 1986 collaboration with rap group Run-DMC, as having much in common with contemporary mashups. Another song Serazio points to is Evolution Control Committee's “Rebel Without a Pause” - a combination of Herb Albert's instrumentals with the rap vocals of Public Enemy's Chuck D.

Hip-hop also popularized the megamix, an important mashup antecedent. The megamix can be thought of as an extension of the song medley. In ‘Regressive and Reflexive Mashups in Sampling Culture,” Eduardo Navas differentiates medleys from megamixes by identifying medleys as being performed by only one band – a playlist of songs are played in a sequence. A megamix is similar but relies on a DJ to play brief, sampled sections of songs that are sequenced
together to create an assemblage. Grandmaster Flash experimented with the megamix when he recorded “The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash and the Wheels of Steel.” This work was performed on turntables and produced in a studio. It included samples of songs by The Sugarhill Gang, The Furious Five, Queen, and Blondie.

THE MODERN MASHUP ERA

The modern mashup era has a very recent origin. Roseman’s *Audio Mashup Construction Kit* dates the advent of the modern mashup era as starting around 2001. That year Erol Alkin mashed up singer Kylie Minogue’s “Can't Get You Out of My Head” with New Order's “Blue Monday.” That same year Freelance Hellraiser created “A Stroke of Genie-us”

In “Stayin' Alive in Da Club: The Illegality and Hypereality of Mashups,” Liam Maloy identifies 2003 as a pivotal year for mashups. That year hip-hop artist Jay-Z, recognizing the power of remix culture, publicly released the a capella vocals from *The Black Album*. This release resulted in a number of mashup albums, including DJ Dangermouse’s *The Grey Album*. In “DangerMouse’s Grey Album, Mashups, and the Age of Composition” Philip A. Gunderson uses Jacques Attali’s stages of music’s social function as a framework for discussing the cultural ramifications of *The Grey Album*. Attali’s distinct stages are sacrifice, representation, repetition, and composition. Gunderson is primarily concerned with composition. This final stage is where music is produced for and by its own consumers.

Gunderson’s commentary on *The Grey Album* reveals some of the essential oppositions within the work that make it so compelling. It is a work that combines the music of a Caucasian British rock band with the lyrics of an African-America rapper. It combines what is now considered a classic record with what was immediately a contemporary hit album. Gunderson

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4 [http://www.illegal-art.org/audio/grey.html](http://www.illegal-art.org/audio/grey.html)
sees Danger Mouse as a historian. Danger Mouse himself is both British and Black. Hip-hop’s roots can be traced back to sixties era rock music. In turn rock music owes much to early American blues written by African Americans.

“I ordered a Frappuccino, where’s my fucking Frappuccino? Alright let’s do this.”

- Collison Course

In 2004, the EP Collision Course was released. Collision Course was a collaboration between rapper Jay-Z and rock band Linkin Park. This EP is composed entirely of tracks that combine elements of one already existing song from Jay-Z with an existing song from Linkin Park. Listening to Collision Course is a voyeuristic experience. Though this was not produced in a bedroom studio or recorded in a garage, the finished tracks smartly leave in short asides or exchanges between Jay-Z and Linkin Park. Yet, Collision Course operates differently than most mashups. This recording has the distinction of being collaborative live recordings of previously recorded Jay-Z and Linkin Park songs. Most mashup producers can only dream about the incredible access to equipment, studios and sound engineers that either Jay-Z or Linkin Park has. Collision Course would eventually reach #1 on the Billboard 200. Since the commercial success of Collision Course, mashups have had much more mainstream attention given to them.

NEW MEDIA ARTIFACTS

Mashups are considered new media artifacts. New media artifacts, like traditional media artifacts, are subject to criticism. Also, like traditional media artifacts much attention is given to the broader cultural effects these artifacts have. New media artifacts have inherent properties that are unique to them. They also have a distinct social practice; mashups particularly exist in a culture of participation and engagement.
The Hyperreal

The concept of the original is of particular concern within our contemporary networked culture. *Simulacra and Simulation* by Jean Baudrillard presents a theory of contemporary culture. Baudrillard addresses the crisis of reproduction with the concept of the simulacrum, the idea of a copy without an original. Within our networked culture, we have access to nearly every image ever reproduced, every film ever made, and every song recorded. In *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility*, Walter Benjamin wrote about the danger of duplicates of an artwork lacking a unique existence in a particular place (21). Benjamin is still concerned with the idea of authenticity. In his definition, the authenticity of a work is somehow embedded within the original, forming an aura. With Baudrillard, this aura has been lost entirely in a hall of mirrors.

Most importantly for remix culture, Baudrillard introduces us to the idea of the hyperreal. Baudrillard uses many examples to familiarize us with this concept. In the first section, “The Precession of Simulacra” he uses Disneyland as a model illustration of hyperreal simulacra. Disneyland exists within such extreme, carefully controlled artifice that it embodies a hyperreal America, a sanitized miniature world that never existed. In “History: A Retro Scenario,” Baudrillard identifies our interest in instant nostalgia, our love of ghosts. He could easily be talking about mashup production rather than cinema. Baudrillard claims everything is equivalent and is mixed indiscriminately in the same morose and funereal exaltation, in the same retro fascination (44).

