'*Stayin' Alive in Da Club*'[1] The Illegality and Hyperreality of Mashups

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Abstract

Mashups are a specific type of sample-based music where 'new' songs are created entirely from 'old' recordings. They contain no 'original' material and are the most overt examples of intertextuality in popular music. Vocal and instrumental parts are separated from musical backing through the process of 'unmixing'. Many of these extracts circulate freely (and often anonymously) on the Internet awaiting recombination with other samples. Following a brief history of mashup pioneers and an overview of its key players, I utilise a range of theoretical approaches to raise questions about originality and the role of the author as it pertains to entirely-sampled music. Permeating the essay are considerations of modernism and postmodernism. I suggest that the collaging, self-referential, ahistoric, postmodernistic tendencies of mashup creation are tempered by the outward-looking, inclusive, modernistic tendencies of DJ culture.

Key words: Mashups; sampling; hyperreality; intertextuality; collage.

Introduction

> Every piece of music is composed of ideas from previous pieces of music. Mashups are just a bit more direct and honest about it. Originality is purely a matter of degree (Joel Roseman, 2007, p. xvii).

> For every artist, borrowing and stealing is your trade. It's the way you regurgitate that borrowing and stealing that makes the difference (Rose from The Pipettes, quoted in Costa, 2007).

Jake Shears from the Scissor Sisters is singing *Take Your Mama* (Universal, 2004) but the effect is decidedly unfamiliar. The music accompanying him is *For No One* (Parlophone, 1966) by the Beatles. In the second verse, the effect is inverted; Paul McCartney (1966 version) is now singing over the music from *Freedom '90* (Epic, 1990) by George Michael. Shears fronts the Beatles for the third verse before McCartney and Michael combine for the next. George then gets to sing on his own song before Shears takes over. The two perform a call and response duet, becoming a vocal trio with the entrance of Aretha Franklin and a quartet when McCartney returns. The song in question is a mashup called *No One Takes Your Freedom* (All mashups mentioned in this article are self released unless otherwise stated) by Joel Roseman (AKA DJ Earworm) compiled entirely from extracts of previously-released musical recordings. The finished product belies the dazzling complexity of its construction. Vocals have been severed from the instruments of four separate songs with the

resulting musical snippets being recombined using sophisticated audio manipulation software.

Mashups are a specific type of sample-based music where 'new' songs are created entirely from 'old' recordings. Vocal and instrumental parts are separated from musical backing through the process of 'unmixing' (Roseman, 2007, p. 157). Many of these extracts circulate freely (and often anonymously) on the Internet and constitute the mashup producer's raw materials awaiting creative placement and combination with other samples. The simplest mashups layer a vocal from one song over the music from another to form what is known as an A Vs B mashup. Rap vocals are popular due their unpitched nature. The creation of a seamless whole from an array of disparate pieces has long been the raison d'être of DJ culture. Whereas club and radio DJs would generally arrange songs in a sequential fashion (with some blending at the start and end of each track), mashup producers arrange samples in both a layered and sequential process. Tagg (2000) proposed the idea of hypothetical substitutions (what would it sound like if …?) for the analysis of music. Mashups make the hypothetical a reality. Popular and widely available (on P2P torrent sites and the wider Internet) a cappella vocal samples can be heard over a variety of widely-differing musical backings, often in the same mashup. Mashup producers create "polystylistic collage" and making "an indifferent use of high and low cultural sources" (Butler, 2002, p. 75).

Mashups are an exemplar of intertextuality (Kristeva, 1980) which is defined as "a relationship of correspondence between two texts or among several texts: that is to say, eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another" (Genette, cited in Lacasse, 2000, p. 36). These references may range from adherence to genre conventions and the evocation of familiar melodic contours or chord changes to the transfer of recognisable fragments from one source to another (a "mosaic of quotations"; Kristeva, 1980) as highlighted in the Beatles' song *Glass Onion* (Apple 1968) makes reference to eight earlier Beatles songs.[2] On reception, listeners' own textual webs engage with those of the artist, creating complex and fluid intertextual networks (cf. Söderman and Folkstad, 2004). Rietveld notes that "the use of the sampler has made this intertextuality more apparent" referring to the self-conscious appropriations and cut-and-paste nature of sample-based music (1998, p. 144). Mashups contain no 'original' material and are the most overt examples of intertextuality in popular music.

Folk, classical and popular musical forms have always contained elements of intertextuality, but in the digital age, the archived past can be experienced and appropriated more rapidly. Downloading, peer-to-peer applications, home CD burners, portable mp3 players and album reissues have speeded up the rate at which the musical past can be referenced. Popular culture is now overtly self-referential. Music, images, quotes and gestures from the past are revisited and rehashed in an incestuous intermedial culture. The development of digital music technology, the widespread use of sampling, rampant intertextuality and the commercial nature of a media-driven culture have led many authors to comment on the postmodern nature of music produced in this way (for example, Chang, 2009; Cutler, 1994; Goodwin, 1990; Poschardt, 1998; Reitveld, 1995 and 1998; Schumacher, 2004). The deconstruction of musical recordings and the reconstruction of samples in a new musical context make it "tempting to imagine sampling as the ultimate postmodern exercise" (Chang, 2009, p. 145). However, an examination of a range of debates on linguistic theory, literature, philosophy, computing and wider culture suggests that the concepts of modernism and postmodernism within these discourses are not consistent making the accurate location of sample-based music problematic (cf. Poschardt, 1998, p. 396). Postmodernism offers a critique of the sources of cultural expressions in order to "see beyond or beyond phenomena to their ultimate foundation" (Cahoone, 1996, p.14). Popular music, especially rock music, is a good example of how ideas of 'the origin' and originality are linked to notions of authenticity. By denying that texts have origins,

postmodernists are affirming that they have no meaning and no history. Divorced from social systems, culture is viewed on a superficial level "by regarding the surface of things" (Cahoone, 1996, p. 15).

This essay investigates mashups and mashup production. Following a brief history of mashup pioneers and an overview of its key players, I utilise a range of theoretical approaches to raise questions about originality and authorship, creativity, concept and craft. Permeating the essay are considerations of the modernism, postmodernism and potentially hyperreal aspects of mashups. I go on to suggest that the collaging, self-referential, ahistoric, postmodernistic tendencies of mashup creation and sample-based music and are at the very least tempered by the outward-looking, inclusive, modernistic tendencies of DJ culture.

Proto-mashups

> The wildest experiments with montages and collages, the most difficult semiotic fractures and shifts have become common property (Ulf Poschart 1998, p. 392).

