Mashnography:

Creativity, Consumption, and Copyright in the Mashup Community

By Liam McGranahan

B.A., San Francisco State University, 2003

A.M., Brown University, 2005

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dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date_____ _____

Kiri Miller, Advisor

Recommended to the Graduate Council

Date_____ _____

Wayne Marshall, Reader

Date_____ _____

Marc Perlman, Reader

Date_____ _____

Jeff Titon, Reader

Approved by the Graduate Council

Date_____ _____

Sheila Bonde, Dean of the Graduate School

Curriculum Vitae

Education

2010 Ph.D., Ethnomusicology, Brown University
Dissertation: *Mashnography: Creativity, Consumption, and Copyright in the Mashup Community*, advised by Kiri Miller

2005 M.A., Music (Ethnomusicology), Brown University
Master's Thesis: *A Survey of Garifuna Musical Genres with an Emphasis on Paranda*, advised by Paul Austerlitz

2003 B.A., with honors, Anthropology, minor in World Music and Dance, San Francisco State University

1981 Born, July 31, Portland, OR

Teaching and Professional Activities

2009 – 2010
Guest Teacher, African-American Studies, Lincoln High School, Portland, Oregon
I am currently collaborating with head teacher Michael Sweeney to design and teach an African-American music unit in spring 2010.

Chair, "Ethnomusicology and the Digital Age" roundtable discussion, Society for Ethnomusicology Northwest Chapter meeting, Portland, Oregon

2008-2009
Teaching Assistant, "Musical Youth Cultures" (MU 0062), Brown University
Professor Kiri Miller (43 students enrolled)
Winner of a 2009 Brown University Teaching with Technology Award.
Taught two course meetings: "Hip-hop and B-boy Culture" March 19, and "British and West Indies Crossovers" April 7. Evaluated assignments, quizzes, and papers, advised students on multimedia web-based final projects, held regular office hours, monitored class attendance and participation.

Lecturer, "World Music Cultures" (MU 0040), Brown University
Co-taught by advanced graduate students (~15 students enrolled)
Co-designed syllabus, taught multi-week unit on the musics and cultures of Latin America and the Caribbean.

2005-2006
Planning Committee Member, Music Department Colloquium Series, Brown University

2003-2006
Advising Proctor, Dean of the College Office, Brown University

Worked in conjunction with the Dean's Office to coordinate freshman and sophomore advising, provided technical and program assistance to faculty, students, and peer advisors.

2002-2003
Research Assistant for Professor James Quesada, Anthropology Department, San Francisco State University

Conducted literature reviews; provided feedback on drafts of a forthcoming manuscript.

2002-2003
Research Assistant for Professor John-Carlos Perea, American Indian Studies Department, San Francisco State University

Conducted archival library research.

2000-2002
Research Assistant, Professor Hafez Modirzadeh, Music Department, San Francisco State University

Created a digital database of the University's uncataloged world music holdings.

Presentations and Publications

2010
"Boulevard of Broken Songs: The Reciprocal Relationship of Mashups and Samples."
Delivered at the International Association for the Study of Popular Music national conference, New Orleans, Louisiana.

"Mashing Up Society."
Delivered at the Society for Ethnomusicology Northwest Chapter conference, Portland, Oregon.

2008
Review: "Oliver Greene, *Play, Jankunú Play: The Garifuna Wanaragua Ritual of Belize*." *Ethnomusicology* 52 (2).

2005
"Creolization, Transnationalism, and Diaspora in Paranda."
Delivered at the Society for Ethnomusicology annual conference, Atlanta, GA.

2004
"Finding Your Way in a *Ghost World*."
Delivered at MU 291 Student Conference, Brown University

Awards and Scholarships

2009-2010

Dissertation Fellowship, Brown University Graduate School

2008-2009
Dissertation Fellowship, Brown University Graduate School

Teaching Assistantship, Brown University Graduate School

2003-2006
Tuition Scholarship, Brown University Music Department

2003-2006
Advising Proctorship, Brown University Dean of the College Office

2003-2006
Summer Research Funding, Brown University Graduate School

Professional Memberships

Society for Ethnomusicology
- Popular Music Section
- Latin American and Caribbean Music Section

Society for American Music
- Popular Music Interest Group
- Music of Latin America and the Caribbean Interest Group

International Association for the Study of Popular Music

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I am grateful to Wayne Marshall, Marc Perlman, and Jeff Titon for being on my dissertation committee, reading this work in various forms, and offering insightful comments. In addition to serving on my committee, Jeff and Marc have been inspiring teachers and mentors during my time at Brown, and I am honored to have been able to know and learn from them. I would also like to acknowledge Professors Anani Dzidzienyo and Paul Austerlitz both of whom I am fortunate to have taken courses from

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Chapter 1

Bastards and Booties: An Introduction

Imagine John Travolta strutting down the streets of Brooklyn circa 1977 with a can of paint in one hand and two slices of pizza folded in the other. You sink into the hypnotic groove of the Bee Gees' "Stayin' Alive." Perhaps, depending on your age, you even begin to do the hustle. But something isn't quite right. Instead of Barry Gibb's soaring falsetto, an ominous voice declares, "We don't need no education," and a chorus of children chant, "All in all, it's just a, another brick in the wall." Travolta disappears and now the fascistic hammers of Pink Floyd's "The Wall" are marching in time down Brooklyn avenues. This cognitive dissonance has been brought to you courtesy of an Australian mashup artist named Wax Audio.

A mashup is a piece of recorded music that is comprised of samples taken from other recordings and remixed to create a single new track. A typical mashup features samples from two or more songs, usually by different artists, edited into one track via the manipulation of elements like tempo, pitch, and key. A mashup often features the vocals taken from one track juxtaposed with the instrumentals taken from another. The use of preexisting recordings in a new piece of music, called sampling, is not unique to mashups. However, mashups typically consist exclusively of samples. In this respect mashups are unlike hip-hop tracks, dance remixes, or other genres of music in which samples are combined with newly created content. The sources used to construct a mashup are usually from the realm of popular music (although a rare few draw on "art" music, religious music, or other genres). Mashups are firmly rooted in popular music and

are a part of the popular music tradition. In fact, one defining quality of a mashup is the adherence to popular song form (some combination of verse, chorus, and bridge). As will be discussed in more detail below, their popular song structure sets mashups apart from other types of sample-based music and related performance genres like turntablism.

Mashups are primarily distributed via the Internet. Many mashup artists[1] have their own websites; others use personal blogs that link to file hosting sites where their work can be downloaded. Mashups are publicized, distributed, and critiqued in online forums and websites; GYBO (short for "Get Your Bootleg On"),[2] Acapellas 4 U,[3] and Mashuptown[4] are among the most important online meeting sites for the mashup community. Mashups are also played in dance clubs across the world, receive occasional radio airplay, are featured in podcasts, and on rare occasions are commercially released.

Key Arguments and Chapter Outline

This work is the first ethnographic study of mashups and the mashup community. In addition to documenting an important genre of popular music and highlighting the stories and opinions of a vibrant community of producers and fans, I advance several important arguments concerning the production and reception of contemporary popular music. Additionally, I argue that web-based communities are emergent and that current theorizing about community form and function needs to incorporate the insights that can

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[1] The terms "mashup artist," "mashup producer," and "bootlegger" are used interchangeably by community members to describe people who make mashups. I use "mashup producer" and "mashup artist" interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

[2] <http://www.gybo5.com>

[3] <http://www.acapellas4u.co.uk>

[4] <http://www.mashuptown.com>

be gained by looking at models like the mashup community. I reframe the commonly accepted notion that the act of remixing is a form of resistance, and demonstrate how ethnographic insights provide a level of nuance that is often missing from studies of popular music and popular culture. I also argue that, in an effort to negotiate the troubled relationship between mashups and copyright, mashup producers have developed an alternative set of rules about authorship and authentic artistic production.

Much of the media reception of mashups, as well as some of the scholarly literature, has misrepresented the genre as simplistic and limited/limiting. One of the contributions of this dissertation is to correct those misperceptions. In Chapter 2 I explore the production of mashups in detail. Mashups are more than the sum of their parts, but the parts matter greatly. I look at how mashup artists select the sources (songs) that they sample from, what factors affect the choice of source material, and how mashup artists edit and rearrange the sampled material to produce a new song.

Based on conversations with mashup artists, posts to online forums, and my own experience listening to mashups, I argue that mashup production is guided by seven aesthetic principles: combination, reliance on samples, songcraft, recognizability, genre clash, humor and satire, and lyrical and thematic interplay of sources. By closely analyzing the aesthetics of mashup production I contribute to the important project, which has been central to so much work in ethnomusicology, of presenting the internal values and principles of different musical communities. I have tried to represent the music and its makers on their own terms in hopes of fostering a sense of understanding and respect for mashups and the mashup community.

Mashups attract a remarkably diverse audience. Over and over, the DJs that organize and perform at mashup events referred to the "mashed-up" nature of the crowd, and my own experiences at mashup club nights around the United States reinforced their observations. In Chapter 3 I look closely at how the organizers of these events have encouraged this diversity. Furthermore, I demonstrate that mashups, by their nature, are appealing to a wider range of listeners than music that is confined to traditionally bound genre categories. I argue that mashups emerged at a time of deteriorating boundaries between the audiences for particular genres, especially in popular music. In addition to reflecting these changes, mashups have been a catalyst. Mashups highlight and subvert the cultural assumptions about race, sexuality, gender, class, and culture that underlie popular conceptions about particular genres and fans.

In Chapter 3 I describe the multiple sites of mashup reception and distribution beyond dance clubs and concerts. Although mashups share many of the same sites of distribution and reception as other genres of popular music (radio, the Internet, clubs and concerts, and video games), mashups are rarely commercially released. Non-commercial distribution channels like blogs, YouTube, and podcasts are centrally important rather than supplementary. Sites of mashup distribution and reception are also largely community-operated. Mashup club nights around the world are run by mashup producers, several mashup community members have hosted radio shows featuring mashups on commercial radio stations, and sites like GYBO and Mashuptown, which are so central to the community, are entirely maintained by community members on a volunteer basis.

Chapter 4 is centered on defining the mashup community and illustrating the importance of recent web-based, dispersed community formations. Using the work of

several different community theorists as well as emic definitions, I construct an amalgamated definition of the term "community" in the context of the online and offline community of mashup fans and producers. I argue that the mashup community is imagined, demarcated by symbolic boundaries, plastic with porous borders, defined by common activity, learned, and dynamic. I also discuss the dispersed nature of the mashup community, which exists online as well as offline in physical spaces around the world. The mashup community model demonstrates the complicated and constantly changing ways that online and offline community sites interact and overlap with each other. As Internet communication becomes increasingly inseparable from daily life, these interactions become more crucial to understand.

The issues of agency and the democratization of technology have a long history in studies of recorded music. In Chapter 5 I look at the major ideas in the literature starting from the work of Adorno and other Frankfurt School theorists, the cultural studies movement, and the more recently to the work of scholars like Tia DeNora. After presenting a broad outline I discuss how the topic has been treated in the literature on mashups, and argue that mashups are an example of the vibrancy of individual agency. Mashup artists' use of recent technologies to create and distribute music outside of the recording industry is an example of the democratizing potential of technology. I demonstrate how these new uses of technology to remix and reconstruct popular culture are contributing to changing notions of producer and consumer, and weakening media corporations' control over released works. Much of the existing scholarship about mashups and other forms of remix has focused on remixing as an act of protest or resistance against the hegemony of the "culture industry." The ethnographic insights that

I present demonstrate that the motives for using new technologies to remix are as diverse as the remixers themselves and not limited to resistance or rebellion.