Later in the section entitled “Apocalypse Now” Baudrillard examines how the film of that name embodies the hyperreal. This film can be compared to the work of mashup artist Girl
Talk in that *Apocalypse Now* is a visual assault, and Girl Talk’s musical compositions are an aural assault. The film, directed by Francis Ford Coppola, is set during the Vietnam War. The plot is partially based on Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, a novella about an Englishman taking a job as a ferryboat captain in Africa. *Apocalypse Now* centers on a US Army Special Operations officer who is sent into the jungle to assassinate an insane Special Forces colonel. The film employs explosions and violence to capture the horrors faced in war. In addition to its on-screen drama and violence, the film’s production itself was also turbulent. This is well documented in *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse* (1991). Both *Apocalypse Now* and the music of Girl Talk are a celebration of fantasy and special effects. His music uses a large number of samples in each song to achieve an overpowering, disorienting effect. Each sample begins to lose its meaning, leaving no room to be interpreted critically with no redeeming moral message. Girl Talk’s live performances are also a spectacle. Girl Talk invites his fans to dance onstage and interact with him. They become participants rather than viewers.

In “Stayin’ Alive in Da Club: The Illegality and Hyperreality of Mashups” Liam Maloy interprets Baudrillard’s theory and attempts to apply it to music mashup culture. Maloy tries to use a specific mashup, “Wild Rock Music” by Smash⁵ and take the reader through Baudrillard’s four orders of signification. Maloy argues that an original master recording constitutes reality and that the mashup is the simulacrum. A first order simulation would be an original vinyl record. A second order simulation would constitute a digitized version of the vinyl record. A third order simulation would be an electronic extract or sample. The fourth order simulation would be a mashup. Maloy extrapolates that the order of signification for live music would be quite different. The “real” would be the band performing live music they wrote. A first order

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simulation would then be a band covering the first band’s material. Second order simulation would be a tribute band that impersonates the original band using costumes and props. Third order simulations would be a tribute band that stays in character off stage or has some sort of crossover with the originating band.

Properties of New Media

New media forms like mashups have inherent properties that distinguish it from old media. In *The Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich presents a robust critical theory. Manovich views new media primarily through cinematic theory. Manovich explores how the vocabulary and conventions of “old media” inform new media. While music is not discussed in depth, visual culture is the focus, new media is where digital sampling lies.

*The Language of New Media* is organized in chapters, each tackle one distinct concept or problem. The first chapter, “What is New Media?” talks about the medium itself. The second chapter, “The Interface” discusses the interaction between humans and computers, emphasizing the relationship of humans with the computer screen. This chapter also discusses operating systems, as they are the primary way most people interact with the computer screen. Mashup artists interact primarily with the computer screen to create and distribute their art. Later in this paper more will be discussed about the specific software and tools artists use to create their mashups. Scholars such as Manovich relate the screen to much older, analog equivalents such as paintings. The screen indicates that another space exists, one that is virtual. Images depicted on screens are still described with painting terminology. Landscape mode refers to a horizontal format while portrait mode refers to a vertical format.

Issues of choice and selection are prevalent in discussions about new media art. Manovich claims, “authentic creation has been replaced by selection from a menu” (124).
Manovich argues that so much comes predefined in any software package. Yet he allows that even before the advent of new media, other scholars have critiqued the idea of the true artist – someone who creates everything on his or her own and relies solely on their imagination – has been always questioned.

Manovich believes that new media artistry has always been based on “modification of an already existing signal” (126). He argues that we have a tendency to romanticize the artist. Somehow we are still uncomfortable designating someone who works predominately on the computer as an artist. Still, artists have long interfaced with the screen. Manovich views the rise of the DJ as being “directly correlated to the rise of computer culture” (135). He sees the DJ as the best example of new media theory in action, someone who relies on selection and the rapid combination of preexisting elements. While Manovich defines the DJ as someone who mixes live and also relies on assorted electronic hardware devices, the mashup artist also embodies the new logic of selection.

Scholars are already trying to envision what culture will look like beyond the remix. Manovich explores the further implications of mashups in the essay, “What Comes After Remix?” (2007). He identifies the introduction of multi-track mixers as what made the birth of remix culture possible. Mixers made it much simpler to quickly manipulate and change elements if a song. The term “remix” came from this action and then began to be applied to other types of manipulation.

**Community**

Jenkins (2006) organizes his arguments around specific case studies, one for each section. The first section uses an examination centered on reality television show *Survivor* to discuss how a virtual community learns and processes knowledge. The second section discusses television
talent show American Idol's success and its effect on commerce and media convergence. The third section examines the movie The Matrix and the transmedia world that was created to compliment and augment the film. The fourth section, “Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars? Grassroots Creativity” discusses fan-made films based on the popular and now iconic characters of George Lucas's Star Wars. The fifth section, “Why Heather Can Write: Media Literacy and the Harry Potter Wars” examines fan-created literature set in the fantasy world created by J.K. Rowling. The sixth section, “Photoshop for Democracy: the New Relationship between Politics and Popular Culture” examines how the consumption and subversion of popular culture can be applied to elements of political activism.

Jenkins concludes Convergence Culture with the idea that participatory skills are going to be applied everywhere and that extending those skills beyond entertainment is going to be increasingly important. Jenkins places a lot of importance on fan communities. Though Jenkins says nothing about music in Convergence Culture his ideas are particularly relevant to the DIY communities of music mashups.

**Remix Culture**

Contemporary culture is concerned with the remix, recombining information to make new creations. Rip! A Remix Manifesto, written and directed by filmmaker Brett Gaylor, is an excellent introduction to the world of remix. Gaylor starts his film with performance footage of Girl Talk. Gaylor claims that Girl Talk's music is obviously creative. Gaylor then relates the history of the Internet with his own personal history. This film is organized around a manifesto set forth by Gaylor and those within the remix community.

Similar in scope to Rip! A Remix Manifesto, the documentary Good Copy, Bad Copy (2007) also explores remix culture. Produced by mashup artist Girl Talk, the film explores the
inhibitions placed upon certain creative works due to copyright law. Good Copy, Bad Copy explores several important cases such as one involving a lawsuit against rap group NWA.