Conceptual avant-garde practices of musical cut-up and artful irreverence (cf. composers such as John Cage and James Tenney)[3] have infiltrated commercially-successful popular music products. For example, The Beatles manipulated pre-recorded tape loops on *Tomorrow Never Knows* (Parlophone, 1966), *Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite* (Parlophone, 1967) and *Revolution #9* (Apple, 1968). In 1979, The Residents created *Beyond the Valley of a Day in the Life* (Ralph Records, 1977) entirely out of taped extracts from Beatles records. In the 1970s, hip-hop DJs began using turntables to 'sample' from records, extending short instrumental passages ('breaks') into song-length dance tunes. Grandmaster Flash created his *Adventures on the Wheels of Steel* (Sugar Hill Records, 1981) entirely from records by Queen, Chic, Blondie, the Furious Five, the Sugar Hill Gang, Spoonie Gee and the Incredible Bongo Band. In the early 1980s, a string of medley records dominated the charts. Starsound arranged interpolated extracts of hits by the Beatles, Abba and Stevie Wonder over a four-on-the-floor beat to create a series of *Stars on 45* (Radio Records, 1981) records.[4] Jive Bunny and the Mastermixers repeated the formula in the late '80s with rock'n'roll records.[5] In 1986, MC Miker 'G' and DJ Sven (Rush Records, 1985) sang a vocal appropriation of *Summer Holiday* by Cliff Richard (Columbia, 1963) over the rhythm track from Madonna's *Holiday* (Sire 1985), becoming early exponents of the themed mashup. In 1987, the JAMs, later known as the Kopyright Liberation Front, or the KLF, released their sample-heavy proto-mashup album *1987: What the fuck is going on?* (The Sound of Mu(sic), 1987). The MCPS demanded that all copies be destroyed; the JAMs complied in a variety of 'artistic' ways.

Technological advances in computing and sampling[6] led to the creation of more sophisticated montages (a more useful term than 'collages' when referring to music as it implies a temporal dimension) with extracts arranged to run concurrently (as well as sequentially) to a strict beat. Notable hits compiled either entirely or substantially from other records include *Pump up the Volume* by M/A/R/R/S[7] (4AD, 1987), *Ride On Time* by Black Box (ZYX, 1989) and *Dub Be Good to Me* by Beats International[8] (Go Beat, 1990). Producers such as DJ Shadow, DJ Food, DJ Q-Bert and Coldcut have delivered intertextual music to the masses whilst maintaining artistic credibility.

The Mashup Era

In 1994, The Evolution Control Committee distributed cassette-only copies of their *Gunderphonic L.P.* (1994) most notably featuring two songs where Public Enemy rap over the music of Herb Albert and the Tijuana Brass, known as the *Whipped Cream Mixes*. Notable modern mashup artists include Erol Alkan (AKA Kurtis Rush),[9] Richard

X,[10] Soulwax[11] (AKA Freelance Hellraiser) and Go Home Productions.[12]   Under the name Girls on Top, Richard X's mashup of Adena Howard's *Freak Like Me* (East West, 1995) (which itself contains an interpolation of Bootsy Collins' *I'd Rather be with you;* Warner Brothers, 1976)) and Gary Numan's *Are Friends Electric?* (Beggars Banquet, 1979) proved an underground hit.   An official release was only possible when The Sugababes replaced Howard's vocal (which had been refused permission) and took the song to number one in the UK singles charts in 2002 (London Records).   Moving from single-track mashups to album length conceptual projects, DJ Dangermouse created *The Grey Album* in 2004 which intricately spliced music and vocals from the Beatles' *The Beatles* (commonly known as *The White Album*; Apple, 1968) with the vocals from Jay-Z's *The Black Album* (Roc-A-Fella, 2003).   Copycat albums have followed including DJ N-Wee's *The Slack Album* (Jay-Z Vs Pavement) and K-12's *The Purple Album* (Jay-Z Vs Prince) Cookin' Soul's *OJaysis*, Max Tannone's *Jaydiohead* and The Spin Junkies' Grateful Dead-themed *Jay-z's Dead*.

Jay-Z fully understood what Dan Hill has described as 'participative media' (2006b, p. 2) when he gave an official release to the a cappella vocals from *The Black Album* making them available for mashup producers and remixers world-wide.   Using the television show *Lost* as an example, Hill describes the 'ripples' of activity that surround the TV show, some of which are organised by the show's producers, but the majority of which are created by fans (2006a).   This 'meta-media' product attempts to "engage the user in creation and adaptation, emphasising their own role in this social process, without losing the directive role and expertise of the composer (…) or producer" (p. 12).

Other conceptual album-length mashups include Clayton Counts' track-by-track mashup of the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* (Capitol, 1966) with the Beatles' *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (Parlophone, 1967) to create *Sgt. Petsound's Lonely Hearts Club Band* by the Beachles (2006).   DJ BC mashed the Beastie Boys with the Beatles to create the albums *The Beastles* and *Let it Beast*, whilst CCC's ambitious *Revolved* and *Cracked Pepper* utilise a multitude of recordings by other artists to supplement samples from the Beatles' original albums.   The practice has expanded to include mashed-up artwork, mashup clubs nights (for example, *Bootie* in San Francisco, L.A. and New York), video mashups (for example, *Like the Way Jenny Scrubs* by DJ Earworm), mashup radio and TV shows (for example, Annie Mac's *Radio 1* show and *MTV Mash*), mashup live bands (for example, Smash-Up Derby) and mashups of mashups (The *Hacked!* Series).   Despite the practice being well established, both historically and within popular culture,[13] mashups operate under a cloud of illegality.

Figure 1: Artwork for DJ N-Wee's *The Slack Album* and CCC's *Revolved*[14]

Mashups and copyright

> The urge to make one thing out of other things is an entirely traditional, socially healthy, and artistically valid impulse which has only recently been criminalized (Negativland, 2007b).

Copyright law on sound recordings varies from country to country. UK copyright law currently states that the rights to a sound recording exist for 50 years after the recording was made (UK Copyright Service, 2010). In the USA, sound recording made before 1972 are protected for 75 years; a 1998 ruling pushed this back another 20 years (Public Domain Music, 2010). Permission from the copyright holder and the payment of a license fee are required before any sampled recording may be released. Expressing the frustrations of DJs and mashup producers worldwide, sample-based art music collective Negativland write that:

> Each of these audio fragments has a different owner and each of these owners must be located. This is usually impossible because the fragmentary nature of our long-ago random capture from radio or TV does not include the owner's name and address. If findable, each one of these owners, assuming they each agree with our usage, must be paid a fee which can range from hundreds to thousands of dollars each. Clearance fees are set, of course, for the lucrative inter-corporate trade. Even if we were somehow able to afford that, there are the endless frustrations involved in just trying to get lethargic and unmotivated bureaucracies to get back to you (2007a p. 5).