In Chapter 6 I describe the ways that copyright law affects the mashup community and how the community reacts. Despite the fact that the legal status of mashups has not been settled in court, the recording industry treats them as a violation of copyright law. Record companies issue cease-and-desist orders to mashup artists and enforce complicated and expensive licensing procedures that make it difficult to commercially release mashups. In addition to explaining the industry's actions to marginalize mashups, I look at the "fair use" argument that some scholars and artists believe establishes a legal foundation for mashups. After looking at the various ways that copyright restrictions and licensing regulations have affected the community, I analyze how community members negotiate the issues of authorship, originality, illegality, and the sales of mashups. In this chapter I challenge the existing notions of "mainstream" and "underground" music and demonstrate how mashups simultaneously occupy both realms. I also argue that mashup community members have created their own set of rules about authorship and originality that are at odds with those of the recording industry and challenge the romantic notions of unique artistic production and the position of the author.

History

Due, in part, to the relative youth of the mashup genre there has been little written by scholars or in popular media about its history. Constructing a history of mashups is further complicated because mashups consist solely of copyrighted works and, as a result,

very few mashups are ever released commercially. The vast majority of mashups are distributed for free over the Internet, leaving no physical archives or official discographies to consult. Furthermore, the absence of the recording industry removes the distinction of "professional." Certain mashup artists are more respected than others, but there are no record companies designating which artists are more important to mashup history. As a result of the independent nature of the mashup community, the history of the genre has primarily been recorded by the community itself. The following history is informed by the scant scholarly and popular literature on the subject, but is based primarily on my fieldwork interviews and community members' posts on online forums.

DJ Earworm, a prominent mashup producer and author of a mashup how-to book, devotes several pages of his book to the history of the mashup genre (Roseman 2007). Earworm's book is an interesting source because it was written by a member of the mashup community but, presumably, meant for outsiders or beginners. Earworm situates mashups in a very long continuous history. He writes,

> Looking at the entire history of music, you'll find that it is full of borrowing and stealing. The taking of other people's ideas and transforming them is the basis for all music… Every piece of music is composed of ideas from previous pieces of music. Mashups are just a bit more direct and honest about it (2007: xvii).

In Chapter Two of his book Earworm points to specific examples of this type of borrowing from the Western music tradition, such as Gregorian chant, motets, and quodlibet. Earworm argues that, like contemporary mashups, all of these genres combine or re-work preexisting music to create new music (2007: 5-6).

Earworm's historical account reaches farther back than the rest of my sources. However, like Earworm, several of the scholarly works on mashups attempt to show a

connection between mashups and Western art music, specifically *musique concrete* (McLeod 2005: 81). In addition to musique concrete, mashups have been likened to pastiche (Gunderson, 2004: 2) and to the collage aesthetic associated with modernism in the visual arts (Levay 2005: 22, McLeod 2005: 81). McLeod calls mashups "an exemplar of how popular culture and popular music have been fully transformed by the modernist collage aesthetic" (2005: 81). Levay draws a comparison to visual arts:

> Just as early-twentieth-century visual art critics were forced to amend their aesthetic paradigm to accommodate the appeal of Marcel Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel* (1913)—a bicycle wheel mounted on a stool, arguably a physical mashup—so should popular music critics recognize the mash-up as a viable twenty-first-century popular music form. (2005: 22)

Members of the community also acknowledge a connection to musique concrete and other examples of Western art music that have used sampling. In a 2005 discussion thread on the community forum Get Your Bootleg On (GYBO),[5] dj BC explained that he and two other mashup artists were preparing a talk on mashups for the Cambridge Center for Adult Education in Massachusetts[6] and were seeking advice on what important moments in mashup history should be raised. dj BC provided some examples in his post, including " 'art' musics sampling (oliveros and cage as examples)" (dj BC 2005). In a response to BC's post, timbearland, another mashup artist, listed John Oswald, Pierre Shaeffer, Edgar Varese, the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, and John Adams as worthy of inclusion in a discussion of mashup history (timbearland 2005). In a separate mashup history thread on GYBO,[7] Mr. Fab credited Richard Maxfield,

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[5]<http://www.gybo.org/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=9548&hilit=+musique+concrete> Accessed December 29, 2008.

[6] The talk was part of a course taught by ethnomusicologist Wayne Marshall.

[7]<http://www.gybo.org/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=36188&start=0&st=0&sk=t&s…&hilit=first+mashup+history&sid=3603b475a4c3af245f8e79ba7ff6412b> Accessed December 4, 2008.

James Tenney, and Terry Riley as having been influential in the history of mashups (Mr. Fab 2008).

Although it may serve as a way of legitimizing the genre in the eyes of some scholars and community members, the connection between mashups and "art" music is problematic. A piece by Steve Reich or John Cage bears little resemblance to most contemporary mashups. The only clear connection between any of the "art" music examples and contemporary mashups is in the use of sampling. This connection is tenuous. In contrast to the works of minimalist composers and musique concrete, the vast majority of mashups sample popular music. One could just as easily make the argument that hip-hop, electronica, or any other music that uses sampling is a part of the same lineage. While there are some shared production techniques, mashups, hip-hop, electronica, and musique concrete are all very different musical genres. Early "art" music sampling paved the way for some sampled music that followed, but more specificity is called for.

Developments in the history of popular music are more helpful for outlining mashup history. There is agreement within the mashup community and in the scholarly literature that mashups belong in the continuum of remix music. Remix is an umbrella term that encompasses all types of music that alter original recordings to create new versions, or remixes, of those recordings. Sampling is one of the many techniques used in remixing, and mashups are one of many genres of remixes.

Remixers see recordings as source material, not as finished products. Remixing extends beyond just recorded sound to still images and video; essentially any medium can be remixed, especially if available in a digital format. A mashup artist approaches

recordings the same way and the specific techniques and tools used by mashup artists are used more widely than just for creating mashups.

There is strong consensus in the scholarly community that remixing has its roots in Jamaica (Brewster and Broughton 1999; Levay 2005; Stolzoff 2000; Veal 2007). Levay writes, "As early as the 1950s, Jamaican *selectors* (disc jockeys) were constructing metatexts in dancehalls by playing a series of records linked by key, tempo, artist, or theme… This performance style was later refined by disco DJs and reinvented by hip-hop DJs" (2005:24). Levay outlines the transition from playing recordings in a user-defined order to using various hardware tools and performance techniques to manipulate the recordings themselves. Jamaican musicians were on the cutting edge of remixing popular music—although, as outlined above, the composers of musique concrete and other early experimenters with recorded sound were also treating recordings as open and remixable contemporaneously. I am not asserting that Pierre Schaffer and Steve Reich invented the remix, but simply that it is difficult to point to any single origin.

Mashups are a specific type of remix and are distinguished by several qualities. A mashup creator does not typically add any new material. Instead, s/he uses only the samples taken from previously recorded, commercially released material by other artists. Much of the intended impact of a mashup relies on the listener's ability to recognize those samples (although this is not a requirement for enjoying a mashup). That no attempt is made to disguise the samples used in a mashup is in contrast to other sample-based (see Schloss 2004 for a discussion of this practice in hip-hop production). Additionally, the length of a sample used in a mashup tends to be much longer than what is used in many other sample-based remixes. Rather than taking a sample and deconstructing it for a split

second of sonic material (such as one single snare drum hit), a mashup producer typically uses long samples (or even entire songs) to maximize recognizability.

The term mashup is recent. According to the Oxford English Dictionary "mashup," or "mash up," was first used to describe music created by mixing two or more disparate recorded samples in 2000 (Oxford English Dictionary Online 2009). This date is in keeping with the emergence of the contemporary mashup scene.

For the sake of clarity I delineate between contemporary mashups and their influences. The limiting factors are that contemporary mashups are created using only samples from preexisting recorded sources,[8] they consist of predominately musical sources, are conceived of as a new song adhering to a recognizable song form, and are made with digital audio editing software and hardware.

Using these criteria I argue that the contemporary mashup genre emerged from the United Kingdom in 2000-2001. At the time mashups were known primarily as bootlegs or bastard pop. The term bastard pop, a tongue-in-cheek reference to a mashup being the illegitimate offspring of two pop songs, has mainly fallen out of use. The term bootleg, and bootlegger, is still used within the community and by the media, especially in the United Kingdom. The word "mashup" gained popularity when the genre spread to the United States during 2002-2003. In the U.S. the term "bootleg" was already firmly associated with illegal copies of music and movies, as well as unauthorized recordings of live concerts or studio sessions, and so "mashup" was favored for its specificity.

It is widely acknowledged within the community that the first dance club night dedicated to mashups began in 2000 in London. Originally called King of Boots, the name was soon changed to Bastard and, while no longer a regular club night, it is still

[8] There are exceptions to this rule, but they are rare.

revered by the mashup community. In addition to their increasing presence in dance clubs, mashups were also regularly featured on "The Remix" radio show on London's XFM.

As the mashup scene in the United Kingdom was getting established, virtual sites for sharing mashups were also popping up online. In November 2001 the music blog Boomselection was created. Boomselection was the first blog focused on mashups and, according its creators and many in the mashup community, the first MP3 blog of any kind on the Internet.[9] While this claim is impossible to verify, Boomselection was, at the very least, one of the first. Boomselection hosted direct download links for mashups.[10] Up until that point mashups could be found on peer-to-peer filesharing networks such as Napster, but there was no central site making mashups available for download.

Four months after Boomselection provided a place to find and download mashups, the mashup producer Grant McSleazy created GYBO. GYBO's early history is recounted on the website:

> GYBO started in February 2002, on a free, basic message board hosting service. It began as a reaction to the emerging craze of bootlegs and the increase in popularity of bedroom production. A combination of easier access to cheap music production software and the internet as a tool for sourcing acapellas and instrumentals helped make Get Your Bootleg On (as it was then) an attractive place for the bootleg community to form (McSleazy 2008).

GYBO has evolved into the central online meeting place for the mashup community.

Mashups started to gain attention outside of the United Kingdom due, in large part, to the Internet. Freelance Hellraiser's 2001 mashup, "A Stroke of Genius," combining Christina Aguilera's "Genie in a Bottle" with The Stroke's "Hard to Explain,"

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[9] <http://web.archive.org/web/20060205042359/http://boomselection.info/> Accessed January 7, 2009.

[10] Boomselection became inactive in September 2005.

was the first mashup to gain widespread media attention outside of the United Kingdom. The immense popularity of "A Stroke of Genius" was facilitated, in no small part, by Boomselection and the large international audience that could access mashups over the Internet.

After 2001 the scene continued to grow on the Internet as well as in nightclubs. London's Bastard closed but several other mashup nights started opening across Europe. In San Francisco, in August 2003, the team of DJ Adrian and The Mysterious D (referred to collectively as A+D) started Bootie, the first mashup night in the United States (the name was an homage to the U.K. roots of mashups/bootlegs). The popularity of Bootie continues with regular Bootie mashup nights in dance clubs across the world.

Mashups reached new heights of popularity in the media in 2004 with the release of DJ Danger Mouse's *The Grey Album*. Danger Mouse combined the Beatles' *White Album* with Jay-Z's *Black Album*. The mashup album was critically acclaimed, but much of the attention that the album received was due to the controversy surrounding its copyright status. Danger Mouse did not license any of the samples that he used (he also only sold a very limited number of CDs and then released the album for free over the Internet), and several websites that were hosting the album for download were issued cease-and-desist orders. In response, numerous websites took part in the Grey Tuesday protest on February 24, 2004. The websites involved collectively disobeyed the cease-and-desist orders by hosting *The Grey Album* for illegal download for a 24-hour period and the online protest was covered widely in the media. *The Grey Album* is an important piece of mashup history because it exposed so many people to mashups, but it also served

to highlight important issues regarding the mashup community's relationship with copyright law (see Chapter 6).