The film features experts that have chronicled instances of conflict involving individuals who have wanted to create new works with copyrighted material. Scholar Siva Vaidhyanathan discusses the issues surrounding the release of DJ Danger Mouse’s *The Grey Album*. Girl Talk also explains the difficulties of securing licensing to use copyrighted work.

Pirated films are also discussed. Since *Good Copy, Bad Copy* revolves around our online, networked culture - online piracy is the focus. Online piracy is seen as much more dangerous than older forms of illegal copying because of how rapidly copies can be distributed. Pirate Bay, a Swedish BitTorrent website, was accused of acts of copyright infringement by the United States. The event became so controversial that a political party was formed as a reaction. Lawrence Lessig, a champion of Creative Commons, is also featured in the film. Lessig represents a middle ground between anti-copyright activists and the militant upholders of copyright. He believes that with Creative Commons, artists can license their work in a fair way.

The film then departs to Nigeria to examine the film production and distribution that is going on there. The United States’ film industry differs greatly from the Nigerian film industry. In fact, Nigerian film is a completely unique situation. The Nigerian film industry arose in a country that had no existing copyright laws. Nigerian films are also released differently than those made in the United States and many other countries. They are almost always released straight to DVD rather than to movie theaters.

Aside from film, *Good Copy, Bad Copy* focuses strongly on the crisis of illegal downloading of music. VP Records, the largest reggae record company in the world is profiled.
They blame illegal downloading for their significant decrease in total sales. Solutions to the problem of illegal downloading are also suggested.

The tecno brega movement in Brazil is explored. Tecno brega is a style of music unique to Brazil. Tecno brega producers blend and remix pop music with Brazilian percussion to create new dance tracks. Distribution of CDs function as promotional items – producers of tecno brega rely on large outdoor dance party performances to generate revenue. CDs are also produced on site at these large live performances and sold.

Scholars have attempted to tackle the issues surrounding our rapidly-evolving remix culture. *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* written by Lawrence Lessig posits solutions to problems that have arisen in our remix culture. Lessig is a Harvard law professor. Lessig offers a comprehensive account of the conflicts artists and other producers have had with copyright law. Lessig is also the author of *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity*. Lessig offers a comprehensive history on copyright law. He explains that a lot of innovations came out of piracy. Lessig uses many illustrations to show how complicated copyrights are. He believes that current copyright laws are much too restrictive and that they harm creativity.

Lessig is a major champion of the Creative Commons licenses. Creative Commons provides licenses that people can easily attach to their content. Creators can use these licenses to grant certain freedoms for others. In *Remix*, he argues for a reform of copyright, finding the current state too limiting of creativity and even detrimental to the economy.

Lessig advocates for a change in the law and the use of Creative Commons. This book is organized in three sections. The first part concerns how our culture has changed. Lessig divides our culture into two categories: Read/Write (RW) culture and Read/Only (RO) culture. RW
culture allows consumers to change and adapt the culture around them. RO culture is a much more passive participation, with consumers simply viewing or experiencing the culture. The second section explains how much our economy has changed as a result of that cultural shift. The third and final section, “Enabling the Future” offers directives on how to adapt to these various changes while still promoting cultural progress and economic growth.

Some scholars are critical of Lessig’s reliance on Creative Commons and his interpretation of the problems within out remix culture. *You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto*, written by Jaron Lanier, offers a differing opinion from Lessig's. Lanier emphasizes the power of the individual. He is concerned that we elevate technology to levels that diminish the value of human input.

*You Are Not a Gadget* is organized in sections around general themes. The first section questions what it means to be human in relation to technology. The second section, “What Will Money Be?” examines finances within today's technocracy and possible directions for the future. The third section, “The Unbearable Thinness of Flatness” is more esoteric. It examines Lanier's view that our culture, as a result of relying on metaphors related to computation, has become “flat.” The fourth section, “Making the Best of Bits” explains Lanier's relationship with computationalism. The fifth section, “Future Humors” concludes *You are Not a Gadget* and offers some possible directions for the future.

Lanier argues that one group of technologists has more influence over our culture than any other. He includes individuals from Creative Commons, Linux, and many others. He feels that many of these people emphasize the crowd rather than the individual. And, he believes that in emphasizing the crowd you have to diminish the individual. In his opinion this results in a loss
of humanity. Lanier believes that this emphasis on the crowd results in a hostile and unproductive networked culture.

Lanier is extremely critical of mashups. He groups them in with his idea of flatness. He uses the example of an anonymous mashup artist combining footage from the film *Blade Runner* as an illustration of what he calls “second-order expression” (Lanier 122). In his opinion, this disjointed, nonsensical juxtaposition could never compete with the original film, an example of what Lanier sees as an original, non-derivative work. Interestingly, Lanier views hip-hop as the last “genuinely new major style” (135). He believes that hip-hop artists were able to overcome the sterility of digital production by the stark contrast of the rigidity of a sequencer with the raw vibrancy of the human voice.

Mashups have also been a tool for activism. *Music and Cyberliberties* written by Patrick Burkart and part of the Music/Culture series from Wesleyan University Press discusses various cyberactivism movements about music. Burkhart derives much of his methodology through Jurgen Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action*.

Compared to other musicians, mashup artists must rely on different methods to get their music heard. In the first chapter of *Music and Cyberliberties*, Burkart mentions the illegal distribution of DJ DangerMouse's *Grey Album* without explaining what exactly made the content illegal. Most mashup artists do not have the means to get permissions from the artists they use in their songs. Gunderson explains that DangerMouse’s decision to release CD copies of *The Grey Album* resulting in a cease-and-desist letter being sent to the artist. This resulted in an Internet campaign called “Grey Tuesday” promoting the album. On February 26 2004, a group of websites provided The Grey Album for easy download. Consumers downloaded copies of the album for free over one million times. Burkart does place DJ DangerMouse alongside groups
Plunderphonics and Negativland in a category he calls “culture jammers.” These groups rely on subversion of mainstream operations to communicate their message.