American copyright law contains a section (107) on 'Fair use' which refers specifically to sound recordings, and it is here that mashup producers often turn for legal validation of their practices (Negativland, 2007a). For a song or sample to be classed as fair use, the following must be considered:

(1) the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes;

(2) the nature of the copyrighted work;

(3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and,

(4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work (Copyright Law of the United States of America, 2010).

Sampling-related law suits are settled on a case-by-case basis and courts have suggested that other factors may be considered when assessing fair use. Fair use advocates and producers of sample-based music would suggest that assignation of copyright to the single originator (namely the author, whether individual or corporate) of a piece of music stifles creativity, and that more 'dialogic' forms of music making are being penalised (Schumacher, 2004, p. 445). Negativland have written an essay on fair use which includes:

> The Fair Use statutes are intended to allow for free appropriation in certain cases of parody or commentary. Currently these provisions are conservatively interpreted and withheld from many "infringers". A huge improvement would occur if the Fair Use section of existing law was expanded or liberalized to allow any partial usage for any reason (2007a, p. 5).

Yet mashups exist and flourish in spite of these restrictions, their free distribution on the Internet and the pseudo-organic evolution of the songs alluding to a modern folk music ethos at odds with copyright laws that insists on the identification of the 'original' author/s, regardless of the music's often complex origins.

> If creativity is a field, copyright is the fence (John Oswald, 1985).

Mashup producers have commented on the creativity involved in constructing sample-based music and how this relates to existing copyright law. Roseman (DJ Earworm) admits that he is "blatantly stealing and then kindly giving back" (2007, p. 1). John Oswald creates complex conceptual musical montages, such as the twenty minute *Plexure* which utilises one thousand instrumental snippets (McDonald, 2007). He suggests that "all popular music (…) essentially, if not legally, exists in the public domain (…) we're bombarded by it" (Oswald, 1985). Negativland argue that creativity is stifled by copyright and wrote a book on the subject called *Fair Use: The Story of the Letter U and the Numeral 2* in 1995, framed around their court case with Island Records after appropriating the work of U2 (Berry, 2007). Alluding to a democratic, collaborative process of music creation, they assert that "culture cannot unfold the way it did before copyright. True folk music (…) is no longer possible" before asking "is it a healthy state of affairs when business attorneys get to lock in the boundaries of experimentation for artists, or is this a recipe for cultural stagnation?" (Negativland, 2007a).

In folk music, melodies and lyrics are adapted and updated before being re-circulated in the community. Before copyright, songs were 'owned' by the culture that spawned them and artists were paid by commission (for composing music) or through live performance. Sampled extracts of recorded music now circulate freely and anonymously among mashup producers and consumers on the Internet, frequently unrecognisable due to audio manipulation. Mashup producers are modern day underground folk musicians. They contemporise the 'song' and pass it on with full expectation that it will be updated further down the line. Hill senses a return to 'domestic music making' (2006b, p. 3) and the emergence of "fully-participative, emergent, vernacular, bottom-up, open-ended models" of cultural production (p. 1). Only by circumventing the conventional music industry of record companies, publishers, pay-per-download websites and attendant sales charts can mashups operate at all, yet their influence over mainstream popular musical practices is notable.

The infringement of copyright law and the inherent illegality of most mashup distribution perpetuate the practice's underground status whilst affording its producers a large degree of cultural kudos. This antagonistic relationship with mainstream institutions has contributed to an outlaw aesthetic which adds a sense of danger to the practice and a good deal of 'sexiness' to the resulting tunes. Mashup has emerged as a significant musical practice during the first decade of the 21st Century at a time when the democratic promise of the Internet is under threat from global media corporations. Peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing systems, and, increasingly rarely, client-server FTP (file transfer protocol) mechanisms, are used to distribute mashups freely (easily and without payment) on the Internet. However high-profile court cases ensure that individuals using P2P and other file sharing applications now do so under the threat of legal retribution. Only in the event of the original copyright holders giving their consent, and license fees being paid, do mashups receive an official release. Mashup distribution offers a commentary on the increasingly heavy-handed tactics of publishers and record companies to maintain control over mass-marketed 'top-down' music.

Copyright law states that the work in question must be original and that the names of the authors (for music read songwriters and lyricists) must be stated. Mashups and sampling raise fundamental questions about the issues of originality and authorship in music. Schumacher suggests that "the practice of sampling change[s] the notion of origin (the basis of copyright) to one of origins" (2004, p. 452). Despite the varying methods by which art forms come into existence, the attendant 'art world' must attribute the title of artist, author, creator, etc. to the person (or people) at the centre of the activity. The assignation of copyright on the various elements of that art work ensures that individuals are paid once the work is commercialised. Music copyright requires the identification of the composer of the music and the writer of the lyrics and struggles to deal with songs composed of a multitude of other songs.

Foucault's notion of the 'author-function' may be more useful than legal insistence on single copyright owners when considering sample-based music. He suggests that the identification of an author (which may not refer to a single individual) is a "complex operation whose purpose it is to construct the rational entity we call an author" (cited in Schumacher, 2004, p. 450). When considering how meaning is generated from a text, Roland Barthes dramatically announced the "death of the author" (1977) which, he suggests, coincides with the rebirth of the reader/listener. Yet, as Poschardt has pointed out "the DJ is both consumer and producer" (1998, p. 378) and that "the death of the author/artist then coincides with the birth of the musician as producer and engineer" (p. 380). Mashup producers are expert listeners able to forge sonic links between disparate samples in a range of keys, tempi, textures and lyrical themes. It is the DJ's life-long listening expertise that elevates them above their peers in the club and in the studio-based extraction and recombination of aural snippets. Removing the vocals from an instrumental backing without access to the original multi-track recordings requires skill, training and years of dedication to the process of sound engineering. The producer needs 'big ears'. Ideas of skill, judgment, passion and dedication suggest that the mashup creator is a craftsperson. It is the conceptual, rather than the crafted artwork which defines postmodernism and a consideration of how mashup production fits into notions of modernism and postmodernism now follows.

Mashups and Postmodernism

Postmodernism ceaselessly reshuffles the fragments of pre-existing texts (Fredric Jameson quoted in Butler, 2002, pp. 111-112).

At its core, postmodernism deconstructs the way in which art forms are created and offers a critique of the economic, social and political processes which form them. It is suspicious of "grand narratives" (Lyotard, 1979) and the dominant ideologies that create and sustain the production of art and culture. As postmodern theorist Jean-François Lyotard states, "all that has been received, if only yesterday (…) must be suspected" (1982, p. 1014). He defines "any science that legitimates itself with reference to a meta discourse" as modern. Yet, postmodernism "is undoubtedly part of the modern" (p. 1014) with both schools of thought involving self-reflection and conceptualism, and the placing of a deliberate and critical distance between these art forms and 'natural' or 'realistic' practices. This self-reflection has led to the "multi-cultural pluralism" (Lyotard, 1979, p. 120) of the Internet, popular culture in general and of mashup production in particular. The effacement of notions of 'high' and 'low' art is apparent even within the same musical product. Recorded works from a host of historical eras may co-exist in mashups. Taken to its extreme, postmodernism spells the death of history and indeed the death of art (Baudrillard, 1993, p. 458). Yet it is the DJ's job to be cognisant of the historicity of the samples used in a new, contemporary creation.