The popularity of the genre has continued to grow, and in October 2009 Activision Games released *DJ Hero* (FreeStyle Games 2009), a video game in which the player performs mashups. The game follows the same concept as the popular *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* franchises but the player controls a turntable and mixing console instead of a guitar, bass, microphone, or drum kit. The music for the game consists entirely of mashups created by established mashup artists with contributions from celebrity DJs (including Cut Chemist, Grandmaster Flash, DJ Jazzy Jeff, and DJ Z-Trip). As of this writing, only the celebrity DJs are credited in the game or on the game's website, [11] although the vast majority of the in-game mashups were created by a handful of U.K. mashup artists.[12]

In addition to a big-budget video game, the genre now has a mainstream star in Girl Talk. Despite using hundreds of uncleared samples, Girl Talk releases his mashups commercially via the record label Illegal Art. He has become a successful full-time touring musician and legitimate mainstream celebrity in the United States. Girl Talk is regularly featured in the media and has been the focus of the documentaries *Good Copy Bad Copy* (Johnson, et al. 2007) and *RiP: A Remix Manifesto* (Gaylor 2008). He is the most widely recognized mashup artist today and, arguably, is better known than any other mashup artist past or present. However, Girl Talk's association with mashups is problematic to both Girl Talk and the mashup community. Many members of the community consider Girl Talk an outsider because he does not perform at mashup events

[11] <http://www.djhero.com/music/> Accessed March 29, 2010.

[12] <http://www.culturedeluxe.com/news_item.asp?id=6393> Accessed March 29, 2010.

or participate in online mashup forums. Girl Talk has tried to distance himself from the community and in a 2006 interview with the popular online music site Pitchfork he said, "I don't seek out mashups. I'm associated with the whole mashup movement, and it's too bad because I'm not a huge fan of them," and later in the same interview, "Anyone can make a mashup in 30 seconds but that record took me—outside of collecting the samples—at least a year of putting everything together" (Pitchfork 2006).

The mashup community is larger now than ever before, with numerous club nights worldwide, occasional radio play, podcasts, and over thousands of users on GYBO and other community websites. What started with a handful of producers and fans has grown to become a worldwide community, and mashups are now a widely recognized part of the landscapes of popular music and popular culture.

Mashup Community

In this dissertation when I refer to the mashup community, I am referring to a group of mashup producers and fans that is largely centered around GYBO. This community is spread worldwide; it congregates online and in various physical spaces such as Bootie club nights around the world. Other mashup community events are publicized, and often planned, on GYBO and a handful of other websites run by community members. As mashups become more popular and widely known, more people make them and listen to them. As a result, the range of people that create and listen to mashups is wider than the community that I address. Any mashup creator or fan is welcome to join GYBO and participate in community events, but not all do.

GYBO is the largest and most active online meeting place and message board for the mashup community. GYBO membership is free and open to anyone. The site allows

users to communicate with each other by posting comments in forums and sending each other private messages. The majority of the members of GYBO are registered under their DJ names, although it is not uncommon that in the forum people will refer to each other by their given names.

Most activity on the site takes revolves around members posting and commenting on mashups.[13] GYBO does not host any files, in order to protect itself from charges of copyright violation. Instead, GYBO allows users to post links to their own websites or filesharing sites where the files can be downloaded. The typical mashup entry will start with a post from a mashup artist who has finished a new mashup. S/he will introduce the mashup, provide a download link, and provide a list of the songs that are sampled in the track. Other members of the community post replies with comments on the new track; the replies tend to be either positive or constructive in their criticism.[14]

The number of replies that a post receives is an important factor in the overall popularity of a mashup. dj BC explained this when I asked him how he finds new mashups:

> **Liam:** Do you find other people's mashups on the bootlegs thread? Do you listen to the new bootlegs that are posted, or…?
>
> **dj BC:** You know I've been falling off with it just because of the new baby. It's been hard for me to go on there and download. Usually what I will do at this point is I will look at GYBO's front page and I will see who

[13] In December 2009 the site underwent a major overhaul. While GYBO still contains a forum, the December 2009 updated featured a homepage listing the most recent mashups in chronological order (much like a blog format) and included the ability to stream audio. The intention was to make it simpler to find and listen to new mashups without having to read through numerous posts in the forum and click through to external sites. The addition of streaming audio made it much easier to sample more mashups; however, in the two months since the upgrade, this also appears to have lessened the amount of activity in the forums because members no longer need to visit the "forum" section of the site in order to catch up on the latest mashups.

[14] GYBO users are generally civil towards each other, although there have been periods of conflict between mashup community members in the United States and Europe as discussed in Chapter 4.

> is getting the most responses. What's going through the roof? Who has 25-35 replies on a thread and I'll check them out.
> (Phone interview, October 14, 2008, quoted with permission)

GYBO is not limited to discussing and sharing the mashups themselves. There are other sections of the site devoted to events listings, community news, compilation projects (it is common for a mashup artist or a group of mashup artists to put together compilation albums and ask for submissions from the community), technical advice, and many other topics. There is also a section devoted to off-topic posts. In this section members post topics ranging from politics and current events to sports. The Off-Topic Chat section demonstrates that the importance of the online community extends beyond its members' shared interest in mashups.

Numerous other websites devoted to mashups and/or the mashup community have been created in the years since GYBO's founding, but none are as large or as important. As Mysterious D told me in an interview:

> GYBO is still a great resource. GYBO is still our number one resource and we are part of that community… GYBO is still a great place and I would say it's the primary meeting spot for the international bootleg community.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

The mashup community does not only exist online. Mashup nights at nightclubs around the world provide physical meeting places for the community. DJ Adrian told me in an interview that he was particularly happy to have helped to create a physical site for mashups and for the community to gather:

> [The mashup community] is a worldwide community that comes together through the Internet and what I really love is that we brought out this Internet community of people and we have created a real live space for this music to exist outside of just listening to it on your own at home while you are downloading it onto your iTunes.
> (Phone interview, November 11, 2008, quoted with permission)

Later in the same interview The Mysterious D pointed out that because of the success of Bootie and other mashup nights, there are now many people who are exposed to mashups by going to clubs rather than through GYBO:

> We felt like we were doing really well when we found out that there were people that became bootleg fans, not because they went to GYBO, but because they went to Bootie… That was cool. Some people have never heard of GYBO, which for the first few years shocked us because for the first few years that we did it to know bootlegs you would have to know GYBO, but not anymore. That is changing and hopefully Bootie is doing its job and helping expose people to new tracks, new producers, and new stuff.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

The mashup community is a web-based dispersed community. The central meeting place for the community is online, complemented by numerous physical sites where community members congregate. The online community facilitates the offline and vice-versa. The mashup community is an example of an emergent community formation that combines online and offline communication (see Chapter 4).

Production

There are many ways to make a mashup. It is possible to construct a mashup using analog equipment, but almost all mashups are created using digital audio editing software. Different artists use different software, although Ableton Live and Sony's Acid Pro are the most common. Live and Acid are both virtual studios containing all of the tools necessary to create, edit, and polish a track (created from original material recorded into the programs or samples of pre-recorded music imported into the programs). Live and Acid are both designed for a much wider consumer base than mashup artists and both

programs are used all over the world by “bedroom producers” as well as professional musicians, producers, and DJs.

The basic elements of any mashup are a vocal section from one song and an instrumental section from another. These samples, generally referred to as “a capellas” and “instrumentals,” come from a variety of sources and are usually MP3 files. Using audio editing software it is possible to manipulate these files and combine elements from multiple sources into one new track. Working with audio files that have already been mixed for commercial release has inherent limitations (few mashup artists are able to get access to the master tapes used to record the original songs), but the software programs are powerful and allow for countless creative reconfigurations and combinations of the source material.

When a commercial recording is released it has already been mixed down and mastered. All of the different components of the song (the various instrumental and vocal sections) have been combined into one stereo track. The end product (CD, MP3, record, etc.) contains only the mixed version and not all of the individual tracks that went into the mix. One component cannot be separated from all of the others. For example, when the volume is adjusted on a stereo it changes the volume for the entire song. Beyond adjusting the equalizer, the listener has no control over the relative volume of the different elements within the recording. It is not possible to listen to only the bass player, or the drummer, or the singer while muting the other parts of the recording. However, in order to create a mashup, one needs to isolate particular elements of songs (like the vocals without the instrumentation). Mashup artists are adept at using audio software to perform this task. By stripping out select frequencies, reversing the phasing of certain

songs, adjusting the EQ, and applying various filters, it is possible to enhance the vocals from a track while muffling the instrumentals. These methods can be applied in reverse to produce an instrumental version with no vocals.

The vast majority of popular music is recorded using multi-track recording techniques, and an a cappella vocal track is one of the ingredients of most songs. Record companies occasionally release these vocal tracks and their instrumental counterparts in an effort to publicize a song; they know producers and DJs will make remixes and extended dance club mixes with these a cappella and instrumental versions and that these remixes can become popular and drive sales for the original. Frequently these tracks, also known as "stems," are released or leaked to the Internet and are archived and shared at sites like Acapellas 4 U. The commercially produced vocal and instrumental sections have a high sound quality, and they are generally preferred over homemade versions, but only a limited selection is available.

Once found or created the instrumental and vocal tracks are imported into multi-track editing programs (like Live and Acid). The pitch and tempo are manipulated so that the tracks will be in sync harmonically and rhythmically and then the samples are edited and rearranged to create a new song. For some mashups this is all the manipulation that is done. Other mashups have added digital effects, loops, and numerous other stylistic embellishments. There are also some mashups that do not rely on a cappella and instrumental tracks, but instead are made of smaller samples from songs that are looped and manipulated to fit together.

The choice of source material is as important as a mashup artist's ability with the computer software. Accounts of mashups that, despite hours of work, never sound quite

right are not uncommon. When dealing with pre-recorded music, artists have a limited ability to manipulate structural elements like key, pitch, and chord progressions; sources that are too structurally dissimilar may never result in a mashup that "works." The choice of source material is important not only because it can determine whether or not a mashup works musically, but also because the source material is a main factor in the popularity of a mashup. Joseph Schloss discussed how sample-based hip-hop producers value "digging in the crates" to find rare vinyl records (2004: 79-80). Mashup artists similarly devote a considerable amount of time to picking the sources for a mashup, but there is little importance placed on the rarity of the sample. Mashup producers earn respect by demonstrating a wide knowledge of popular music from diverse genres and eras, and the ability to find structural and thematic similarities between multiple songs.

After selecting sources comes the work of manipulating the samples, adding effects, and remixing the samples into a new track. The control allowed by the editing software is impressive. Virtually every musical and sonic element can be manipulated, within certain limitations. Artists do not consider this limitation to be a creative liability. Quite the opposite: working in a limited framework inspires creative thinking and problem solving. As with a poet who writes haiku, or a composer who writes fugues, the ability to create within set limitations is a skill that is valued by the mashup community (discussed in Chapter 2).

Once the samples have been combined into a new song the track is exported from the audio software, usually as an MP3. Some mashup artists remaster their mashups for higher sound quality (adjusting for things like bass distortion when played over a loud PA

system), but this is not common; many producers feel this step is not necessary given the amount of mastering that a commercially released track has already gone through.

The final step for many mashup producers will be to create "cover" art (usually a Photoshopped collage of the sampled artists images) and possibly a video (combining the original music videos for the sampled songs). Completed tracks are usually uploaded to a personal website or filesharing site for distribution, and posted on GYBO to publicize them within the community.

Performance

Mashup performance takes the form of a DJ playing mashups for a crowd in a dance club, or at a party, concert, or music festival. Dance clubs are the most common venue. Different DJs have different styles and use different equipment, but the most frequent setup involves the use of a pair of CD turntables connected to a mixer that allows the DJ to fade between the two turntables. The mashups themselves are burnt to CDRs. The CD turntables act, in many ways, like analog turntables. The DJ can adjust the pitch by speeding up or slowing down the RPM and can manually alter the direction and speed that the CD spins, enabling a variety of "scratching" effects. (Mashup DJs, unlike hip-hop turntablists, rarely scratch.) Another commonly encountered configuration involves the use of a laptop either by itself or with a MIDI controller (often designed to resemble two turntables and a mixer). The use of a laptop and CD turntables are generally preferred by DJs who are less concerned with scratching or other turntablist performance techniques.