Other scholars approach mashups holistically, evaluating the implication of this new art form as it relates to culture as a whole. *Mashed Up: Music, Technology, and the Rise of Configurable Culture* by Aram Sinnreich explores music mashups based on how technology and networked culture is allowing us to rapidly configure and reconfigure music. In the introduction, Sinnreich discusses critical information studies - the ways in which culture and information are regulated and thus the relationships among regulation and commerce, creativity, science, technology, politics, and other human affairs.

Sinnreich organizes his examination in three sections. The first section concerns the existing paradigm of music and how that paradigm is changing. The second section examines themes within mashup culture that arose from Sinnreich’s surveying and interviewing both mashup artists and regular Americans. The third section discusses some conclusions brought about by interviews and surveys from the second section. Sinnreich attempts to apply these ideas to the changing paradigm of music. To perform research on changing views of music Sinnreich relied in two sources of data. The first was a quantitative survey of a diverse range of Americans asking them about their awareness of configurable culture practices. Sinnreich mostly uses the last qualitative question from this survey an open-ended question of what people thought about mashup culture. The second data source was a series of interviews with people involved with music production mashup artists, music attorneys, and music industry executives.

*Mashup Cultures*, edited by Stefan Sonvilla-Weiss, extends the idea of mashups to include the related ideas of data mashups and other Web 2.0 practices. The contributors are an incredibly diverse group made up of media scholars with wildly different interests. The
introduction, written by Stefan Sonvilla-Weiss outlines what his ideas about mashup culture are as well as introducing each contributor’s investigation in order. *Mashup Cultures* is organized alphabetically by each contributor’s last name. Only one author, Eduardo Navas in “Regressive and Reflexive Mashups in Sampling Culture” explicitly discusses music as the central theme to his contribution.

Many contributors to *Mashup Cultures* are concerned with how mashups relate to ideas of media literacy. These include Mizuko Ito’s “Mobilizing the Imagination in Everyday Play: The Case of Japanese Media Mixes” as well as Henry Jenkins's “Remixing Moby Dick.” In “Remixing Moby Dick,” Henry Jenkins relates the story of educator Ricardo Pitts-Wiley teaching the novel *Moby Dick* to incarcerated youth. Pitts-Wiley created a play, *Moby Dick: Then and Now* that was adapted from the original text. The incarcerated juveniles contributed to this adaptation, they modernized the characters while remaining true to the motivations of the original text. *Moby Dick* is a story about a man’s single-minded obsession with capturing a rare white whale. In *Moby Dick: Then and Now*, the obsession shifts to the modern cocaine cartel. Jenkins also discusses an important question brought up by many students. Why is it appropriation when Melville borrows from various texts and plagiarism when they do the same? This problem is related in terms of today’s copyright laws as well as changing attitudes towards what constitutes originality and artistry.

In *Mashed Up*, Sinnreich discusses new media literacy in terms of artistry. He attempts to identify what is truly artistic within mashup culture. Sinnreich determines that the more transformative and innovative the work is, with evidence of true media literacy, the higher the level of artistry. It is possible to associate the rise of mashup artists with Baudrillard’s belief that socialization is measured by the exposure to media messages (p. 80). Mashup artists are
immersed in media and are seen as savvy so they are sometimes regarded as geniuses due to their skillfulness of their innovation or transformative artistry.

*Sound Unbound* is a diverse anthology of remix culture edited by Paul D. Miller (2008). Contributors to *Sound Unbound* include artists, academics, journalists, and lawyers. Each section stands on its own. In the section “In Through the Out Door: Sampling and the Creative Act” Miller describes *Sound Unbound*:

“It’s the remix – it’s a sampling machine where any sound can be you and all text is only a tenuous claim to the idea of individual creativity. It’s a plagiarist’s club for the famished souls of a geography of now-where” (p.5)

In “An Introduction, or My (Ambiguous) Life with Technology” written Steve Reich, Reich recounts his history with electronic music. Reich’s work has been characterized with its extensive use of phasing and looping. Reich is an enthusiastic user of sampling. He cautiously approves of laptop-based composers but maintains that there will always be a place for the performance of live music.

“In Through the Out Door: Sampling and the Creative Act” by Paul D. Miller attempts to explain remix culture. He argues that remixing has exploded due to the networked nature of our technology. In remix culture, ownership is usually a subject of contention. The term “appropriation” is often used to discuss derivative creative works. “The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism Mosaic” by Jonathan Lethem (2008) discusses artistic appropriation. Lethem claims that appropriation has always been an essential part of creative works. He uses William S Burroughs as a starting point for structuring text as a collage. Lethem recognizes that some would have deemed Burroughs’s cut and paste technique plagiarism.
Plagiarism is a reoccurring theme within *Sound Unbound*. In “The Musician as Thief: Digital Culture & Copyright Law” by Daphne Keller states that digital technology has made remix more accessible to the masses. She also discusses how sampling culture and copyright law often clash and that fair use doctrine is problematic. Keller argues that recording technology has just increased and further enabled our existing tendency of reuse. She states that our culture has always built new art upon old. The only difference that technology brought was that, “Artists can now build upon prior recordings themselves, turning the fixed artifact of an earlier artist’s performance into raw material for new work.” (p.135). Predigital sonic collage took a long time to make and was difficult to do. The artists were also limited to whatever physical tapes they had to manipulate.

