

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

You want to become a Hip Hop expert? Learn the info below and you're on your way, yo!

FAMOUS HIP HOP SAMPLING

Back in the early 1970s, when Hip Hop was not even a word in anyone's vocabulary, the foundation was being laid for its emergence onto the world scene as DJs started mixing up existing songs using two turntables. The repurposing of existing music became more complex as the DJs increased in skill, giving way to what many would argue to be a new art form. As DJs became consumed with perfecting their mixing techniques, they needed someone else to connect with the crowd on the mic. This opened the door for those who would be called rappers or MCs. These Masters of the Ceremony, or party, would speak to the crowd to hype them up and build love for the DJ. While the DJs refined their turntable work, the MCs refined their mic command and control, turning their raps into rhymes of increasing complexity and significance. This is how Hip Hop music was born. The advent of digital sampling machines in the 1980s made it easier to do the mixing that the DJs had innovated using turntables. This took mixing existing music to greater heights and created a defining sound for Hip Hop music. While, over the past two decades, the law (see SCHOOL'd article titled "The Court Case that Forever Changed Hip Hop Music") and technology has further changed how Hip Hop music uses other music to create its signature sound, sampling is still the foundation of Hip Hop music, as is talking, or rapping, over those samples. In this lesson, we are going to look at some of the most famous samples used in Hip Hop music and how they were repurposed to create new classics.

Sample 1: "My Name Is" by Eminem samples "I Got The" by Labi Siffre

This is the song that began the mainstream career of Marshall Mathers and his alter ego Slim Shady. It was produced by Andre Young, (aka Dr. Dre, possibly the most famous producer on the planet right now) who is well known for his prodigious use of sampling in his music. In fact, after the court case mentioned above changed how sampling was used in Hip Hop, Dr. Dre was one of the pioneers in the next wave of sampling. Dr. Dre began using larger sections of older songs as samples instead of a large number of smaller samples as previous producers had done. In his best work, Dr. Dre switches up the context and style surrounding the sample to create a new sonic effect, making the old song new again. To hear the sample used you need to listen about a third of the way through the English singer's 1975 song.

Sample 2: "Hypnotize" by The Notorious B.I.G. samples "Rise" by Herb Alpert

Blowing up the ratings charts just slightly after he was murdered, "Hypnotize" became one of Biggie's most famous songs. It is considered by many to be one of the most loved tracks in all of Hip Hop. This one is produced by Sean Combs (aka Puff Daddy aka Puff aka Puffy aka P. Diddy aka Diddy) who is also known for heavy sampling in his music. Sometimes Diddy's samples are obvious, (e.g. "Mo' Money, Mo' Problems" sample of "I'm Coming Out" by Diana Ross and "Feels So Good" sample of "Hollywood Swinging" by Kool and The Gang) but this particular sample is nicely remixed into an original instrument that calls back to "Rise" without sounding exactly like it. In fact, even those who wrote "Rise" were impressed by how their song was reused and proudly share in the success of "Hypnotize".

Sample 3: "Luv 2 Luv U (Remix)" by Timbaland and Magoo samples "Givin' Up Food for Funk" by The J.B.'s

Another world famous producer is responsible for this excellent track. While this is not Tim Mosley's (aka Timbaland) most famous track by far, it is a perfect example of his sampling talents. In contrast to the two previous producers highlighted above, Timbaland is even more subtle and original in his use of sampling (however, in the spirit of being completely transparent and honest, Timbaland is possibly our favorite Hip Hop producer and therefore we may be a bit biased in our assessment and praise). To judge for yourself, check any of the samples he has used for popular artists such as Aaliyah, Missy Elliott and Justin Timberlake. We strongly feel that listening to these tracks to hear how cleverly he uses sampling is a real joy and time well spent. In this particular song, Tim samples James Brown's Band in a way that shows exactly why George Clinton of the great funk band Parliament Funkadelic said "funk is the DNA in Hip Hop".

Sample 4: "It Takes Two" by Rob Base and DJ EZ Rock samples "Think (About It)" by Lyn Collins

Written, rapped and produced by Robert Ginyard (aka Rob Base), "It Takes Two" is one of the most popular Hip Hop songs of all time. The sample it uses from funk songstress Lyn Collins epitomizes how the technique made Hip Hop Music so well loved and popular. In "Think" the sampled used is a very small part of the song towards the middle, a classic break beat. If you listen to the entire song, you'll hear that most of the song sounds nothing like that break. However, Rob Base used it exactly as one of the early Hip Hop DJs would have, looping that funky and groovy four 8-count section over and over, and they rapping on top of it. As an additional fun sampling fact, the intro of the song, one people know from the second the first note is played, is actually a sample from a song called "Space Dust" by Galactic Force Band.