There are two additional DJ techniques that I encountered less frequently but are worth mentioning. The first is the use of software called Scratch Live by Serato (generally just called "Serato"). Although in principle Serato functions like any other DJ software on a laptop with a MIDI controller, it is unique because one has the option of using it with proprietary MIDI controllers that are designed to look, feel, and act exactly like analog turntables. The turntables even "play" vinyl records. However, unlike traditional records, they are not pressed with audio material. They are pressed with a continuous pattern that, when read by the "stylus," transforms the hand movements of the DJ (scratching, speeding up or slowing down the RPMs, etc.) into a set of instructions and transmits them to the computer. The Serato software then interprets these instructions and applies them to the music being played. This all occurs in real timeand allows the DJ to have the tactile experience of spinning vinyl records but, rather than having to bring crates of vinyl and manually switch from one record to the next, the DJ uses sound files stored on the computer.

The setup that I have encountered least frequently is the use of Ableton Live. Ableton is primarily used for the production of mashups but, as its name implies, it has also been designed for live performance. Using Ableton to DJ is fundamentally different than the above methods. Ableton allows for the "live" creation of mashups by combining samples in real time rather than playing a series of pre-produced mashups. The mashup artist Faroff explained the difference to me this way:

> **Faroff:** I am actually in the middle of this identity crisis about what to use to spin. I have seen people spinning with Live which is cool, but it is a different way of spinning. Instead of thinking in terms of tracks you think in terms of sequences which is a different approach. I always think in terms of tracks, maybe because I used to be a musician.

> **Liam:** Whole tracks, like you are thinking of whole songs.
>
> **Faroff:** Yeah and then you mix the tracks. One after the other as if you had two CDs and were mixing, like DJing, but in Live you have samples and you are just playing with them.
> (Cambridge, MA, April 8, 2009, quoted with permission)

As Faroff pointed out, the different equipment used to DJ has implications for performance practice. The use of Serato, for example, is much more common amongst hip-hop turntablists than mashup DJs because of its similarity to the use of vinyl and analog turntables. Mashup DJs who use Serato are often those who are more inclined to scratch or borrow other performance techniques from turntablism. The mashup producer DJ Matt Hite told me that his preference for Serato stems from his background as a club DJ using analog equipment:

> **Liam:** Do you prefer Serato because, having DJed, that is what you are used to with the vinyl?
>
> **Matt Hite:** Absolutely. I know that 90% of mashup DJs are doing it on CDJs [the most popular model of CD turntable] or the computer. That's not my thing because I like to actually touch the vinyl. I like to spin that way and I like the sort of live, human, element to it. It kind of gives a little bit of a performance aspect. I do a little bit of scratching, some tricks or whatever. But most mashup DJs are droppin' it with CDs or their computer.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 13, 2009, quoted with permission)

The use of CD turntables or computer programs other than Serato generally involves the least manipulation of the audio material. This equipment tends to be favored by mashup DJs whose interest is in seamlessly mixing from one track into the next rather than affecting the sound of the individual tracks. In general mashup DJs view their role as selecting and playing songs in order to facilitate dancing, in contrast to turntablist DJs who view their performance, in part, as a display of skill and virtuosity. This difference is

one of the boundaries that divide the mashup community from the turntablist community (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4).

Copyright

Intellectual property issues arise in mashup production, distribution, and reception. The act of making a mashup—editing, remixing, and combining commercially released recordings—is treated as a violation of copyright law.[15] Despite the fact that most mashups are not sold, their production is considered illegal by the recording industry, as is their distribution via the Internet or on physical media. Although a mashup artist may be in violation of copyright law, the nightclub promoters and radio hosts that I spoke with all believed that they could legally play mashups because nightclubs and radio stations pay blanket licensing fees (to organizations like Broadcast Music, Inc., or BMI, and The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, or ASCAP, in the United States).[16]

At the time of this writing no mashup artist has been sued for copyright violation. However, the illegality of mashup production has affected the community in a number of ways. One direct effect is the issuance of cease-and-desist orders by record companies and media conglomerates. Cease-and-desist orders, as their name implies, are letters sent by the legal representatives of copyright holders to persons who are allegedly violating

[15] The legality of mashup production and distribution has not been determined in court. Nevertheless, the industry treats them as illegal infringement of copyright, and members of the community, for the most part, accept this view as the *de facto* reality. These issues will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

[16] There are differing opinions about whether the performance/broadcast of mashups is protected by blanket licensing fees. Suffice to say that the law is unclear on the subject.

specific copyrights; the letters demand that the distribution of the infringing material be halted lest the recipient face further legal action.

Cease-and-desist orders have brought media attention to the mashup community. The most well-covered event was DJ Danger Mouse's *The Grey Album* and the subsequent Grey Tuesday protest discussed earlier. There have also been other relatively high-profile cease-and-desist orders. In November 2005 the mashup artists Party Ben and team9 collaborated to create *American Edit*. The album was primarily mashups of songs from the Green Day album *American Idiot*, and the mashup duo released the album under the name Dean Gray (a textual remix of Green Day). *American Edit*, like *The Grey Album* before it, became quite popular online and within days of its release the website that Party Ben and team9 created for the project was issued a cease-and-desist order from Warner Brothers. Shortly after the album was taken down, fans launched an online protest called "Dean Gray Tuesday" and multiple websites, bit torrent sites, and peer-to-peer networks posted *American Edit* for downloading. As with *The Grey Album* before it, the controversy that ensued over the cease-and-desist order generated a significant amount of media attention and additional downloads of the album.

Record companies issue cease-and-desist orders to enforce their copyrights. The intention of the cease-and-desist order is to make mashups that are in violation of copyright unavailable. But, in many instances, cease-and-desist orders have served the opposite function by bringing attention to the very material that they hope to remove. Additionally, because of the nature of digital music files and the ease with which they can be posted and re-posted on any number of websites, the targeted mashups remain readily available for download even after being removed from the websites that have received

C&D orders. One need only do a quick Google search for "Grey Album" or "American Edit" to find links to download these "illegal" albums.

Record companies' efforts to squelch mashup distribution with cease-and-desist orders have been unsuccessful, but the pressures of copyright restriction have impacted the mashup community. Perhaps the most significant effect has been the dramatic limitation of commercially released mashups. The difficulty and cost associated with clearing all the samples contained in a typical mashup is prohibitive, and only a few mashup artists have attempted to release commercial albums with cleared samples.

One of the earliest and most influential mashup albums, *As Heard on Radio Soulwax Pt. 2*., was released in 2002 by the duo 2ManyDJs. 2ManyDJs actually went through the long process involved in clearing the samples used on their album, or at least their record company did. 2ManyDJs describe the arduous task of clearing the samples on their website:

> it's been almost three years in the making, it took one record company employee more than six months of hard labour, 865 e-mails, 160 faxes and hundreds of phone calls to contact over 45 major and independent record-companies. a total amount of 187 different tracks were involved from which 114 got approved, 62 refused and 11 were un-trackable. it caused massive headaches and sweaty palms to employees of 'clearance centres' and record companies all over the world. but it's finally here. it's about 62 minutes long and there's 45 (or is that 46?) tracks on it. it took seven long days and nights to cut, edit, mix and re-edit it all together and it fucking rocks![17]

Even after all the work to clear the samples, *As Heard on Radio Soulwax Pt. 2* could only be released in Belgium and was available as an import-only to the United States and the United Kingdom.

2ManyDJs is the moniker that David and Stephen Dewaele use when they are not

[17] <http://www.soulwax.com/2007> Accessed August 24, 2009.

fronting the successful Belgian rock group Soulwax. It is a direct result of their connection with the recording industry that they had the capacity, via their record company, to navigate through the complicated process of clearing samples. Few unsigned musicians would be able to spend 6 months making phone calls and sending faxes, not to mention paying the licensing fees, in order to get copyright permission. As a result most mashups are released and distributed online for free. This limitation has, in effect, kept mashup culture "underground." Mashups are not available on iTunes or at record stores and, while not difficult, it takes more effort to find a mashup online than a commercially available song. Mashups exist outside of the commercial music industry and as a result the mashup community is comprised of "amateurs" who can only profit from mashups indirectly (for instance by running a mashup night, being paid to DJ, or being offered paid production work because of their mashup abilities).

Mashup producers are prohibited from selling mashups with uncleared samples. Additionally, many mashup producers release their mashups for free out of a sense of community and, as dj BC put it, "honor amongst thieves" (phone interview, October 14, 2008, quoted with permission). In an interview with DJ Earworm he recounted how DJ Adrian convinced him to post his mashups online for free:

> I took my first handful of mashups and went to, I had heard that there was a club that played mashups called Bootie, and I went in there and met with Adrian and gave him a CD demo. I came back the next month and he said, 'you should do something with these, put these on a website,' and I said, 'I can't put them on a website. People will just take them,' and he said, 'well, what did you do?' I said, 'oh yeah, I guess,' and then basically he convinced me that these would do a lot more good being given away to the world rather than saving them up. This is the old way of thinking: that you need to, not necessarily capitalize in money, but you have to benefit from your music. Anyway, so I put it out.
> (San Francisco, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

The effects of copyright on the mashup community and the ways in which community members negotiate their relationship with copyright law are numerous and diverse. One thing is certain: the current system of cease-and-desist orders is not sustainable, nor has it curbed the creation or sharing of mashups. Scholars like Lawrence Lessig (2004, 2008) and Kembrew McLeod (2005) have shown the many inconsistencies and contradictions in copyright law as it exists today. At some point copyright law should be reformed to account for the new uses of media that technology allows for. The gap between what copyright law allows and how people actually use copyrighted material is clearly demonstrated by the mashup community and will only get wider with more advances in technology.

Existing Scholarly Literature

In this section I present a brief chronological survey of the previous scholarly work on mashups. I will be referencing most of these works throughout the dissertation and addressing specific ideas and arguments that the authors have made in more detail. Here I present a thumbnail sketch of each work to provide a sense of the way in which this topic has been addressed in the literature.

The first published works on mashups were from 2004. Philip Gunderson and Sam Howard-Spink both wrote articles responding to the release of DJ Danger Mouse's *The Grey Album*, the cease-and-desist order, and subsequent online protest. Gunderson argued that *The Grey Album* was an example of seismic shifts in the production of music, and potentially the dawning of Attali's age of "composition" (Attali 1985 [1977]: 133-148). Gunderson wrote, "*The Grey Album* and the mash-up form in general are

symptomatic of an historical moment in which the forces of music production (production technology, artistic invention, and web-based networks of music distribution) have greatly exceeded the present relations of production as expressed by artist/label contracts, music property rights, and traditional producer/consumer dichotomies" (2004).

Howard-Spink's article focused on the emerging form of "online protest" represented by "Grey Tuesday." He examined the efficacy of online protest, discussed the recent history of copyright activism, and gave a detailed history of "Grey Tuesday." Howard-Spink argued that mashups are a political act on several levels:

> Semiotic democracy speaks to the power of active audiences in their own processes of meaning creation. The Grey Tuesday story suggests that more than "meaning" is being created here; indeed, it epitomizes a new form of political engagement. At the individual level is Danger Mouse himself and the creative artifact that he generated by recombining elements of our cultural environment and heritage. At a collective level, the participants in the Grey Tuesday protest became the distributors — and even the marketers — of the *Grey Album* artifact itself. This is where cultural studies and political economy find a new area of common ground: audiences are not merely active in the sense of creating meanings; they are active in the evolution of the technological and economic structures of the music circulation system itself. And, either consciously or unwittingly, every person who has downloaded The *Grey Album* has been party to the fostering of an emergent form of political participation. (2005)

Gunderson and Howard-Spink both treated *The Grey Album* rather optimistically. Gunderson envisioned a coming age of increased consumer control of culture and the weakening of the "culture industry," and Howard-Spink viewed mashups and online activism as a potential site for advocacy and protest. In 2005, William Levay took a different approach. Although Levay acknowledged the potential for mashups to destabilize the "culture industry" and challenge ideas about authorship and the producer/consumer dichotomy, Levay ultimately concluded that the disruptive power of mashups would be appropriated and muted by industry (2005: 36).