In “Stop. Hey. What's that Sound?” by Ken Jordan examines the immersing qualities of sound and extends that idea to music. Jordan posits that the very nature of digital technology directs artists to create new connections and breakdown boundaries between genres. He argues that since computers being able to break down all media into discrete data, all information can be recombined. Jordan also argues that music can be more easily disseminated so musicians today are more easily able to draw from a wide range of influences.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Subjects were asked to fill out a short online survey about their experiences creating mashups. Questions ranged from how many mashups they had created to whether they performed their mashups live. Many subjects were found by posting a link to the survey on GYBO, a popular online music mashup forum. Other subjects were found using social media platforms such as Twitter and facebook. Many of the mashup artists shared the link with each

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6 [http://www.gybo5.com/](http://www.gybo5.com/)
other. Some retweeted the link to all of their Twitter followers. Ten subjects responded. A copy of the survey may be found in the appendix of this document.

The questions asked were purposely left extremely open-ended. Since there is not much research in the field of music mashup in general, it was important to try and establish baseline questions of inquiry. Further research is needed to see if this very small sample is generalizable. There is also almost no research on how or why people make music mashups.

RESULTS

Data collected from the study resulted in several conclusions about the nature of mashup artists. First, mashup artists are mostly self-taught. Also, mashup artists belong to a sophisticated fan community and actively exchange ideas. There are also implications that the democratization of technology is resulting in mashups being crafted and shared much faster that ever before. Finally, the creators of mashups often credit hip-hop as the most relevant ancestor of mashups.

The term “self-taught” can have many connotations. All ten subjects describe themselves as predominantly self-taught. Mashup artists seem to identify greatly with this term. There seems to be significant DIY ethos within the whole movement of remix culture; mashup creation is no exception to this. Mashup artists seek out instruction for their work themselves, rather than wait passively for instruction to be brought to them. Responses varied from Captain Obvious's “self-taught with a few tips from friends” to A plus D's claim that, “A friend came over and showed us Ableton Live for about two hours one night and we learned the rest on our own, self-taught.” Ian Fondue cites that when he started, “there were no online tutorials or even an online scene” when he started creating mashups. Mashup artists seem to align their definition of self-taught with having little or no institutional education on music. Only a few identified themselves as being
musicians before getting into creating mashups. Even those that did identify as musicians, such as artist Maxwelljump claimed he only “dabbled in recording” prior to making mashups.

Though the mashup artists who responded all claimed to be self-taught, most conditioned that response with some sort of statement that they received some tip or production trick from a friend. Besides A plus D, Maxwelljump also mentions learning “re-pitching and changing the tempo of songs through a friend who was learning Pro-Tools.” Others like artist ToToM said they learned a certain software package for other music purposes and then adapted that knowledge to apply it towards making mashups.

Music mashup tutorials abound online. A casual search will yield hundreds of thousands of results, ranging from high school lesson plans incorporating them to advanced audio techniques utilizing multiple software applications. Many mashup tutorials can be found on YouTube, a popular video-sharing website. YouTube is primarily a forum for sharing user-generated content, and so sharing elements of remix culture such as mashup tutorials seems particularly appropriate. YouTube is easily accessible. It also has a low entry point in terms of participation; anyone can create a free account and start adding content. Additionally, YouTube automatically generates an embed code, allowing easy insertion of video clips into blogs and other websites. YouTube is also a major venue for video mashups remixing preexisting videos to create some new commentary.

Music mashup video tutorials tend to all have a similar structure. Most have the author of the tutorial narrating the steps while a video of the computer screen actually shows the software program in action. The tutorial can be easily followed as the actions performed by the author are indicated by the computer's cursor. Rarely do we actually see the author of the tutorial.
Other mashup tutorials use primarily text to instruct. For example, the tutorial “Bootcamp: Mashing for Beginners”\(^7\) instructs potential new mashup artists on how to create mashups using the software package Tracktion. This tutorial begins with a brief definition of mashups. Next, the key components of what is needed to complete this tutorial are outlined. This tutorial focuses on making a mashup that combines two songs, the instrumental of one song with the a cappella vocals of another. The tutorial then goes through the concepts that are to be learned to create the mashup. The first concept is setting a tempo grid. A tempo grid is crucial as it make the whole composition easier to line up. The next step involves removing vocals from a track if necessary. This tutorial explains how to use phase-reversal to effectively disguise and remove the vocals from a song. Example audio clips are given to show what the various steps of this process sound like. Then, the a cappella track is dealt with and the two tracks are combined.

Mashup producers tend to be technologically savvy. Some mentioned the mashup forum GYBO specifically as a source of inspiration and a place to receive guidance. GYBO is an acronym, short for get your bootleg on. In this forum users can post their completed work in several categories: mashups, remixes, original songs, and even links to video mashups they have created. A section called “Tweak” is where works in progress can be shared for feedback. GYBO also hosts challenges, contests where mashup artists can show off their skills. Many mashup artists use audio distribution platforms such as SoundCloud\(^8\). Music uploaded to SoundCloud is easily shared. Tracks can be embedded into websites and shared on Twitter. Official.fm\(^9\) is a similar platform. Formerly known as faertilizer, this platform bills itself as “the do it yourself music club.”

\(^7\) http://paintingbynumbers.com/bootcamp
\(^8\) http://soundcloud.com/
\(^9\) http://official.fm/
In addition to sharing their music digitally, aspects of live performance also figure greatly in some mashup artist’s conception of their practice. Most mashup artists interviewed had performed their work for an audience at some point. The few who had not performed live expressed interest in performing in the future. Some came to mashups through the more established practice of live DJing. Other mashup artists consider mashups something that is not really a live medium. Some distinguish mashups from songs mixed together and performed live as part of a DJ set. The artists A Plus D consider mashups “produced songs, not live mixes.” A Plus D is also affiliated with SmashUp Derby, a rock band that does live versions of mashups. A Plusd D goes even farther to claim that a “guy pushing buttons to tracks he’s already made is a bit false.”