In 1936, Walter Benjamin stated that "in the age of mechanical reproduction", a work of art would lose its 'aura' (cited in Therberge, 1999, p. 220). However, through the discursive processes surrounding music, particular recorded performances are canonised, deemed 'special', become exemplars of their art form or genre, untouchable 'classics' surrounded by the aura of their status in the public consciousness, something akin to the cult of celebrity, where the 'buzz' is not about the person (or the recorded object) but the constructed persona and its projection into the media and beyond. Mashup DJs require an irreverent streak in order to manipulate 'classic' songs without being paralysed by 'the aura'. Chang states that "although the sample is not a historical object (…) the record from which the sample comes certainly is" (2009, p. 153). Adapting Derrida's idea of freeplay, Chang writes "the sample is inherently

jointed, flexible in its capacity to signify multiple genres, based on its fluid connection to its old context" (p. 152).

Musical composers and popular musicians had challenged the 'grand narratives' of their art form long before notions of modernism and postmodernism were formulated.   Attacks on musical conventions, intertextuality, the deconstruction of musical texts and their recontextualisation are at the heart of popular music and in many ways define the art form.   These critical tendencies and the attendant self-reflection of practitioners have been amplified in DJ culture. The idea of examining an art form from within, critiquing its methods, whilst utilising the central tenets of the genre to produce a more rarefied, purer, stronger, more 'absolute' form is an entirely modernist tendency.   Poschardt states that "in DJ culture, self-reflection and self-referentiality have always been core definitions of DJ music" (1998, p. 386).   He discusses how hip-hop and dance music lyrics refer to dancing, beat making, bass-lines and other aspects of the genre forms and practices (p. 387).   DJs and MCs frequently refer to themselves and their own technical and lyrical skills, even through the use of appropriate samples.[15]   Yet, "being 'lost in music' does not mean the loss of self, but its recovery in the realm of sounds" (p. 387).   Inward-looking, conceptual tendencies in other art forms have led to artistic cul-de-sacs and cultural dead ends. In DJ culture, they have led to a proliferation of genre forms and the reinvigoration of the existing sound archive.

Differentiating between the two concepts, Butler states that "for the postmodernist, to create is to be critically self-aware to an extent that goes far beyond modernism" (2002, p. 78).   Mashups have a function; they must get people moving on a dance floor and, for domestic use, withstand repeated listenings.   If licenses for samples are paid, and their uses granted for an official release, mashups can operate in a commercial context. Lyotard suggests that "in the absence of aesthetic criteria, it remains possible and useful to assess the value of works of art according to the profits they yield" (1982, p. 1011).   As novice mashup DJs quickly discover, not all of their creations will ensure a packed dance floor and an ecstatic reception. Mashups need internal integrity;   the DJ/producer must assess the dancability and mixability of the samples available as well as deciding whether the individual layered samples 'work' in the chosen key and tempo. They need to be well crafted. AplusD's *Standing in the Way of Connection* and DJ Moule's *Sympathy for Teen Spirit* are excellent examples of mashups that operate on a range of functional levels. It is this ability to look inward to the mechanics of the track, and to the mixing equipment, whilst looking outward to the dancers on the floor and the listeners at home that ensures the successful mashup DJ is a well-balanced combination of producer and consumer, constructor and deconstructor, listener and speaker, fan and artist.   Poschardt states that "the complexity of DJ music must be able to disguise itself in the realm of the dance floor if it's to be sure of providing fun" (1998, p. 391). Pessimistic and cynical, postmodernism suggests that meaning has been has been effaced from cultural products and that every utterance is of equal value.   To the postmodern thinker, concepts such as beauty, goodness and truth are ideological, and bound to the processes and discourses which created the text and therefore should be treated with suspicion.

In the later part of this essay, I will go on to explore the modernist tendencies of mashup creation and DJ practices.   By means of contrast, it is to the most pessimistic, non-utopian, and pluralistic end of postmodernism and to the work of Jean Baudrillard that discussions will now turn.

Hyperreality

Baudrillard posited the theory of hyperreality, stressing the importance of the mediatisation of culture in this process (cited in Topor, 2007).   In his *Simulacra and*

Simulations (1988, p. 167) he writes "the real is produced from miniaturized units, from matrices, memory banks and command modules – and with these it can be reproduced an infinite number of times". He further states:

> It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself. (…) Never again will the real have to be produced (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 167).

In Baudrillard's hyperreality, there is a "confusion of the fact with its model" (1988, p. 173) and it is "impossible to isolate the process of the real, or to prove the real" (1988, p. 177). To Baudrillard, "the hyperrealism of simulation is expressed everywhere by the real's striking resemblance to itself" (1988, p.178). He describes a copy of an 'original' as a simulation and proposed four 'orders of signification' whereby simulations move further from an 'original' source until a state described as the simulacrum or hyperreality is reached whereby a receiver can no longer tell the difference between a 'real' piece of work or a simulation (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 169; Grace, 2004).   Digital technology offers the chance to create endless exact reproductions or simulations of an 'original'. Following Baudrillard's logic, mashups exemplify hyperreality as they are conglomerations of representations of a long-forgotten, and now entirely irrelevant, reality. The signs have been permanently detached from their signifiers, "never again exchanging for what is real, but exchanging in itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference" (1983, p. 77).

In Baudrillard's simulacrum, the listener is destabilised; they cannot orient themselves in a 'depthless' world of surfaces and exteriors (1998b, p. 45). Any 'truth' or sense of the 'real' inherent in the 'original' is now lost. In a self-referential culture that is perpetually sampling and remixing itself, hyperreality becomes the dominant aesthetic. Shales describes the 1990s as a "Re-Decade" in which exists an "endless lifestyle loop of repeating, retrieving, rewinding, recycling [and] reprocessing", where "nostalgia is a permanent state of mind" (Plasketes, 2005). Jameson suggests that the reader/listener is increasingly less able to engage with the emotional content of cultural objects as society becomes increasingly self-referential ("a waning of the affect", James cited in Roberts, 2000, p. 124). He refers to a text in such a culture as a pastiche or a "neutral practice of mimicry" resulting in "the disappearance of the individual subject" (p. 125).