Kembrew McLeod's 2005 article on mashups was the most comprehensive up to that point, and he was the first scholar to include material from interviews with mashup artists. In addition to providing a thorough history of the genre, McLeod contextualized mashups within a larger history of sampling and experimentation with recorded sound. McLeod also focused much of his attention on *The Grey Album* and used it as a case study to demonstrate inconsistencies and problems in copyright law, particularly in its treatment of sample-based music.

Two articles about mashups were published in 2006. Em McAven wrote a short piece that explored much of the same ground that had been covered by Gunderson and Levay regarding the disruptive potential of mashups to the hegemony of the "culture industry," and arguing that mashups demonstrated the existence of an active consumer. McAven moderated Levay's prediction that mashups would be appropriated, and Gunderson's prediction that mashups would bring about a new era of Attali-esque "composition":

> One should not consider mash-ups as an unambiguous refusal of late capitalism, for many bootleggers would like nothing better than to become part of the system from which they currently pilfer. However, given the nature of the medium, its commercial co-option is far from assured, since the clearance fees for many bootlegs render them un-releasable. In their re-appropriations of popular music culture, though, mash-ups embody the contradictions inherent in late capitalism—fun and serious, nihilist and political, anti-capitalist and marked by hyper-consumption. Immersed in pop culture, but not quite of it, the liminal place of mash-ups on the edge of the culture should continue to make them of interest to critics of media culture. (2006)

The second article published in 2006 was by Davis Schneiderman in the journal *Plagiary: Cross-Disciplinary Studies in Plagiarism, Fabrication, and Falsification*.[18] Schneiderman looked at the "complex assault on ownership standards" (2006: 11) and

[18] Which I cite with care.

authorship posed by *The Grey Album* and by William S. Borroughs' "cut-up" method. Schneiderman was primarily concerned with analyzing the defenses offered by the artists and/or critics of these works when confronted with claims of misappropriation of previous work.

Two important pieces were published in 2007: John Shiga's article "Copy-and-Persist: The Logic of Mash-Up Culture," and Aram Sinnreich's dissertation *Configurable Culture: Mainstreaming the Remix, Remixing the Mainstream*. These two works were especially helpful to this project because both Shiga and Sinnreich paid close attention to the mashup community and incorporated community perspectives into their arguments. Shiga focused on "the logic that guides the development of works, styles and reputations in mash-up culture," and noted the ways that the mashup community is distinct from "DJ culture" (2007: 93).

Sinnreich's dissertation is concerned with "configurable culture," his term for the whole of remixing, and the way that these new forms of creativity challenge the assumptions and traditions of the "modern ontological framework." The heart of Sinnreich's dissertation was an analysis of the ways that new uses of technology are blurring a set of binaries: art/craft, artist/audience, original/copy, composition/performance, and materials/tools. Sinnreich used mashups as an example for many of his arguments, and convincingly argued that mashups belong in the larger realm of remix.

The two most recent works were both published in 2008 in the journal *Popular Music and Society*. The first, by Michael Serazio, argued that "the mash-up is a response to larger technological, institutional, and social contexts. Through themes of irony,

empowerment, and re-appropriation, the mash-up serves as a fitting expression of today's youth media experience" (2008: 79). Serazio based his arguments on analysis of numerous pieces that had appeared in the press about mashups, and textual analysis of a handful of mashups. Serazio's approach privileged media reception and, while he did conduct some email interviews with mashup producers, his conclusions are not informed by the views of mashup community members:

> As politically defining pop goes, I believe the mash-up movement is surprisingly vapid. Certainly it does serve a limited political function. Mashers rewrite the pop canon in a way that critics and musicians wouldn't prefer and subvert taste hierarchies that dominate pop music. Their deconstructionist, re-appropriationist mentality—whereby texts are stripped of original meaning and soldered to others—also blurs the high-low culture divide… Is there a real cause here, beyond irony—a genuine call to arms toward something rather than a simple wink-wink, tongue-in-cheek prank about nothing? I would argue that the mash-up is bricolage for its own sake; as a definitive generational statement, it hesitates to espouse anything more than detached, wry commentary, which actually may be apropos. The mash-up can be considered the audio complement to reading The Onion's farcical news stories or sporting a pseudo-thrift-store T-shirt slogan á la Urban Outfitters' "Jesus is my homeboy." (2008: 92)

The second article published in 2008 was David Gunkel's "Rethinking the Digital Remix: Mashups and the Metaphysics of Sound Recording." Gunkel argued against the notions that mashups are either creative and innovative, or derivative and inauthentic. He asserted that mashups do not belong in any argument that stems from a Platonic understanding of the "recording" as a referent to the "original." Mashups, he argued, should not be subject to critiques of innovation or derivation that presume a relationship to an "original" sonic event. Gunkel wrote, "A mash-up does not copy or reproduce an original audio event… a mash-up does not consist in the technological reproduction of some original and prior performance. Instead mash-ups manufacture copies from copies"

(2008: 497), and in order to understand them we must, "learn to hear the mash-up as a critical intervention in and fundamental reconfiguration of the very concepts of originality and authenticity that, for better or worse, already structure our comprehension of and expectations for recording technology" (2008: 491).[19]

With the exception of the work by Shiga, Sinnreich, and McLeod, the voices of mashup producers and other community members have been absent from the existing scholarly literature. This work remedies that absence. Throughout the dissertation I engage with key topics raised in the literature, but I privilege the views of community members themselves. I have been careful to focus on the interests, opinions, and concerns of community members when choosing the topics and themes presented, and I approached the theoretical and analytical sections of this work with those perspectives in mind. By focusing on the people that make mashups, I have been able to present a more nuanced view of the community and the genre than what has heretofore been published. It is my hope that this work will be read by interested scholars as well as members of the community whose feedback will help to guide my future research and writing on this subject.

[19] In addition to the above works, mashups, particularly *The Grey Album*, have been the subject of several articles by legal scholars debating the merits of the "fair use" argument as a defense against claims of copyright infringement, and how copyright law might be expanded to address mashups (Lewis 2005, Mongillo 2009, Power 2006, 2007, Rimmer 2005).

Chapter 2

"It Goes Beyond Having A Good Beat And I Can Dance To It": Mashup Aesthetics and Creative Process

Making a mashup involves more than technical proficiency with the right computer software and access to the Internet. Mashup production is a creative process that involves careful attention to the selection of source material and the ability to arrange that material into a coherent song form. Mashup producers make choices based on musical structure, key, tempo, etc., as well as relying on their understanding of the aesthetic values of the mashup community. The mashup community has its own set of aesthetic principles, distinct from those of other related genres of remix and sample-based popular music like dub (Veal 2007), hip-hop (Schloss 2004), and electronic dance music (Butler 2006). This chapter will examine the steps involved in the creative process of mashup production, and then look at the set of aesthetic values that guide the production and critical reception of mashups within the mashup community.

Creative Process

The most important aspects of mashup production are the selection of sources to be sampled, and the arrangement of those samples. Because mashups, or at least the vast majority of them, contain only material sampled from other recordings, mashups are more reliant on samples than any other genre of music. Arrangement is important because mashups are generally conceived of as songs with distinct sections and a recognizable

structure. Mashup artists intend to create stand-alone pieces of music that adhere, in some form, to recognizable popular song structures and conventions.

The creative process of making a mashup is deeply subjective and individual, and the observations that follow need to be understood as generalizations that, while reflective of many mashup artists' experiences, are neither universal nor meant to be prescriptive. Different mashup artists have different methods and processes, but throughout the course of my observations, interviews, and listening to thousands of mashups, several common themes have become apparent.[20]

Selection of Sources

How do mashup artists get the idea to combine particular songs? Four broad themes recurred when I discussed this with mashup producers. First, there is an element of inspiration. Several artists recounted times that they were struck with the idea to combine particular songs. A second way that sources are selected is through a process of informed trial and error. A mashup artist may have an idea for some but not all of the sources that s/he would like to use and will find the other sources by auditioning many samples until a suitable match is found. Thirdly, some mashup artists also rely, in part, on song databases in which they keep track of structural elements like BPM (beats per minute) and key. This data can be helpful in narrowing the options for source material. Finally, the selection of sources can also be partially predetermined, as in the case of

[20] Although the technical process of mashup creation is important, I will not be detailing the technical steps beyond what was outlined in the introductory chapter. For an in-depth look at the software and techniques required to create and combine a capellas, instrumentals, and other samples, there exist numerous books, manuals, online forums, and tutorials, devoted to the subject and to specific software programs (see Roseman 2007 for a specific step-by-step description of mashup creation, as well as the website http://www.bootcampclique.com which provides mashup tutorials).

commercial mashup work, mashup compilation albums centered on a specific artist, theme, or song, and the periodic "challenges" that are posted to websites or forums and solicit mashups using specific source material. The process of selecting sources is also influenced by a mashup producer's musical tastes, the intended audience for a mashup, and, importantly, whether or not multiple sources can be made to work musically with each other.

Processes of Selection

Many mashup artists told me about times that the idea for a mashup occurred to them while listening to, or playing, music and being reminded of another song. Faroff described how he came up with the idea for his mashup of Bob Marley's "No Woman No Cry" and The Beatles' "Let It Be":

> Was "Let It Be" the first song that I thought of? I think so. I think I was actually playing it, I think it was for my girlfriend, I don't know. I was just playing it and it just occurred to me that the two sequences of chords were really similar and I was like, "are they the same key?" It was like: boom! That is the best thing when you realize they are the same keys… Now when I am listening to my iPod I am always thinking about mashups. Sometimes "shuffle" helps me because I am always using it on shuffle and sometimes there will be two songs in a row that I will be like, "what? They go together."
> (Cambridge, MA, April 8, 2009, quoted with permission)

Faroff's example demonstrates the importance of a good ear for music in the traditional sense (his ability to identify the similar key and chord progressions of two songs), as well as the more specific ability to hear multiple songs that will work together in a mashup. Like any other musical skill, the ability to hear what will work well as a mashup requires time, practice, and an understanding of the genre. In an interview, dj BC referred to this skill as the ability to recognize "remixable" songs, or sections of songs:

> **Liam:** How do you start out? Do you just hear a song and it reminds you of another song? How do you approach a mashup?
>
> **BC:** At this point, you know, I've done enough of them that I'm constantly thinking about what's remixable. So, if I'm listening to something and it either reminds me of another song, or if I'm listening to a tune that has a really great instrumental break or some looped part, then I can say to myself that sounds great. Now that's a track that I want to try and see if I can do something with.
> (Phone interview, October 14, 2008, quoted with permission)

Listening to music was frequently cited as a source for inspiration, but there were also examples of a spontaneous spark of creativity. As Party Ben told me,

> The creative process totally depends, which I think it does for any artist... Sometimes something hits my head as I am riding around on the motorcycle, I'll be like, "oh my god, that Police song needs to go with that Snow Patrol song." I just hear it completed in my head, just a flash and it is all I can do to get somewhere where I can make it. I can't talk, or think about anything else I just hear it perfectly and I can't work fast enough. My hands don't go fast enough to make it because I know exactly. That Snow Patrol mashup came into my head 100% completed. I knew where the little echoey vocal parts had to be at the end, all just done. Same thing with the Madonna and New Order, I just heard it like "bing."
> (San Francisco, CA, June 10, 2009, quoted with permission)

