Remixing Report

People look at remixing as a genre itself, not looking at what is really contained in the wide umbrella that is remixing. Remixing holds many different genres, and can be used to spin-off other genres very much irrelevant to the creation of remixing. Saying that, there was very much a cultural and influential movement that led up to what we know today to be remixing.

Remixing really began when an individual named ‘Pierre Schaeffer’ and others at ‘Studio d'Essai’ (translated as Experimental Studio) used dry and original recorded sounds and mixing them into a track using a French radio system– this developed into what is known as ‘Musique Concrète’ which then progressed further by experimental artists and composers from 1948 onwards into the 1960’s.

During the 1960's an era of what is known as 'Dub' came into place. Dub summed up in a generalized aspect is meaning to take pre-recorded stems and reshaping them into a more 'rhythmic' track. This genre developed through those listening to Reggae music, and those experimental musicians deciding to make the song have that bit more rhythm into it. They would take the stems to a reggae or similar sounding song, Funk included, and putting the recorded tracks through a mixer and then take out other aspects of the song such as maybe a lead guitar and focusing more on the bass and drums - ultimately mixing and fading in some of the removed elements a bit more. People such as King Tubby and Scratch Lee Perry are known for being influential artists in this sub-genre and development in the umbrella known as Remixing today. In terms of King Tubby, looking at the song 'Flag Dub', the points that define the Dub era work in hand with the aspects of this song under his name. The song is a 'remix' of the song 'It a go Dread' by Barry Brown, the vocals in King Tubby's remix fade out and are heavily edited with delay and reverb, the drums and rhythmic aspects are enhanced which gives the upbeat feel that most dub songs then started to be based around after these defining factors into the development of Dub.

Later on in the 1970's the era of 'Disco' derived from the experimental artists moving onto more personalized aspects to music - they wanted to add their own feel to the music they listen to and enjoy. In discos, there was an atmosphere of people who wanted to dance for long periods of time - very influenced with drugs during that time - so the DJ would do what is called a 'breakdown', it involves taking a song and taking down the other elements of the song to continue an instrumental rhythm (very similar to Dub). Tom Moulton was the most well-known pioneer for the creation of the 'extended mix' which included 'Disco' songs which had a long breakdown recorded onto a longer 12" Vinyl (previously much smaller) which can hold 7-8 minute recordings. However this later developed into vinyls we know today that can be played at a much slower RPM - enabling full albums to be recorded onto both sides of the 12" vinyl. Disco was mostly played in clubs and was all about the best music, and the best dancing - it had originated from black culture and was a very territorial music movement. However it did evolve into becoming a mainly black culture and homosexual culture, this has obviously been changed - as disco nowadays is seen as very much 'cheesy' music.

Driving off of Disco, in the Late 70's - Early 80's, the formation of Hip Hop started to spark up. This was an obviously still very territorial - much more so than Disco started off to be. This sub-cultural movement was built up by the working class, mostly associated with The Bronx in New York, USA (a borough inside of New York, more northern to the extra 4 inside the city) - as this appeared to be the 'cultural origin' of Hip Hop. There was an artistic movement along with this era of Remixing, as the formation of it was really induced at what is known as a 'block party'. People would throw parties in the streets, and bring along friends and more friends. The party consisted of a DJ with turntables, Funk and Soul records, people dancing and the artistic aspect of Street Art. Block parties were very much about who had the best recording, best dancing, and best 'tagging' (Street Art). In relevance to the musical aspects behind the movement, DJ's would take two of the same record (as said probably Funk or Soul beats), and have them both on a separate turntable, playing the breakdown over and over, playing one vinyl, and then the other and swapping back to form what is called 'Beat Juggling'.

The introduction of sampler units into this era really helped influence more aspects into the musical element creation to Hip Hop. People such as Grandmaster Flash, Grand Wizard Theodore and Kool Herc would use this sampling unit and take the records that they had previously used a turntable to continually repeat - instead they had it at the push of a button. This then allowed effects to be added in, and the addition of extra sampled audio or even vocals to be added over the sampled 'breakbeat'/music. The drum machine was an addition to this development also, composers could take sampled drum beats, split them up and put them onto a grid - an easy layout for beat making. Drum machines such as the AKAI MPC 2000 were revolutionary for the easy handling of cut samples from drums. This specific model could hold 16 samples of 4 layers, locking them to that grid - you could quantize the hits and load in different one shots - evolving the composition behind the remixing - and very much led onto the development of early synthesizers.