In his book *The Consumer Society* (1998), Baudrillard refers to cultural recycling whereby culture becomes ephemeral through its mode of production and reproduction (pp. 100-101). "Culture is no longer made to last" and "it is subject to the same pressure to be 'up-to-the-minute' as material goods" (pp. 101-102). It is this leveling of so-called 'high' and 'low' cultural products that particularly concerns Baudrillard. He concludes that "there is no longer any difference between 'cultural creativity' (…) and this ludic/technical play of combinations. And no difference between 'avant-garde creations' and 'mass culture' either" (p. 102). Poschardt concurs stating that "all the difficult matters have now been moved from the elite circle of galleries and universities (…) and into the pop charts" (1998, p. 392).

Baudrillard's writing is often abstract and self-referential. He refers to specific cultural phenomena such as Disneyland and Pop Art which are described as simulacra, yet his reluctance to lead the reader sequentially through his four orders of signification using case studies results in confusion about how to apply his work to recorded popular music and specifically to mashups and sample-based music. What follows is my own interpretation of his theory using a specific mashup for clarification.

The mashup *Wild Rock Music!* by Smash contains recognisable samples of *Born to be Wild* by Steppenwolf (Dunhill, 1968), *Nutbush City Limits* by Ike and Tina Turner (United Artists Records, 1973), *Music* by Madonna (Maverick, 2000) and *Stop the Rock* by Apollo Four Forty (Stealth Sonic, 1999). Firstly, there needs to be some agreement as to the nature of 'the real'. In sample-based music, I will suggest that it is

a recording that constitutes 'reality' and that it is a mashup that results as a simulacrum. In 'reality' "the sign and the real are equivalent" (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 77). The '*reality*' in this mashup case study is a recording of a performance (or performances) by Ike and Tina performing *Nutbush City Limits*, suitably overdubbed and sonically manipulated, stored, in this case (1973) on a reel of magnetic tape in a studio (United Artists Records, 1973).

Mass production of this 'original' recording on vinyl records (in 1973) would constitute a *first order simulation* where it "is the reflection of a basic reality" (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 169), the mechanical reproduction and distribution of the song allowing the song to transcend the specific location and temporality of its origin. Baudrillard's *second order of simulation* "masks and perverts a basic reality" (1988, p. 169). I will suggest that in terms of mashups, a digitised version of the recording would constitute this. Only technologically possible in the late 20th Century on compact discs (1980s onwards) or mp3 (1990s onwards), the recording is able to be copied *exactly* with none of the attendant hiss or crackle from previous cassette/vinyl reproductions. It is at this point that problems arise. *A third order simulation* ("Masks the absence of a basic reality"; 1988, p. 170) could potentially take the form of an electronic extract of the song ripped from a mass-produced recording, which may or may not have been sonically manipulated to alter the pitch, tempo, timbre, etc. and, in the case of mashups, to extract the vocals from the instrumental backing. For this logic to hold, the sample needs to have replaced the original recording in the public's consciousness, the shorter version replacing the longer, the sound bite standing in for the full quote, the abridged version effacing the full text. I can appreciate that for many people, the extract of Dido's *Thank You* (Arista, 1999) that appears in Eminem's *Stan* (Interscope, 2000) *is* the real thing, or that fans of the Boogie Pimps' *Somebody to Love* (1993) may be surprised to hear that the extract of the song with which they are familiar has verses and other elements in its original context as part of Jefferson Airplane 'original' (RCA, 1967). To conclude this extrapolation, in the *fourth order of signification* where signs become simulacra bearing "no relation to any reality whatever" (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 170), samples are layered over and next to numerous other altered samples to form mashups. The recontextualisation of the audio snippets spells the "death sentence of every reference" (1988, p. 171) and becomes a simulacrum.

This extrapolation highlights the importance of listener competence in for cultural orientation purposes. If a listener has previously heard the songs from which the samples were taken, they may not be fooled that the simulation is 'real' or even 'hyperreal'. However, they may yearn nostalgically for a spurious time in the past when songs and recordings were discreet entities, experienced in full, rather than atomised sound bites, and when cultural texts were uninformed by external sources.

Unlike traditional musicians (instrumental players and singers) who *produce* sound, mashup producers *use* sound as their raw materials suggesting that they manipulate material already at a third or fourth order of signification, and that mashup production has a different relationship to the 'origin' than that of 'performed' popular music, which is authenticated on issues of 'liveness', 'realness', authorship and originality. A similar extrapolation for 'live' music could proceed:

- *Reality*: A live band performing self-penned music onstage.
- *First order simulation*: A second band performing cover versions of previous band's material.
- *Second order*: A tribute band concentrating solely on replicating the music to one band or artist utilising 'authentic' visuals such as costumes, props, performance mannerisms, etc.
- *Third/Fourth order*: A tribute band whose tribute extends into their 'real' lives and they continue to stay 'in character' whilst off-stage, or where there is some

crossover between the 'original' artist and the tribute act. David Bowie's acceptance of Doug Yule as the 'original' lead singer of the Velvet Underground (Five Years, 2010), or established stars joining their own tribute act would be examples of this. Apocryphal accounts of members of a Beatles tribute band having plastic surgery to look more 'authentic' suggests a state of hyperreality.

The temptation to align mashup production with postmodernist cultural practices and hyperreality is strong. The commercial nature of popular music ("the intention of pop musicians is to sell records, get famous and write beautiful songs"; Poschardt, 1998, p. 392) follows Baudrillard's claims that mass produced culture and commerce have become interchangeable. He states that pop is "the form of art contemporaneous with the logic of signs and consumption" (1998a, p. 115) and that pop is "homogenous with [its] industrial, mass production and hence with the artificial, manufactured character of the whole environment" (p. 115). Although referring to pop art, rather than pop music, Baudrillard (1998a, p.120) writes:

> pop is a 'cool' art: it demands not aesthetic ecstasy or affective or symbolic participation ('deep involvement'), but a kind of 'abstract involvement', a sort of *instrumental curiosity*. And this retains (…) a näive enchantment of discovery.

His idea of "instrumental curiosity" alludes to the production of art through 'playing' with toys and machines. Simple mashups proliferate on the Internet produced by novice producers exploring their software, testing their machines, manipulating the samples on their hard drives, and creating their art products as by-products of their own systemising. Compared with linguistics, literature and the visual arts, music is hardly mentioned in writings on postmodernism. Butler suggests that it is "very difficult to make music without words behave like text, or to convey those critical, oppositional messages to be found elsewhere in post-modern art" (2002, p. 75). Postmodernism renders sample-based intertextual music as automated and mechanical, depthless and without history. This is at odds with the well-crafted products (rather than conceptual) and optimistic tone (rather than cynical) of most mashups; a brief foray into ideas of listener competence and modernism may redress the balance. To Lyotard, modernism and postmodernism are symbiotic. He writes that "a work of art can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state" (1982, p. 1014). Pertinent to sampling, he states that "the essay (…) is postmodern, while the fragment is modern" (1982, p. 1015).