Most mashup artists have personal websites to share their music and get feedback. All but one subject answered that they listened to mashups made by other artists. In fact, most cited more than ten other mashup artists that they listened to regularly.

Eight out of the ten mashup producers interviewed used the software product Ableton Live to create their mashups. Ableton Live is a robust digital audio workstation (DAW) that is designed to work as a loop-based sequencer. Using Ableton Live has many benefits for the music mashup artist. Ableton Live is a unique software product. Unlike many other DAWs, Ableton Live is also designed to work as an instrument for live performance. Ableton Live can operate in two different views, Session View and Arrangement View. Session View allows for nonlinear composition while arrangement view is a more traditional, linear sequencer view. It is Session View that makes Ableton Live so useful for mashup artists. Ableton Live also has dedicated hardware instruments like Akai’s APC40, a MIDI controller designed specifically to interface for
use with Live. Live is also able to automatically beat-match different songs, a helpful feature when making mashups.

Live's target audiences are DJs and other electronic music artists. Some mashup artists interviewed were first introduced to Live while working on other electronic music projects. They then adapted Live to making mashups. Live also has a relatively low entry point for cost and free trials can be downloaded from the official website. Live is a popular software suite, as a result tutorials abound online.

Music production was not always so accessible. Prior to such robust software, music production was often prohibitively expensive with limitations also being posed by the availability of physical space. Large drum machines, effects racks, synthesizers, and other electronic music instruments had to be purchased separately and installed in some sort of music studio. Now many mashup artists use just one laptop or computer with primarily one software package.

Mashup artists had an extremely wide range of answers when asked why they created mashups. CHEEKYBOY said he only made new mashups if he loved the song. Captain Obvious claimed he had “no idea” why he created mashups, calling it a “thankless task.” Other responses were similar to scntfc’s, he said he made mashups “for fun and to expose people to music they might not otherwise hear.” Maxwelljump claimed to “like the found art aspect of it.” A plus D’s response indicates that they are aware of mashup’s important position within remix culture and their relevancy as a creative medium. They stated, “mashups are another form of remix, and while the tools and creativity are there people will keep creating.”

DISCUSSION
Mashup artists seem to have the attitude that what they are doing is simply the next logical step in music’s evolution. However, what they are doing is quite revolutionary. The study of the creation of mashups has several implications for new media learning. Mashups are challenging works of intertextuality. Also, mashup artists themselves are erudite artists. They are aware of mashup’s close relationship to hip-hop. They emphasis the community they create in and for. This is significant in that it echoes many ideas about remix culture put forth by Henry Jenkins. Mashup artists are an interesting counterpoint to the theories set forth by Jaron Lanier as well as those of Baudrillard.

Mashup artists are already applying the types of new media learning that scholars are stressing will only become more and more important. Mashups can serve as a model for future educational curriculum. In “What Comes After Remix?” Lev Manovich asserts that we are living in a remix era. Remix is now an inescapable part of life. Since we cannot avoid remix practices, is useful to study mashup artists learning about how to make mashups as they can be a model of how we interact with any software. To learn, mashup artists rely on collaborative practices, the most prevalent being the online forum.

**Intertextuality**

Mashups are seen as a creation of intertextuality. Intertextuality is the shaping of texts’ meanings by other texts. Mashups subvert the authority of a text. By combining disparate works they create a new dialog. Scholars such as Jaron Lanier fear that the nature of the web, with its potential for anonymity could lead to the death of authorship. He believes that the loss of this authorship correlates with a lack of humanistic thought. These anonymous comments in blog posts or forums will somehow lead to a loss of personal creativity. Yet, scholars have long discussed the death of the author. In Roland Barthes’s *Image, Music, Text* the essay “The Death
of the Author” explores the life of a text removed from the writer of the work. Barthes views a written work as something that becomes divorced from the writer upon its completion.

The distinction of mashups as intertextual works is quite different from aligning mashups with visual practices we refer to as “montage” or “collage.” In “What Comes After Remix?” Manovich discusses how works using montage or collage rely on distinct, jarring oppositions. The successes of many mashups rely on how unobtrusive the samples are. Samples are edited and changed to fit within a coherent whole. Also, traditional collage is a destructive act. The original is cut up and then used in a new composition. With mashups created on a computer, samples can be saved in the form they were acquired and manipulated endlessly.

Mashups remove any illusion of authority of the author of the component tracks may have had. Barthes’s views on the nature of a body of text also relate greatly to the intertextual nature of mashups. Barthes views written text as “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (146). Barthes sees writing as synthesis. In his view, the removal of the author is productive in that it eliminates the misguided notion that there is some sort of final authority on a text. The inherent nature of mashup achieves the same goal. Barthes sees writing as a “multiplicity” where “everything is to be disentangled, nothing deciphered.” This attitude towards disentangling texts – rather than forcing a sort of imperfect translation – is helpful when considering mashups.