This being said, because of the sampling technique using vinyls, one 6 second drum loop has been used to shape over 1000 songs we know today for its key rhythm. Commonly known as the 'Amen Break', this piece was a 6 second sample from a drum section in The Winstons' 'Amen Brother'. This has been sampled and pitched down, reused, re-recorded, pitched up, sped up among other composing and mixing aspects - before then fitted into many popular songs we know. For example, a few of the songs that include the infamous drum loop are songs such as 'Firestarter' by The Prodigy, they took the loop and pitched it up, speeding it up to a much higher BMP to fit their musical aspects to their band. Another few ones are David Bowie's 'Little Wonder', Oasis and their song 'D'you Know What I Mean' and others such as Amy Winehouse with 'You Know I'm no Good'. There are over 1000 songs out there that are bolstered and based around this probably most sampled drum loop.

Branching off of Hip Hop, during the mid-1980's 'scratching' was developed onto the musical aspects. The sampler would hold the rhythmic aspects, or even of a turntable and using the recorded vinyl, the element to adding more onto the track was introduced with vocals and this scratching. Grand Wizzard Theodore was probably the pioneer of scratching. This included taking a vinyl and gently moving it back and/or forth on the turntable and moving the Turntable mixing crossfader - while the needle is down, making this warping and scratching sound. This moved into the formation of Rap. Again, this was a very territorial movement in mostly black culture. Individuals would Rap over instrumental recordings - with the addition of scratching by a composer/performer.

The musical style onwards from that developed into the 2000's and started exploding in genres after some point. The off branching of Techo, House, Grime and many other variations of Remixing. This outlines the more simple terms of how Remixing came about today. However the genre of Remixing, as we see it now, really things shifted to more digital aspects. The usage of hardware is integrated but a lot of remixing now is exclusively digital on DAW's such as Ableton Live where a Dj set can be mixed and recorded live using the system. The use of Elastic Audio is also revolutionary for remixing, as you can warp the track almost seamlessly (if used correctly) to work with any track and BMP/tempo in literally seconds - making it much easier to implement extra elements into a remix. This correlates with the updated hardware that we use today such as virtual instruments within DAW's (example in Ableton, Pro Tools, Logic Pro X) - making it much easier for those remixing to compose extra elements, as it was a lot harder to do so back in the era of Dub and Hip Hop - with the addition of this being able to be implemented in someone's bedroom if they have the basic pieces of kit and programs.

Generally Remixing is experimental artist and composers wanting to have their own addition to a pre-recorded song - making it more adaptive for club playing and for individuals to dance to in these venues. However, ultimately if these remixes are put out for sale on the market to be downloaded or bought on CD/Vinyl - it's for some fundamental gain. People remix to earn money from doing what they love, as well as actual artists including a Remix onto their albums of a recorded song from the same album - or for example with Bring Me The Horizon's 'Suicide Silence' album, they released a completely new album full of remixed tracks from the original. This was to broaden their demographic and gain more listeners in the market.

However; when it comes to selling remixed tracks, there comes a limitation of copyright into the fray. Although people remix, some do it without getting official go-ahead from the right owners to the track they remix - this is more commonly known in the music industry as 'Bootleg' or 'White Label' remixes. These remixes are done without consent and they may be making money from it - it's hard to tell who started the Bootleg off-spawn of Remixing as no individual would genuinely put their name with the Bootleg or White Label work - as they would be subject to heavy lawsuits.  When taking care of a Remix in a legal manner, there has to be negotiations with permissions and rights. As the person remixing you need 2 pieces of those, 1 for the composition and the 2nd for the Sound Recording. To get the rights and permissions for composition you need to contact the Record Company, and the sound recording goes through the Music Publisher/Owner.

An agreement would be made so that as the musician who wants to remix a piece of work, you gain rights and permission to do so through the corresponding above, you then have to agree to a set amount of money that will be given back if you were to sell the Remix out on the marketplace. However, this then generated a copyright in itself as a remix artist. The money paid out (in the United Kingdom) for the Sound recording would go to PPL, then spreading to the Record Company, Author and Session Musicians. In terms of the Composition the money runs through PRS, to the Publisher, Songwriters and Composers. This is the legal way of working with Remixes and any market and income that's gained from an agreement of remixing.

* King Tubby: Flag Dub - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvYSYOKFCbk>
Original Track: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82AhCMcidu4>
* The Winstons: Amen Brother full track: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxZuq57_bYM>
‘The Amen Break’: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwQLk7NcpO4>
The Prodigy: Firestarter: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmin5WkOuPw>
* DJ Grand Wizard Theodore: Subway Theme: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeP7jbm3a70>