More often, the initial inspiration may spring forth out of the blue, but then requires a considerable amount of work to bring to fruition:

> **Party Ben:** Other times it is a creative inspiration that then becomes just drudgery. Like the Green Day and Oasis was like that. For like two weeks I heard that Green Day song and I was like "what song does that sound like, ahhh!" It was driving me nuts and then I figured it out and producing it was a total bitch. There were no a capellas of either song so it was like this careful fudging of everything, and the pitches weren't right, and how was I going to arrange this. It wasn't going to be a Freelance Hellraiser style mashup where I just had the instrumental of one, vocal of the other. The vocals had to intertwine, it was very complicated. I wasn't sure how to end it. It was a whole struggle, just hours and hours and hours of work.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 10, 2009, quoted with permission)

Most mashup artists have different creative experiences with different mashups. As in Party Ben's account, some mashups may be sparked by inspiration, while others

may be the result of hours of trying numerous songs in combination with each other. All the mashup artists that I interviewed acknowledged that the process differed depending on the mashup. Mr. Fab put it this way:

> **Liam:** When you sit down to make a mashup, when you start a mashup, what is your process like? How do you come up with the idea? What steps do you take to see it through?
>
> **Mr. Fab:** Well there isn't any one way. Sometimes I will be humming a song in my head, just going about my business, and another song will pop into my head because they might share similar characteristics. Or I'll be listening to the radio and I'll start singing another song over it. Then there are the times where I just sit down at the computer like a writer who just starts writing. I won't have any idea I'll just think, "there is that one element that I want to use, what will go with it?" It is a whole stream of consciousness thing, and I'll do it right there on the computer. Other times I will have it all planned out in my head and then it is just a matter of sitting down at the computer, so it is everything in-between.
>
> **Liam:** I have talked to a couple different mashup artists, and some people will have more of a process of trial and error where you've got your instrumental and you drop different a capellas on it.
>
> **Mr. Fab:** Yeah, oh yeah, there is a lot of that. I might start off with one idea but, "nah, that doesn't work, but I think this one will." So I will try that one and then the beat I am using, "no that one's not quite right," so I will bring in another one. The Beastie Boys, on their message board, used to have a remix section and someone had a *Night of the Living Dead* challenge: mix the Beastie Boys with *Night of the Living Dead* for Halloween. So I started with those two, and then I added the song "Spooky," the '60s song, and then I added a beat. By the time that I got through with it there was like three seconds of the Beastie Boys and three seconds of the *Night of the Living Dead* and it ended up being completely different from how I started. So that definitely happens.
> (Los Angeles, CA, June 9, 2009, quoted with permission)

Mr. Fab mentioned three of the four common ways for selecting source material: inspiration, trial and error, and creating a mashup with predetermined sources, in this case for a remix challenge. The mashup producer DJ Earworm is well known for the fourth type, database-supported selection. He details the process in his 2007 instructional book

Audio Mashup Construction Kit (Roseman, 2007). In the book Earworm outlines various methods of categorizing songs by their tempo, key, and other musical elements. Novice bootleggers are instructed to create a computer database that organizes their a cappella and instrumental tracks by numerous different structural elements of the music, allowing them to be quickly accessed and compared. As DJ Earworm explained to me in an interview, this database does not replace the other types of decision-making discussed above, but functions as a supplement:

> **Liam:** You have a different system, it seems from the book, than some of the other DJs that I have talked to. It sounds like you have this expansive database. When did you start keeping that?
>
> **Earworm:** Well, I have always really liked databases and going through large amounts of data to data-mine and cherry-pick. I love computer programming so I always thought of mashups as a data problem. How do you find the stuff that is meant for each other and I am still working on this. I want to go a lot further and find, it is not just key and tempo, it is chord progression, melody. In my ultimate world I would have every note within the song mapped out rhythmically and melodically and then be able to quantify how much does this material rhythmically coincide with this and how much does it coincide melodically, and the chords, and even what's the semantic meaning? What is this about?
>
> …
>
> **Liam:** In your process of creating a mashup does it start with that database or is it inspiration?
>
> **Earworm:** Usually it is inspiration. I do use it. Sometimes there is a song I really like and it is not obvious what I should combine it with and so I will go into the database and say what is in this key near this tempo and then I will look at it if anything strikes me. It is just a way of jogging your memory and then you will be like, "oh, this might work." Then you will just try this, try this, try this through brute force, and then all the sudden it is like, "oh, this has some chemistry."
> (San Francisco, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

As Earworm points out, many times a mashup artist will have one source in mind for a mashup, but will not necessarily have an idea for what to mix it with. Party Ben put it this way:

> Goddammit, I really want to play 'Jump Around' at the club and it has to be mixed with something, let's go through my a capellas and see what I can make.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 10, 2009, quoted with permission)

DJ Matt Hite also described starting a mashup with only one source in mind. In his case finding or creating a unique a capella can be the motivation to create a mashup:

> The other tangent of how I think about it is, a lot of times I will want to, I'll come across an a cappella that I am able to make that maybe nobody else is out there making mashups with, and I'll want to make a mashup around this because it is kind of a rare a capella that I managed to create or get a hold of. It makes it a little bit more special because there are not a whole bunch of mashups out there that are all using the same a capella which kind of happens once the a capella… A lot of times I will have an instrumental that I think is pretty rare or something that people would be surprised to hear so I take it from there.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 13, 2009, quoted with permission)

Factors Affecting the Selection of Sources

The sources that mashup artists choose are also subject to any number of subjective decision-making factors like personal aesthetics, intended audience, and intended purpose for a mashup. While explaining how he selects his sources, DJ Matt Hite emphasized the role that his personal musical tastes, as well as the tastes of his audience play:

> I'm a total '80s throwback guy, so a lot of my mashups have an '80s theme to them. Either an '80s vocal, or an '80s beat is going on so I kind of like to bring that nostalgic '80s style to a lot of my mashups. Also, I do electro clubs too so I like to produce mashups that have electro beats and stuff. I am more creating them for something that I know is going to fit my audience and then sometimes I will just do something cheesy that I think is funny.

(San Francisco, CA, June 13, 2009, quoted with permission)

In addition to considering personal tastes and audience expectations, mashup artists make choices based on their goal for a mashup. If, for example, a mashup is intended for the dance floor it will often feature sources with an upbeat danceable tempo. Mashups that are not necessarily intended for dancing can be slower or less danceable, like Faroff's mashup of "Let It Be" and "No Woman No Cry":

> **Liam:** Like you said, you are often thinking about the dance floor. Are there some that you are making for other reasons?
>
> **Faroff:** Yeah sometimes. Sometimes there are two songs that you like so much and you realize that they work so well together that you just do it. "Let It Be" with "No Woman No Cry" is the same harmony almost… I like it even though I am never going to spin it on the dance floor. (Cambridge, MA, April 8, 2009, quoted with permission)

While aesthetic and artistic choices are an important part of the selection of sources for a mashup, equally important is the musical structure of the samples to be combined. One of the main reasons that a capellas are used to make mashups is that by isolating the vocals there are fewer possibilities for key clashes. DJ Shyboy explained this to me in an interview:

> You need the right ingredients first. It's all about the ingredients. For me, I like to use a capellas mostly. If you mashup a full version with a full version, you will usually get things that will clash because there will be some underlying keyboard tone that clashes with the melody of the other track, etcetera. It's all about having those fresh ingredients for me. (Los Angeles, CA, June 8, 2009, quoted with permission)

Using the various audio editing programs it is possible to overcome some key and tempo discrepancies. All current digital audio programs allow for the independent manipulation of pitch and tempo (as opposed to physical media like tape, vinyl, and CD, in which speeding or slowing the tempo of a song will also affect the pitch). However,

both adjustments have their limitations. Altering the pitch too drastically will result in vocals that sound unnatural and will degrade the audio quality. Changing the tempo too drastically also results in decreased fidelity. Another issue at play is one of mashup aesthetics (addressed later in the chapter): it is important that the audience can recognize the samples used. Altering the speed and pitch too much runs the risk of straying too far from the recognizability of the original. Faroff discussed both of these issues with me:

> Sometimes you are listening to a song and you think about another song that would work so well and then you just pray that they will be close enough keys, but if one is E and the other one is B then you are screwed. You would have to pitch too much, you can't do it. Sometimes you just force it a little bit like "Enter Toxman." Metallica was E and Britney was C. Kind of distant, but I just put [pitched] Metallica down a little bit, and brought Britney up a little bit. Some people at GYBO were kind of upset. Not upset, but they were like, "it's not the right pitch for Metallica." But what would be the alternative to play it?
> (Cambridge, MA, April 8, 2009, quoted with permission)

In the case of "Enter Toxman" Faroff was able to make the samples work, although he received some negative reactions from the community for pitch-shifting. However, accounts of mashups that, despite hours of work, never sound quite right are not uncommon. As Faroff pointed out, sources that are too structurally dissimilar may never result in a mashup that "works." DJ Adrian and The Mysterious D shared one such experience:

> **Liam:** I would imagine that there have also been mashups where you have got a great idea and you try for hours or days but you just can't get the songs to line up.
>
> **Adrian:** That's the worst when you just keep forcing it. We learned that on our third mashup ever which was… The Killers with Kiss and it would work in parts… I think it was the third mashup we ever made, it was so frustrating because you have one part that works perfectly and the other parts are almost there.

> **Mysterious D:** Or it will work on the verses and not on the choruses, and that is a mistake people make all the time is that they will just release the mashup anyway. But you need to change the music when the vocals change or sometimes in a mashup the chorus doesn't work. You either need to cut something out, change something up, or give up on it. Sometimes it doesn't work all the way through.
>
> …
>
> **Adrian:** Yeah and it is really frustrating to have something that works like seventy percent of the time and you just want to release it because those parts that work are so great, but it just falls apart in the chorus or it falls apart in the bridge. That was one thing that we learned, that self-editing is really important. But we released that mashup. It was out for about a week before we pulled it. It was called "Somebody Kissed Me."
>
> **Mysterious D:** Was it out that long?
>
> **Adrian:** I think maybe it was like six days and it has become known amongst ourselves as "Somebody Key Clashed Me."
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

A+D's experience with "Somebody Kissed Me" is one that most mashup artists have had. Conversely accounts of mashups in which the source material worked together so well that it required minimal manipulation are also not uncommon. Earlier in the same interview DJ Adrian recounted one such example:

> **Liam:** What was the easiest mashup that you have made? Have there been any where you just dropped a sample in and it was just perfect?
>
> **Adrian:** There have been a couple that we have done where that happened. I would say our Robin vs. The Cure came together like that. Mashup detractors will say anyone can make a mashup, and it takes no effort, and I can throw together a mashup in 20 minutes. That is patently untrue. But there has been one mashup that we made where it literally took 20 minutes and that was our Robin vs. The Cure. There's a lot of mashups with "Close To Me" by The Cure and I can see why because it is a great beat. A lot of hip-hop tempo stuff fits right on top of it. It took literally 20 minutes and it was like, we were done, there was nothing more that we could do to make it any better.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

DJ Paul V. shared a similar story about the sources of a mashup requiring next to no structural manipulation:

> My biggest hit is Lil' Mama versus The Champs "Tequila Lip Gloss." That is my biggest hit and I have to tell you something: that mashup I think I made in an hour. I got the a capella for it and I don't even know why I would think to use "Tequila." I must have heard it or something and said, "I'm going to try this." I barely had to adjust the tempo, the structure, and that is my biggest hit. Sometimes that happens. Sometimes you spend no time, the most minimal amount of tweaking and working and people adore it. Then other things you slave over and people are like, "what?" That's kind of the beauty of it. You never know what mashup, what is going to strike a chord with people.
> (Los Angeles, CA, June 7, 2009, quoted with permission)

The experiences in which sources simply would not mash together, and those in which sources came together easily, reinforce the importance of selecting sources in the creative process of making a mashup.