It is to the reception of mashups that discussions now turn whereby individual song fragments may radiate a multitude of socially and historically-derived meanings for mashup producers (as expert listeners), dancers and downloaders.

Listener Competence

Mashups consist of a series of signs which have the power of connotation (Cobley and Jansz 1998, p. 42) drawing a broader meaning from outside the immediate realms of the song in question. 'Competent' listeners (Kassabian, 2001, p. 24) can consciously and subconsciously connect with wider connotations gained through social and cultural exposure. The most successful mashups consist of widely-recognised samples allowing maximum connotive potential (Anon 2006; Preve, 2006). John Oswald defines his chosen samples or "plunderphones" as "recognisable sonic quote[s], using the actual sound of something familiar which has already been recorded" (quoted in Igma, 2000).

Figure 2 shows a diagrammatic representation of the song *Lust Train* by CCC demonstrating the laminated nature of a typical mashup.
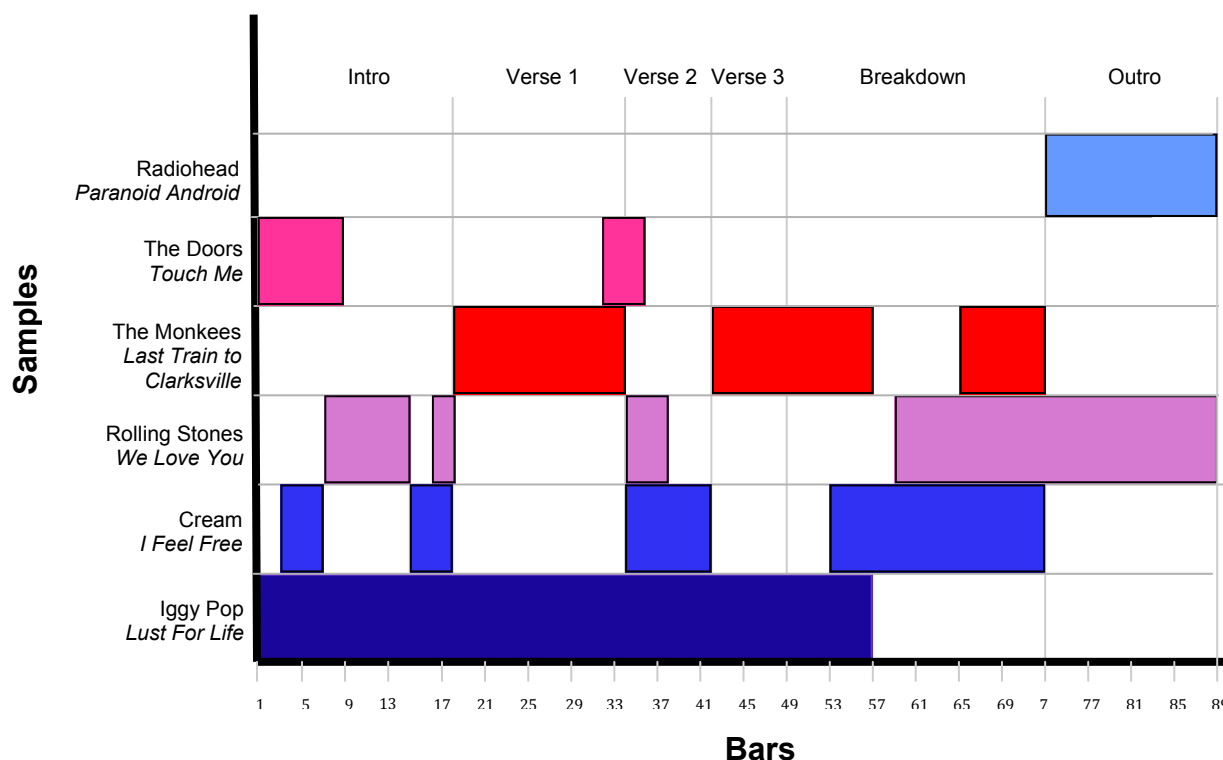
Figure 2: Diagram of *Lust Train* by CCC

The individual samples listed above will evoke a multitude of responses by individual listeners. Readers' connotations may correspond at least partially with those of the author listed below.

Sample 1: *Lust for Life* by Iggy Pop (RCA, 1977)
Trainspotting, Detroit, Motown, *You Can't Hurry Love*, Berlin, transparent trousers, David Bowie, drugs, etc.

Sample 2: *I Feel Free* by Cream (Reaction, 1968)
Eric Clapton, Psychedelia, the Blues, Jimi Hendrix, Foo Fighters, *Waitrose* free-range eggs advert, David Bowie's cover version, drugs, etc.

Sample 3: *We Love You* by The Rolling Stones (Decca, 1967)
Prison, drugs arrest, Lord Rees-Mogg, butterflies, wheels, Oscar Wilde, dandelions, The Beatles, the Swinging Sixties, etc.

Although irreverent, this list serves to highlight the idiosyncratic nature of the connotations aroused by individual musical fragments. I propose a taxonomy of listener competence as it relates to mashups, concurrent with Richards' definition of a bottom-up listening process whereby the decoding of a whole text into meaningful units requires that "students need to know the code" (1990).

An *incompetent* mashup listener would be unable to identify any of the sampled material and would potentially be unable to discern the 'joins' in the music. Unaware of the sources or their contexts, the mashup will be received as a 'new' song. A *partially-competent* receiver would be able to identify one or more of the samples, break the whole down into 'meaningful units' and relate the song snippets to external references. At this level of competence, the listener's web of references overlaps, at least partially, with those of the producer. A *fully-competent* listener would recognise all of the sampled material and potentially synthesise the thematic or musical connections between the samples which have been manipulated by the producer. The listener may

possess an emotional or affective relationship to the individual samples thus actualising the mashup to its fullest potential. Söderman and Folkstad (2004, p. 324) differentiate between the *initiated listener* who "becomes more of a co-creator than a mere consumer" by forging a "specific personal product", and the *cultural victim* who "cannot interpret and understand the intertextuality". Mashup audiences require a high level of musical and cultural knowledge to achieve full participation in the practice. Repeated listening, however, lessens the novelty effect of the semic ruptures and the clash of musical styles, cohering the piece and smoothing the fragments into a new whole.