Many mashup artists saw hip-hop as mashup's most recent and relevant ancestor. A few even claimed hip-hop as their gateway into creating mashups. For example, Maxwelljump asserted interest in sampling as early as first hearing Run DMC and Aerosmith's “Walk This Way.” Surprisingly, given to the academic focus on mashup's roots in plunderphonics, none of the subjects interviewed mentioned that as an influence.
Music Mashup Culture

Mashup artists are actively engaged in a culture of participation and interaction. Mashup artists seem to align closely with many ideas brought forth by Henry Jenkins. Mashup artists are fans of music in general and mashups in particular. Most subjects reported that they listened to several other mashup artists’ work. Many also mentioned music mashup online forums as a place to share and learn about music mashups. Belonging to a participatory culture feels natural to them. In “The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagarism Mosaic:” author Jonathan Lethem (2008) states:

“Today when we can eat Tex-Mex with chopsticks while listening to reggae and watching a YouTube rebroadcast of the Berlin Wall’s fall – i.e., when damn near everything presents itself as familiar – it’s not a surprise that some of today’s most ambitious art is going about trying to make the familiar strange.” (p.32)

Mashup artists operate in a unique position within the realm of music creation. In Barthes’s essay “Musica Practica,” the author makes a clear distinction between the music one plays and the music one listens to. Mashup artists use the music that they listen to as the raw material for their own work. That music becomes the music they play for an audience. This audience can be solely online, live performance, or a combination of both.

In “Remixing Moby Dick,” Jenkins explores fan fiction. He explores how fans of media take elements they are drawn to and adapt them to create their own stories. Jenkins sees Moby Dick as making more sense of a mashup. He explains how Melville used disparate elements from the Bible to 19th century whaling lore to tell the story. He argues that some of the same practices that occur in crafting fan fiction occur during creating works on the level of Moby Dick. Writers
synthesize what they have read from other works. They borrow references from the Bible or make allusions to works by Shakespeare.

Music education can benefit from similar practices utilizing mashups. Influences of multiple music styles can be illustrated quickly and also serve as sonic representations of various musical concepts. Mashups also encourage users to use sophisticated software programs. These are often complex programs with many settings and endless options. Since mashup artists are dealing with preexisting media, they can focus on mastering the skills needed to use the software. They can immediately start using new media tools to create.

Mashups have inherent conflict within them. They blend together different narratives and juxtapose genres. In Barthes’s “The Grain of the Voice,” the author discusses how difficult it is to use language to describe music. Barthes views most music criticism as poor because it relies mostly on what he considers “the poorest of linguistic categories: the adjective” (179). Music engenders description. Barthes argues that the whole scope of music criticism would have to be reexamined and changed.

Yet, mashup artists show reverence to their source material. They show great care in their selections. Barthes discusses music in terms of it possessing a “grain.” Barthes’s concept of the grain is that it is the intersection of a language and a voice. The grain is a visceral experience. Barthes explains his definition of the grain in terms of his experiences with specific voice. He relates his experiences much like a fan does, valuing greatly emotional experience as well as technical difficulty. Mashup artists behave in much of the same way. They seek to honor the original grain of each source material by creating transformative works.

In Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy, Lawrence Lessig tackles the issue of the grain from a slightly different perspective. He explains that remixers, like
mashup artists, are aware of the cultural reference that the source material contains. We have shared memories of certain media. Songs that become popular enter the public consciousness and will forever have associations tied to it. This is powerful. Using your own original content cannot achieve this, as it will not contain the same type of embedded symbolic meaning. In other words, it will lack the same sort of grain.

Issues of professional versus amateur are always prevalent in discussions of any type of artistry. Mashup artists are no exception. Barthes also views the music that people play themselves as being “above all manual” (149). Some may perceive mashups as being removed from the same kind of manual manipulation. However, the metaphors of composition and computation seem firmly entrenched in the physical. Some artists interviewed related their work in terms of older, analog recording systems. Others mentioned DJing, an incredibly physical medium. Most discussed hardware tools as well as software.

Mashup artists also offer an interesting counterpoint to Jaron Lanier’s *You are not a Gadget*. Lanier (2010) states:

“Anonymous blog comments, vapid video pranks, and lightweight mashups may seem trivial and harmless, but as a whole, this widespread practice of fragmentary, impersonal communication has demeaned interpersonal interaction.” (p. 4)

Lanier believes that the freedom of our networked culture is an illusion. He argues that our reliance on metaphors of computation has resulted in a decline of creativity and a general culture of “flatness.” He feels that the advancement of technology has come at a price that we are simply mashing up already existing art to create purely derivative works devoid of meaning.

But mashup artists do value individual creativity, as evidenced by their admiration for specific other mashup artists. Lanier claims to value the individual yet does not seem to consider
the motivations of individuals who wish to create mashups or other remix works. This is problematic. Also, Lanier refers to mashups as being a part of “a culture of reaction without action.” However, mashups are a product of both reaction and action. Mashups have an illusion of ease to them. Since all of the media used to make them is already present, many think they are simple constructions. However, even the simplest mashups involving only two songs require a lot of time to create. Lanier seems to view mashup creators as people who mindlessly combine media with no thought to the end result. Simply uploading two songs and instantly outputting a finished product is not how mashups are made.

Individuals within the mashup community praise ingenuity. Most mashup creators valued thoughtful juxtaposition of music rather than making a more random sound collage. Mashup artists that employ the most skillful manipulations get the most attention within online communities. Artists interviewed were interested with innovating on the genre rather than revisiting already covered territory. Lanier also seems to think that remix artists let the technology that facilitates making mashups make most of the decisions. Most mashup artists interviewed mentioned being active on online forums honing their craft as well as trading production techniques with others.

Today I will check off my to-do list without touching a pen or paper. A click of the mouse will cross off tasks completed. As Manovich states in *The Language of New Media*, “what before involved scissors and glue now involves simply clicking on ‘cut’ and ‘paste’”(130). We have accepted the immateriality of today.