Arrangement

Once the sources for a mashup have been selected they need to be arranged into a mashup. Arrangement is a very important step in the creation of a mashup because mashups are generally intended to follow the structure and conventions of popular songs. Usually this means that mashups follow some type of verse-chorus format. Even when not following a strict format, most mashups will feature some sort of musical break or change in the music that separates the mashup into sections and provides some structure. The ability to arrange samples into new songs is a skill that mashup artists value highly, and, as will be discussed in later chapters, is one of the ways that members of the mashup community distinguish themselves from other closely related musical communities.

A popular misconception about mashups is that they are simply an a capella of one song and an instrumental of another played simultaneously. This has led to a perception amongst some in remix, turntablism, electronic music, and music media circles that mashups are easy to make and require little more than the right samples and a computer program which does all the "work." One example of this critique—which has been levied against the mashup genre since its early days—appeared in a May 2004 article from the *SF Weekly* promoting a concert by the turntablist DJ Z-Trip:

> The last year has been a good one for the mash-up, that DIY form of culture-mulching in which anyone with an Internet connection can download two songs plus the software to splat them together and come up with a trendy dance-floor hit in a matter of minutes… "It's sort of become the new karaoke, in my mind. You're at work, and someone's like, 'Hey, listen to what John did in Cubicle No. 4! It's pretty wacky: He did this thing with Christina Aguilera and the Strokes.' To me it's lost its appeal. And it's gone way, way out of the DJ realm." Those are the words of Zach Sciacca, aka DJ Z-Trip, the so-called "king" of mash-ups… As he vehemently points out, Z-Trip is not a mash-up DJ. He's a turntablist, first and foremost, and there's a big difference. Mash-up DJs are known for working primarily on the computer, uploading tracks into ready-made programs that conveniently do the work of syncing up the two songs for you; the mashers then burn the resulting pieces onto CDs, which they spin at clubs. It takes little or no musical talent to make mash-ups this way, which explains why the trend is so popular—and why it has become so saturated with crap. (Kamps, 2004)

Contrary to these claims, mashups that lack a coherent structure (which would almost surely be the result if one picked two samples and simply superimposed them) are generally met with criticism within the mashup community. One GYBO member, headphoneboy, has consistently posted mashups to GYBO which sound as though he has just layered one entire song over the top of another and let them play. Although he has been a GYBO member for some time and regularly posts new mashups, he seems to ignore or dismiss the regular criticism that the mashups receive. In fact, Grant McSleazy,

the GYBO administrator, recently started a thread devoted entirely to headphoneboy. McSleazy wrote,

> We've been a pretty open community over the last (almost) eight years. The times we have joined together have usually been against people who have been abusive on the chat forums or in reaction to tunes.
>
> This is the first time I've seen so much abuse given against someone purely for the tunes that they have posted, and I can't say I'm altogether comfortable with the way things have gone.
>
> Yes, to most people's ears, his tunes sounds awful. They have no 'traditional' effort made to be in tune or in time. To me, it just sounds like they're picked at random and slapped together. Which they very well may have been.
>
> So, there's 2 possibilities. He's either genuine and is hearing something in his tunes which we are not, or he's taking the piss.
>
> Fucked if I know which it is. (2010)

Many of the responses to McSleazy's post express a genuine curiosity about how headphoneboy can continually produce mashups that sound "awful" based on community aesthetic standards. Lee Spoons asked,

> Question for headphoneboy, if he's reading this:
>
> Do you honestly not notice any key clashes/dissonance in your own work, or to turn the argument on its head, do you notice that there's an obvious difference between, say, Nirvana's Lake Of Fire on its own and Nirvana's Lake Of Fire playing simultaneously with a White Stripes tune?
>
> Or does all music sound like noise to you - in which case you most probably are tone deaf, a term which has been thrown about as an insult on here for years but simply means an inability to distinguish musical notes.
>
> Just intrigued more than anything. I don't have a problem with you posting stuff that I think is unlistenable shite on here, plenty of other people do it and it's far easier to ignore on the new GYBO. (2010)

Because anyone, regardless of experience or knowledge, can post their mashup creations to the Internet, there are many examples of mashups that do not display the high level of arrangement and production skill that is the goal of most members of the mashup

community. More often than not these mashups are the work of novice mashup artists who are still learning the techniques and aesthetics of mashup production, or the work of outsiders who may not even be aware that a mashup community exists.

The value of arranging samples into a structured pop song was expressed to me frequently during interviews with mashup producers from within the community. DJ Adrian and The Mysterious D put it this way,

> **Adrian:** Something that you learn when you are a mashup producer, you are doing more than just lining up beats, you are doing more than just lining up words and chords, you are rearranging, you are dealing with songcraft. That is something that a lot of people, especially turntablist DJs, don't understand. The thing is that you need to be not just a producer, you need to be an arranger, you need to understand songcraft, you have to understand key.
>
> …
>
> **Mysterious D:** It all depends on how you can arrange it to make a well-produced song just like you would if you were just creating a bunch of beats and lyrics, but instead you are using preexisting material.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

Faroff also likened mashup production to composing a song with preexisting material:

> It is like you are composing, that is the way that I think about it. It is like composing, writing a song, with elements that are already out there. I think of a song, of a track, as an actual song that I would be writing, as an arrangement with an intro, verse and then chorus, verse and then chorus, a bridge… There is a big element of songwriting there and composing.
> (Cambridge, MA, April 8, 2009, quoted with permission)

DJ Matt Hite also articulated the desire to adhere to a song form, and emphasized the desire for a mashup to be a self-contained musical unit:

> **Liam:** Sometimes it seems with digital mashups that there is more of a focus on a song form.
>
> **Matt Hite:** Absolutely, verse-chorus-verse-chorus-bridge, do the whole thing and the chorus-out. Definitely when you are making a mashup, or at least when I do it, I am structuring it like a song or trying to. You want it

> to be a stand-alone sort of thing that you can listen to and appreciate it on its own.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 13, 2009, quoted with permission)

Although many mashups are created with the intention of being "stand-alone" pieces, mashup artists also create mashups that are intended to be part of a longer mix or DJ set. This requires a slightly different type of arrangement in which a longer intro and outro section are created for mixing into and out of. Additionally, when creating a mashup as part of a longer DJ set, there may be less emphasis on creating a piece with a clear beginning and ending. Faroff played one such piece for me during our interview and commented:

> This was made for Bootie New York. It is not entirely done because I am not really happy with the way it goes at the end. It is always about the arrangement too, but the end of this one I didn't really think about the track per se to put it online, but more like a track to spin. I was thinking about the next song that I was going to spin.
> (Cambridge, MA, April 8, 2009, quoted with permission)

While there are some conventions of mashup arrangement—including the adherence to popular song structure, the use of musical breaks or distinct musical sections to provide structure, or extended intro and outro sections for mixing—mashup arrangement is also quite diverse. Whether combining two sources or twenty, a producer is faced with numerous creative choices. The following section provides an example of this process by presenting a close analysis of a mashup by the Swedish mashup producer DJ Gauffie. The choice of source material for this mashup is somewhat uncommon, in that the producer has combined two songs by the same group and from the same genre. I have chosen to analyze this mashup in order to demonstrate how even the combination of two very similar sources can be quite complicated.

The Jackson 5 Meet The Jackson 5

DJ Gauffie's "I Want ABC Back" combines the lead vocals from the Jackson 5 song "ABC" with the instrumentals, background vocals, and a small section of lead vocals from another Jackson 5 song, "I Want You Back."[21] The two songs are remarkably similar in length, structure, key, and tempo. In fact, the two songs are identical in structure, each following a standard verse, chorus, bridge format, and featuring a breakdown followed by a repetition of the chorus and bridge until a fade out. Both songs are in the key of Ab, in 4/4 time, almost exactly three minutes long, and the BPM of the two songs is quite similar ("ABC" is 98-99 BPM and "I Want You Back" is 93-94 BPM). These two songs are terrific candidates to be combined in a mashup because of their structural similarities. Because both songs are in the same key, no pitch-shifting is required. Using only the vocal line from one of the two songs greatly reduces the possibility for dissonance. Additionally, because the songs are so close in tempo, only a minor tempo adjustment is necessary to match them up and such a small adjustment would more than likely be indistinguishable to the listener. If there were ever two songs that could simply be played at the same time to make a mashup, these would seem to be ideal candidates.

Although this mashup may give the impression of simplicity, its construction is quite complicated. Even with two sources so alike in many ways, producing the mashup required significant editing and rearranging. Table 1 presents a timeline comparison of the two songs. The differing lengths of the structural elements make it impossible to simply layer the vocals from one song over the instrumental track from the other.

[21] The mashup can be found on DJ Gauffie's blog at <http://djgauffie.blogg.se/2008/july/jackson-5-i-want-abc-back-dj-gauffie-rmx.html>

I Want You Back:																																			
Intro						Verse				Chorus				Bridge		Verse				Chorus				Break				Chorus		Bri.	Chorus		Bri.	Chorus	
ABC:																																			
In.	Verse				Chorus				Bridge		Verse				Chorus*						Break*						Chorus		Bri.	Chorus		Bri.	Chorus		
Bars:																																			
2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50	52	54	56	58	60	62	64	66	68	70	72

* The chorus is interrupted at the end of the 11th bar by a 12 bar break that is then followed by the final (12th) bar of the chorus. This is simplified for clarity in the table.

Table 1: Timeline comparison of "I Want You Back" and "ABC"

With the possibility for simply "pressing play" and letting the two samples run simultaneously removed, the question confronting the mashup artist becomes how to rearrange the samples so that they combine to create a structure that works. DJ Gauffie chose to rearrange the samples to create a new structure, but one that is not radically different from the original songs.

I Want ABC Back:																																	
Verse				Chorus A				Chorus B				Bridge		Verse				Chorus C						Break						Chorus (A)			
Bars:																																	
2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50	52	54	56	58	60	62	64	66	68

Table 2: Structure of "I Want ABC Back" arranged linearly

Table 3 below demonstrates how the vocal and instrumental sections were reconstructed and which specific parts were used from the original songs. The vocal line of the mashup is comprised of the lead vocals taken from "ABC" and the backup vocals from "I Want You Back" with the exception of Chorus B and the last bar of the second verse which use the lead vocals from "I Want You Back." The instrumental section is taken entirely from "I Want You Back" but rearranged. The lines indicate which samples from each song where used for each section. Brackets indicate that a partial section was used. For example, in the instrumental chart, the last four bars of the mashup's Chorus A were taken from the final four bars of the first verse of "I Want You Back."

Table 3 visually demonstrates the complex rearranging that DJ Gauffie used to transform two very similar songs into one. It would be impossible to create rules, or

generalize, about the specific editing and rearranging strategies that mashup artists use because they vary so significantly from mashup to mashup and are so reliant on the particular sources and number of sources that are sampled. However, this example still serves to demonstrate the complexity and sophistication of mashup arrangement.