The High-Modernist tendencies of mashups

A number of authors have highlighted the modernist tendencies in the apparently postmodern practice of sampling. Writing about sample-based music, Cutler attempts to balance notions of hyperreality against a wholly-referential system of "imaginary inverted commas" to signal a quotation, often used in face-to-face conversation but impossible in music (1994). Such a gesture would allow the full context and 'meaning' of that quotation to come flooding into the new text whereby authenticity is constructed through such a reference to the original 'author' (Hosokawa cited in Frith, 1998). Describing both the effacement of the origin and the subsequent reestablishment of meaning during the sampling process, Cutler states that "a recording may be considered as no more than the anonymous carrier of a 'pure' - which is to say a non-referential - sound; or it may be an instance of a text that cannot exist without reference" (1994). He goes on to suggest that samples have "the unique ability not just to refer but to be". The sample, viewed in this way becomes a free-floating lexial signifyer, polysemic in nature, its meaning manipulated by the mashup producer and open to interpretation by listeners with widely-differing experiences of the 'original'. Landow used the term 'lexias' to refer to the textual objects linked within a hypertext (2000, p. 154). Barthes had previously used the term to refer to deconstructed units of text whereby the meaning of the fragments are altered by discursive and contextual factors. Mashup creation is ultimately the reordering and layering of lexias; the fragmentation and collation of "autosonic quotations" (Lacasse, 2000, p. 38) for creative ends. Mashup DJs may manipulate the aura of the original recordings through the creative placement and presentation of the sampled material, choosing either to foreground or background semiotically-potent musical motifs.

Poschardt points out that "in DJ culture, self-referentiality does not work by exclusion, but by inclusion and absorption" (1998, p. 385) leading to a "diversity in pop music that had never been there before" (p. 389). Mashups and sampling "maintain (…) an ethics of inclusion (…) creating a tradition that involves the past without submitting to its structures and limitations" (Chang, 2009, p. 156). Modernism "disposes those pasts which have been made available by the objectifying scholarship of historicism, but it opposes at the same time a neutralizing history which is locked up in the museum of historicism" (Habermas, 1981, p. 1001).

However, mashups may display some of the playful irony associated with postmodernism. The process of signifyin(g) was described by Henry Louis Gates Jr. as "the manner in which texts seem concerned to address their antecedents" (in Schumacher, 2004, p. 452). Originating in black oral processes and prevalent in hip-hop and DJ culture, signifyin(g) is "repetition, with a signal difference" where "meaning operates at several levels" (p. 452). The original meaning of a text is twisted and reversed in a knowing gesture. The Situationists called this detournement (Negativland, 2007a). An exemplar of a signifyin(g) mashup is *Boys Who Luv Boys Will Survive* by Futuro, where Blur's hormone-fuelled summer holiday romp *Girls and Boys* (Food, 1994) is given an ironic twist through its close proximity to Gloria Gaynor's anthemic *I Will Survive* (Universal, 1978). Setting edited versions of Western world

leaders' speeches against a variety of musical backings, (for example Wax Audio's *WMD American Justice* or Mediacracy's *Imagine This*) mashup producers invert the meaning of the intended verbal/aural message.   The Evolution Control Committee spliced up commentary from TV news reports on their *Rocked By Rape* (Eerie Materials, 1998) providing a critique of mass media representation.   The Legendary K.O. sampled Kanye West on *George Bush Don't Like Black People* (2005), expanding and recontextualising the original Bush quote as a commentary on the American government's response to Hurricane Katrina.   DJ Earworm's *We Need a Filthy War* mashes six songs, the disparate samples arranged to provide an anti-war commentary[16] at odds with the intentions of the original sources.   Finance-related samples are compiled on Team 9's *The Money Song* which explores the topic from opposing perspectives.[17]

The 'performing art' of deconstruction is the process of "taking texts … and trying to see what they are really saying in a social, political, and sexual context" (Rucker in Poschardt 1998, p. 368).   It is a process of stripping away unnecessary material to reveal the true meaning of the text (p. 368).   Reducing well-known songs to brief snippets may reveal the essence of their message.   The precise job of the remix producer is to locate, extract and re-contextualise that essence.   There is an Internet-based *One Minute Remix* contest where a range of classic songs (and albums) are edited down to their bare essentials; whole songs and albums reduced to one minute in length (WFMU, 2007).   The mashup process can distil Nirvana to a single riff, converted to a hip-hop rhythm track through the addition of a rap vocal (DJ Not-I's *Feel All Apologies*).   Mashups highlight the fluid and artificial nature of traditional genre categories.   Rage Against the Machine, when stripped of vocals and reduced to a single two bar riff, provide a rock/ragga fusion with the addition of Shaggy on vocals (DJ Zebra's *Killing Boombastic*).   Guns N' Roses are transformed into a credible hip-hop band when Snoop Dogg is their vocalist (99X's *Dog Pound Paradise*).
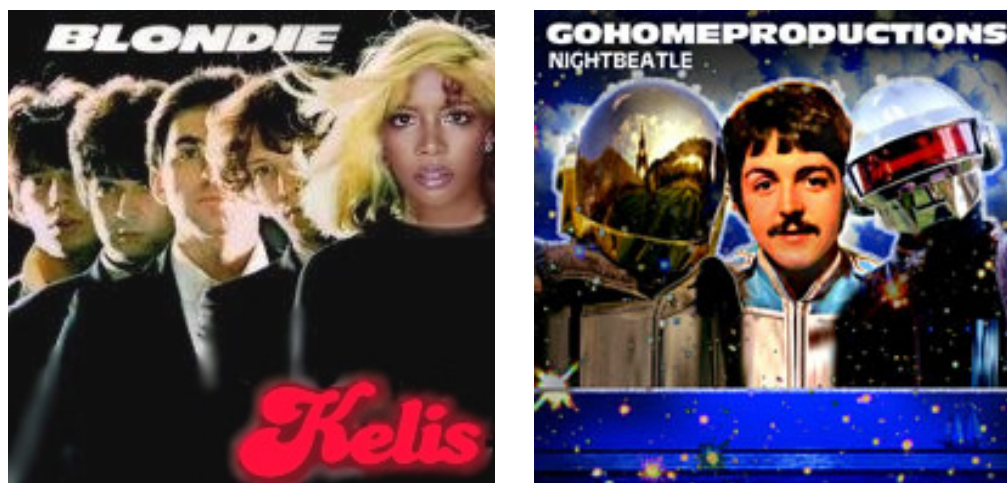

Figure 3: Examples of mashed up artwork;
Bossy Blondie by Jimmi James and *Nightbeatle* by Go Home Productions[18]

Conclusions

Unlike the string of 'isms' in the visual arts (Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism, Surrealism, etc.) which sought, in a conscious way, to challenge the practices and narratives of the previous movements, (post)modernism and deconstructionism have operated largely unconsciously in popular music.   Yet postmodern tendencies have informed popular music since the birth of the gramophone and the attendant

empowerment of the listener through the circulation and manipulation of mass-produced musical products. For most of its development, popular music has been unconsciously post-modern. Notably since the emergence of the promotional video as integral to pop music's reception, a range of successful chart artists have attempted to bring their knowledge of art theories and of the inner working of the pop industry to their music.   Artists such as Roxy Music, Sigue Sigue Sputnik, The KLF, Björk, the Aphex Twin and Lady GaGa seem conscious of their position within the political and aesthetic structure of their art form and make some attempt to critique and subvert the genre from the inside.