Comparisons of mashups to the theories of Baudrillard prove problematic. In “Staying Alive in Da Club: The Illegality and Hyperreality of Mashups” Liam Maloy’s attempt to order mashups in terms of signification is intriguing but flawed. Aligning mashups within this system
seems overly simplistic. Maloy does not include remixes of original songs. Maloy also does not explore the problem of different artists covering the same song. Also, the mashup performed with a live band is another quandary. Mashup artist A plus D mentioned being affiliated with a live mashup band, Smashup Derby. Also, singer-songwriter Butch Walker is known for doing both covers of popular songs and mashups at his live shows. Walker has performed a rendition of “Since You’ve Been Gone” by Kelly Clarkson combined with his rendition of “Maps” by the Yeah, Yeah, Yeahs.

Some scholars have attempted to argue that the mashup genre has already become stagnant. First, mashups have already become widely commercially accepted. Mashups have been featured on television shows like Glee – a mainstream network program set in a high school. Mashups have also been featured in commercials. In Mashed Up: Music, Technology, and the Rise of Configurable Culture, Aram Sinnreich (2010) identifies DJ DangerMouse’s The Grey Album’s success as being the catalyst for mashups going mainstream (189). Journalists immediately jumped on the mashup bandwagon, and mashups were legitimized in the press. Another sign of stagnation is statements from the mashup artists themselves. Some mashup artists interviewed seemed cynical towards remix culture.

However, mashups are a response to the commodification of music as a whole. Genres are contrived, rather than being the result of a natural development of diverse music practices. Often the categories of music seem arbitrary or overly reductive. Mashups can be seen as a reactionary movement against this commodification.

Take for example the genre of pop music. Rather than being characterized by any one sound, pop music is simply defined as being what is popular music today. As a result, genres

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10 [Video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pik5DLgq48Y)
have collapsed. A pop radio station is very likely to play rap music immediately after a rock hit. It is telling that works like *The Grey Album* resonated so deeply. Since the majority of people that acquired the album did so by downloading, the album was obtained for free. This work became something that existed outside of commodification. Many other mashup artists distribute their work for free via the Internet. Often, their work often cannot be something they profit off of directly because they are unable to legally use their source material in commercial works.

CONCLUSION

“When you cut into the present the future leaks out.”

-William S. Burroughs, *Break Through in Grey Room*

In *This is Your Brain on Music*, professor and neuroscientist Daniel J. Levitin suggests that the desire to engage in collective music making may be an evolutionary response to support social bonding. Mashup artists may be working with computers with powerful processing power, but what they seem to value most is contributing to a community. Though the tools to create are constantly evolving, we still have the same impetus to create and share. Remix culture is an important area of study as it emphasizes sharing over our networked culture. Mashups are a prevalent example of those remix culture and serve as markers for this connection.

The study of mashup culture still has a long way to go. Production techniques are under documented. Individual mashup artists are rarely interviewed unless they have some sort of mainstream success. The learning process that accompanies mashup creation has not yet been fully documented. Rather, we assume a learning process exists as finished mashups often exhibit a high sophistication of technical literacy. Many mashup tutorial sites exist yet there is no academic documentation on their effect on remix culture or their efficacy. We still do not know
yet if there is a dominant creative pedagogy. It has not yet been established if there is a typical
music mashup artist. A wider net must be first cast to establish this.

Areas of interest for future research include investigating cross-cultural music mashup
works such as Brazil's tecno brega. Tecno brega often combines hits from the United States or
Europe with locally produced Brazilian percussion. Ideally, some tecno brega artists could
be interviewed in person and observed performing as most of these works are geared towards
live performance at large outdoor dance parties. It would be interesting to see how this particular
subgenre of music aligns with contemporary theories on remix culture.

Mashups of visual culture are also an area of interest. As stated before, mashups are often
imperfectly compared to collage. Many contemporary artists have engaged in new versions of
collage that rely on a more blended concept rather than stark juxtapositions. This work seems to
be a contemporary response to living in remix culture. The artist Wangechi Mutu is of particular
interest as she appropriates a diverse array of imagery – from clippings from fashion magazines
to images from medical textbooks. These images are then incorporated into new, mixed forms,
often of a figural nature.

New media artists known as video jockeys or VJs are another interesting area for future
research. Scholars such as Lev Manovich have long aligned the development of electronic music
pop culture with the development of electronic visual culture. VJs improvise with visual
information in much of the same way mashup artists can improvise with songs. VJs are firmly
entrenched in remix culture. Most of them appropriate found footage to create new interactions
and meanings. They also seem to define themselves as largely self-taught.

Since the remix era is well under way, some have questioned what comes next. Some
have claimed that mashups and our remix culture have ushered in a new era of creativity by
allowing a degree of participation that has never been seen before. These individuals claim that this creativity will grow and flourish. Others claim that mashups signal the exact opposite. They believe that mashups and remix culture are the dirges of creativity. They feel that this new type of music is a cultural dead end. However, from what is known about mashups, the level of innovation and artistry can only be a signal of a bigger movement. Welcome to the mashup era.
SURVEY QUESTIONS

What is your DJ/performance name if you have one? Do you have a website where you share your work? Please include a website address if desired.

Do you listen to mashups made by other artists?

If yes, whose mashups do you listen to? Who are you a fan of? What mashup tracks are your favorite?

What made you first want to make your own mashups?

What do you use to make your mashups? (What software, kind of computer, etc....)

How did you learn how to make your mashups? Did someone else teach you? Did you follow online tutorial?

Are you entirely self-taught?

How long have you been making mashups?

About how many mashups have you made? Do you perform your mashups live?

Why do you continue to make mashups?
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Francesca Lyn was born on May 5, 1985 in Hollywood, Florida. She grew up in North Lauderdale, Florida and graduated from the International Baccalaureate program at Deerfield Beach High School in 2003. She earned her Bachelor’s of Fine Arts with a concentration in Painting from the University of Florida in 2008. Upon completion of her Master’s degree she intends to seek employment in her field as well as continue her work with idealMashup.