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Sample 5: "Ice Ice Baby" by Vanilla Ice samples "Under Pressure" by Queen and David Bowie

Possibly the most infamous sample ever used in Hip Hop. While it should have been being celebrated for being the very first Hip Hop song to reach number one on the Billboard charts, Vanilla Ice stirred major controversy with his breakthrough hit mostly because of not acknowledging his blatant sample. It is a very odd turn since, by the time he came along, it was well accepted that Hip Hop was based on sampling and, in fact, Ice's song only uses the sample on the hook. The rest of the song is built upon a very catchy and original funky groove. Had ice come right out and admitted use of the sample, instead of being honest far later, the song would have just been praised for its good reuse of a beloved earlier song.

Sample 6: "Peter Piper" by Run-D.M.C. samples "Take Me to the Mardi Gras" by Bob James

Bob James is one of the most sampled artists in Hip Hop. With that in mind, it might be amusing to realize that James is famous in the music world as being a pioneer of smooth Jazz. However, what's special about James is that his soft songs still include some very funky drum beats. Run-D.M.C. (and more specifically, producer Rick Rubin) is known for their hard drums and rocked out sound and "Peter Piper" is no exception. However, their powerful sound is boosted by a sample from this smooth Jazz song which, once again, sounds nothing like the rest of the song. Rick Rubin beefed up the bass sound, added tons of great scratching from Jam Master Jay and repurposed a smooth Jazz intro into a Hip Hop standard.

Sample 7: "They Reminisce Over You (T.R.O.Y.)" by Pete Rock and C.L. Smooth samples "Today" by Tom Scott

Considered one of the greatest Hip Hop songs of all time, producer Peter Phillips (aka Pete Rock) again shows how a small sound from one song can be recreated into the foundation of another. Pete Rock is known for bringing a Jazzy sound to Hip Hop and that can definitely be heard in this song. The song "Today" is actually somewhat of a cover of a Jefferson Airplane song though it sounds dramatically different. One of the biggest differences is the saxophone that is used at various times during Scott's cover. It is this saxophone that gives the defining sound to Pete Rock's classic hit. If you have not yet been listening to every sample listed here, we highly encourage you to take a break to hear this one. This sample is a perfect demonstration of how Hip Hop can make something entirely new from something old.

NOTE: As of this writing, the place we recommend to hear the original songs and their samples is @ WhoSampled.com.

As Hip Hop is built upon sampling, it would be impossible to come even close to alisting all of the great samples that exist out there within this short lesson. However, these seven samples do an excellent job of demonstrating how a smart and skillful DJ or producer can build something new out of a variety of old parts.

As a final note, while some people declare sampling to be a lazy way of producing music, and while some sampling can indeed be lazy, this ignores the reality that nearly every creative action is merely a meshing of existing objects or ideas. A house is built using existing trees and other raw materials and is constructed using preexisting architectural ideas. A house is creatively and originally decorated using many creations by other people as well as design ideas from other people. However, when done well, repurposing something from the past can be done so as to create something far more powerful than the original thing. For example, the peace sign expressed by raising two fingers in a "V" shape was originally a symbol to denote victory in war. In the 1960s, people opposing the Vietnam war took the gesture and instead said "peace" while holding it up, thereby showing their desire for an end to the war. This is the power of sampling. When old things are put into a new context, new potential emerges. We all attempt to create with what we have available to us in ways that make the original materials almost unrecognizable to the creators and to the world. While this process is clear throughout most types of creatino, in our modern day, it is Hip Hop which has brought the creative capacity of sampling to the world of music.

HIP HOP WORD OF THE WEEK

What it do? Said as a greeting, similar to "What's up?" or "What's happening?" It can also be used to say "show me".

EX: "What it do, yo?" "Nothin'. I was just coming back from dancing and decided to hit you up."

Song reference: "A Star is Born" by Jay Z: "What up, Jeezy? / What it do? / Y'all remind me of us in early '92"

BONUS: NAME ANOTHER SONG/ARTIST THAT HAS USED THIS HHWOTW

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) Name a way that you sample (non-musically) in your everyday life.
- 2) What song does Common's "Universal Mind Control" sample? (extra super bonus points if you get it just by listening)
- 3) Missy Elliott's "We Run This" samples a song that is itself built on a sample. Name both.