In my considerations of mashups and the sample-manipulating DJ culture in which it is suffused, I have pondered the issues of copyright and authorship, of illegality, creativity, listener competence, postmodernism, hyperreality and finally modernism. Mashup production is, to a large extent, unconsciously modernist. The manifestos of the visual arts are notably absent whilst progressive attitudes and the tendency to strive for improvements in technique, innovation and genre forms are exemplified by its practitioners (Poschardt, 1998, pp. 395-397).

> Problems that were glossed over when art was art and there was no genre confusion (…) suddenly threatened to become dangerously problematic when genres blurred and both plunder and original began to operate in the same disputed (art/commercial) space (Cutler, 1994).

It is increasingly difficult to differentiate between an official (major label) release and an illegitimate mashup. Nas raps over Johnny Cash's *Hurt* (American Recordings, 2002) courtesy of underground mashup producer DJ Erb, whilst the title track from Nas' legitimate high-profile *Hip-Hop is Dead* (Def Jam, 2006) album utilises *In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida* by Iron Butterfly (Atco, 1968) as a musical backing. Snoop Dogg raps over *Riders on the Storm* by the Doors[19] (Elektra, 1971) on an official release (Electronic Arts, 2004) whilst fronting Chic,[20] The Beastie Boys[21] and Led Zeppelin[22] on illegitimate equivalents. Globally-successful recording artists have the money and legal teams to clear samples.

The Beatles' latest official album release is a mashup of their own work. Despite sounding conservative when compared to *The Grey Album* or *Revolved*, *Love* (Apple, 2006) is symptomatic of a cut-and-paste, self-referential, mashed up, post-modern 21st Century culture, its inception undoubtedly inspired by a host of illegitimate antecedents. Mashups raise questions of authorship and originality; it is still The Beatles name on the front of this 'new' album, not those of George and Giles Martin, the mashup producers. Technology undoubtedly plays a part in the emergence of mashup as a practice. Mashups rely on the Internet for distribution and exposure. Powerful sampling and audio-manipulation software is available to bedroom producers. The first time that the Beatles' back catalogue was digitised was for the making of *Love*. Whilst identification and protection of authorship and insistence on originality remain central to Western music copyright law, the legality of the vast majority of mashups will remain in contention and the practice will continue to flourish away from the mainstream.

Notes

1. The title of a mashup featuring 50 Cent and The Bee Gees by DVJ Charlie P.

2. The song references *I Am the Walrus*, *Strawberry Fields Forever*, *There's a Place*, *I'm Looking Through You*, *Within You Without You*, *Lady Madonna*, *The Fool on the Hill*, and *Fixing a Hole*. The term 'A Glass Onion' has been used in a wider context to describe any song which is intertextual and overtly referential.

3. In 1961, James Tenney manipulated a single recording of *Blue Suede Shoes* by

Elvis Presley to create his own *Collage No.1 (Blue Suede)* (Oswald, 1985).

4. Originally created using actual Beatles samples, the records fell foul of copyright law and the tracks were recreated using session singers. A string of medley hits by producers such as Startrax (BeeGees medley), Enigma (party hits medley) and Lobo (Caribbean songs medley) dominated the charts in the early 1980s.

5. The 'Jive Bunny' records used actual samples of rock'n'roll, swing and pop tunes. The 'brand' scored 10 UK hits, including three number ones within a six month period.

6. A proto-sampler was invented in 1946; early 'sampler's such as the Chamberlin and the Mellotron used analogue tape loops triggered by a keyboard (Roseman, 2007).

7. The producers of 'Pump up the Volume' utilised around 30 records in their creation (Goodwin, 1988).

8. Beats International featured Norman Cook, AKA mashup DJ extraordinaire Fatboy Slim. *Dub Be Good To Me* utilised *Guns of Brixton* by the Clash, *Just be good to me* by the SOS Band and *Once Upon a Time in the West* by Ennio Morricone.

9. Erol Alkan mixed Kylie Minogue's *Can't Get You out of my Head* with New Order's *Blue Monday* for a Brit Awards show in 2001.

10. Richard X also used a sampled sound effect from computer game *Frogger* at the start.

11. In 2002, Freelance Hellraiser produced *Stroke of Genieus* and *Smells like Bootie*.

12. Go Home Productions (Mark Vidler) gained permission from the original artists to release *Rapture Riders* (Capitol 2006) (Blondie Vs The Doors) and *Ray of Gob* (Half Inch Recordings, 2004) (Madonna Vs The Sex Pistols).

13. The plethora of club nights, weblinks, video mashups and general activity on sites such as www.mashup-industries.com, djearworm.com, www.mashuptown.com, www.bootiemashup.com/aplusd/index.php suggests that the practice of mashups is alive and well in 2010.

14. Picture on the left: <www.noiset.com/dj-n-wee--the-slack-album>, consulted: 01.dec.10; Picture on the right: <www.zachary.com/s/blog/2005/12/15/beatles_mashups_and_other_ipod_filler>, consulted: 01.dec.10.

15. Note Grandmaster Flash's use of the line 'Flash is fast' from Blondie's *Rapture* on his *Adventures on the Wheels of Steel*.

16. The line "If you think we need a war" (Fischerspooner) is answered by alternate cries of "*It's a Sin*" (Pet Shop Boys), "You're filthy/disgusting" (Scissor Sisters). Edwin Starr's shouts of "*War*" merge with "We're out of control" (Chemical Brothers).

17. Extracts featured in *The Money Song* include *Money Money Money* by Abba, *Money* by The Flying Lizards, *Cash Machine* by Hard Fi and *More Money, More Cash, More Hoes* by Jay-Z.

18. Picture on the left: <www.bootlegsfr.com/blog/index.php?post/2006/04/24/329-tir-groupe>, consulted: 01.dec.10; Picture on the right: <www.mashuptown.com>, consulted: 01.dec.10.

19. As well as the 1971 vocals of Jim Morrison, Snoop's *Riders on the Storm* (Electronic Arts, 2004) features the remaining member of the Doors recreating their parts in a modern studio (www.allhiphop.com/hiphopnews/?ID=3767).

20. BenDoubleM's *Drop it like it's Hot*.

21. Lock3Down's *Drop it like Paul Revere*.

22. Party Ben's *LedSnooppelin*.

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Discography

The majority of the mashup songs and albums listed have no record company and no release date as they were never 'released' in any traditional sense.

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