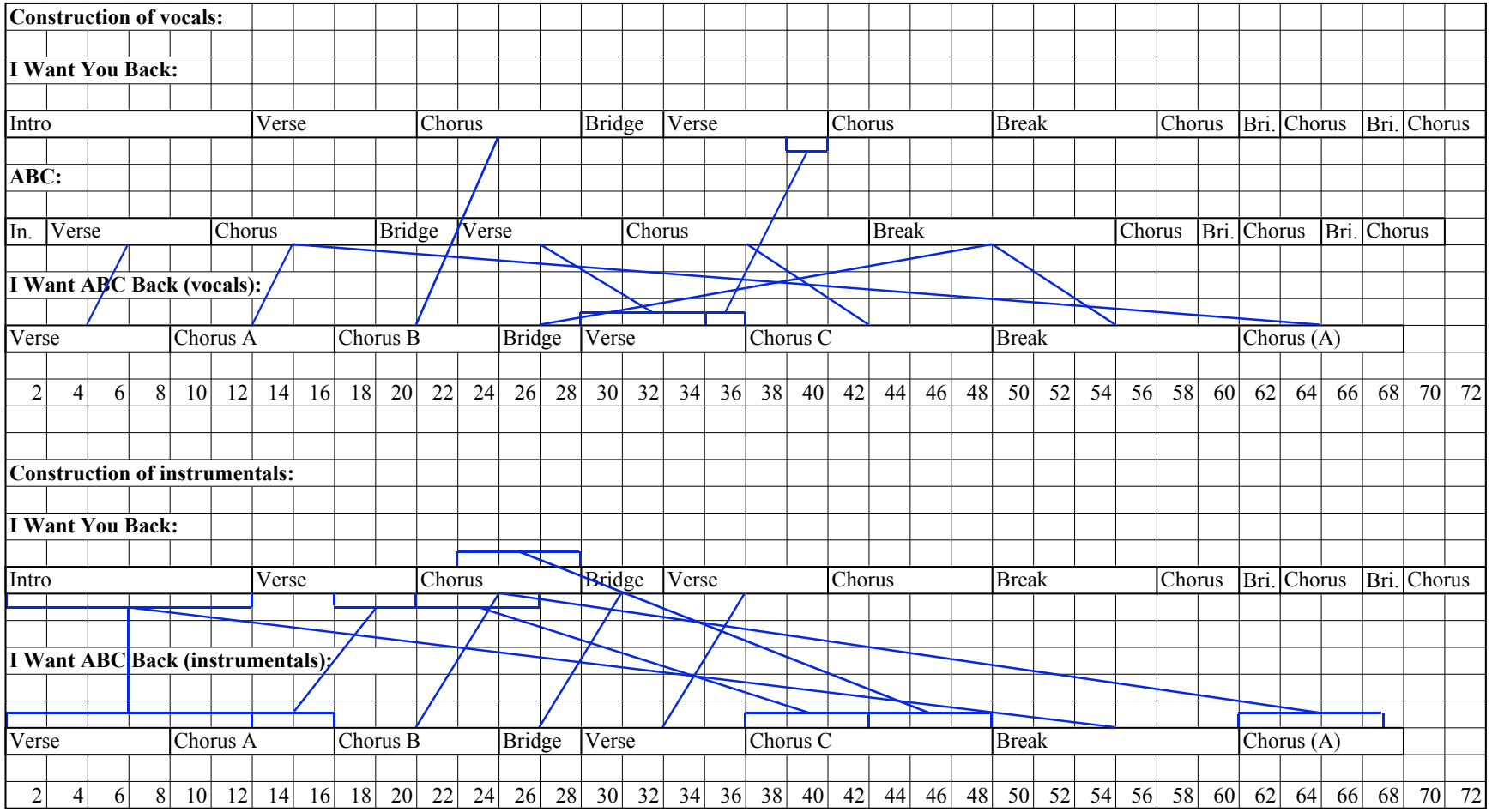

Table 3: Construction of the vocal and instrumental sections of "I Want ABC Back"

Aesthetics

Mashups are closely related to other types of remix music, but distinct aesthetic principles guide the production and reception of mashups. The mashup community is largely self-sufficient. Because legal restrictions prevent the community from fully participating in the systems of production, distribution, marketing, and criticism that make up the commercial music industry, the mashup community has created its own parallel systems. This self-reliance has resulted in a set of aesthetic values that are created and negotiated internally. Mashup artists usually are not beholden to record labels when they make their creative choices.

Mashups are periodically reviewed in mainstream media outlets, but the critical response from outside the community is often not consistent with producers' aesthetic values. A recent listing for Girl Talk's September 2009 concert in Portland, Oregon that appeared in the *Portland Mercury* reflects these different values: "Mash-ups have seen their day. The foolproof template—take a wistful hook, add some rap lyrics, lay it all on top of a pumped-up dance-floor beat—has been so overdone that that a backlash has emerged from within the electronic music community, complete with its own 'no mash-up' sticker." The author exempts Girl Talk from this judgment, citing the complexity of Girl Talk's music relative to the perceived simplicity of others': "[Girl Talk] differs from other producers by limiting his samples to very brief clips. Sure it's easy to drop a memorable Ace of Bass (or Journey) hook, but rather than relying on the familiarity of the sample itself, [Girl Talk] stitches together bits and pieces at a dizzying pace and adds in unique glitches and snap transitions that keep you wondering what'll come next" (Hegedus 2009).

Hegedus's criticism is a perfect example of an aesthetic difference between mashups and other types of sample-based music. Girl Talk is lauded for his ability to use numerous samples in a short period of time. This is also the case for turntablists like Z-Trip and others who are, amongst other things, celebrated for their ability to move from one record to the next quickly and seamlessly. For the mashup community, the ability to use and manipulate many short samples is secondary to the ability to carefully choose *the right* number of samples and transform them into a new song with a coherent structure. In fact, Girl Talk is criticized by some community members for using too many samples and moving too quickly from one to the next while ignoring issues like key and song structure. In a May 2009 GYBO thread, abomb2988 posted a mashup containing 23 samples. The first response was from Norwegian Recycling who wrote, "i really like your eye for details and your creative twists! With that being said i think it became just too random and way two many songs… There was also a couple of key clashes throughout the song... Its very Girl Talk'ish!" (2009). Norwegian Recycling invokes Girl Talk to describe a mashup that contains too many songs and is too "random."

This distinction is highlighted by the difference between the work of Girl Talk and that of DJ Earworm. Earworm, like Girl Talk, is known for making mashups that use numerous samples. Earworm has produced a series of mashups, in December of 2007, 2008, and 2009, in which he combines the 25 most popular songs of the year (according to Billboard). These tracks feature as many samples as anything by Girl Talk or the most talented of turntablists, but instead of moving rapidly from one sample to the next, Earworm layers, repeats, and interweaves the samples to construct a larger song form that features discrete sections. Despite using dozens of samples, these tracks feel less frenetic

than the work that typifies turntablism or much of Girl Talk's music. These distinctions are not judgements of value, but they reflect different aesthetic norms between different musical communities. Because the mashup community is small in comparison to many others and lacks a presence in the commercial music industry, mashups are often judged by criteria that are not compatible with the aesthetic values held by community members.

GYBO, the central online meeting place for the mashup community, is a key site for the negotiation and transmission of mashup aesthetics. GYBO provides the largest collection of links to mashups online, and members of the mashup community post links to their newest mashups on the site in the hopes of publicity and feedback. Not every mashup receives comments, and comments are not always evaluative, but many comments do offer constructive criticism that reinforces the community's aesthetic values. (Although I have heard accounts of abusive or insulting comments, this is relatively uncommon.) Other sites for the transmission of mashup community aesthetics include blogs, best-of lists, and face-to-face interaction, all of which offer means of learning and teaching what qualities are valued in mashup production.

In the following pages I present a list of general values that are important for the community in evaluating the quality of mashups. Even though there are many commonly held aesthetic principles, there is also a tremendous amount of subjectivity in any evaluation of quality. As with my description of source selection and arrangement of samples, I have presented the aesthetic principles that I encountered most commonly over the course of my interviews, in the comments on GYBO, and from listening to numerous mashups. Needless to say, each individual member of the mashup community forms his

or her own aesthetic which may not be exactly in line with the overarching aesthetic principles that I present here.

Combination

Perhaps the most obvious principle that guides the production and criticism of mashups is the aesthetic of combination. This is the idea that two or more preexisting pieces of music, regardless of their relation to each other, can and should be combined. Even though mashups are a musical form, the aesthetic of combination extends to video, photos, and text. The names of tracks are often a combination of the names of the sampled source, as in "I Want ABC Back." The artwork made to accompany mashups is frequently a photoshopped image combining the pictures of the artists sampled in a mashup.

The combination aesthetic guides the production of all mashups. This trait sets the genre apart because it is united by a production technique rather than stylistic qualities of the musical product. The category "mashup," unlike traditional categories of musical genre like blues, rock, opera, or rap, does not imply any particular style of music; it implies a piece of music that has been made by combining two or more other pieces of music. Additionally, as will be addressed below, mashups often combine numerous different genres into one track. I have argued that mashups generally belong in the realm of popular music, and mashup producers generally strive to create mashups that adhere to the standards of contemporary popular song form. However, mashups that do not sample from the sphere of popular music are periodically distributed throughout the community and accepted as mashups.

One recent example (posted to GYBO in September 2009) is okiokinl's mashup of the vocals from Beyonce's 2008 "Single Ladies" with the instrumentals from Duke Ellington's 1940 "Harlem Airshaft." Although Duke Ellington's music was widely popular in its day, it is unlikely that many contemporary listeners would identify "Harlem Airshaft" as popular music, and certainly not as "pop" music. okiokinl's post attracted numerous positive responses complimenting the mashup and the producer's relatively unusual choice of source material. DJ Doc wrote, "The world needs more jazz-based mashups…thanks for this!" (2009). djmagnet commented, "Very nice. Sounds like a newly unearthed recording from back in the day. More Duke Ellington mashes!!!" (2009), and Ace of Clubs added, "Something this unique doesn't come around every year!" (2009). Many of the responses noted the unusual use of jazz in the mashup, but all the responders clearly characterized the piece as a mashup. okioninl is not alone; other examples include Norwegian Recycling's "Pachelbel Mashup," which is built on a loop constructed from Pachelbel's canon, and dj BC's 2005 mashup concept album *Glassbreaks*, which combines hip-hop a capellas and beats with the music of Phillip Glass.

The exclusive reliance on samples taken from preexisting music to create mashups is a constraint, but also opens the genre up to endless stylistic possibilities. Party Ben explained to me:

> It was kind of our long held secret of the club [Bootie] that it is all mashups. All that really does is mean that we can play anything we want as long as it is two songs over each other. We can play ZZ Top, we can play Grease, we can play "Thank God I'm A Country Boy," we can play whatever the hell as long as it is two songs mixed up. So it is kind of this dirty secret. It's like license to do anything within these strictures. I don't know if this is just getting too much into artistic philosophy, but if you look at the White Stripes, they only wear black, red, or white, and they

> don't have a bass, and they give themselves a week to record their whole album on analog equipment, and they place all these restrictions on themselves, and I think that Jack White specifically said in interviews that part of what allows him freedom is setting up these restrictions. Now, of course, the restrictions are arbitrary, but I feel like it helps me as an "artist" and I say that in the loosest possible sense.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 10, 2009, quoted with permission)

Party Ben refers to the general perception that mashups are restrictive because they comprise of pre-recorded samples only. The "dirty secret" is that the restriction of form allows for limitless diversity of content. As he noted, the Bootie DJs can play anything they want so long as it is mashed with something else. This is not the case with many other dance clubs that are dedicated to a particular type of music (house, hip-hop, indie rock, etc.). Party Ben's reluctance to call himself an artist is due in part to his self-deprecating humor, but also points to a larger issue about the role of mashup producer. Creating new music out of the work of others raises questions about authorship that will be addressed in Chapter 6.

Reliance on Sampled Material

Another important aesthetic is the reliance on sampled material to make a mashup. Mashups, as opposed to other sample-based genres like hip-hop, generally consist exclusively of samples. Faroff explained to me, "I am kind of a puritan… I don't put any drum, anything [that isn't sampled], any beats, if I want a sound or something I just steal it from a song. If you are doing it, that is the way to do it, all the way" (Cambridge, MA, April 8, 2009, quoted with permission).

Faroff's attitude reflects the majority of mashup producers. However, there is some disagreement among members of the mashup community on this point. There are

producers who add their own beats or other original elements to their mashups. In a GYBO thread called "define the mashup," the use of non-sampled material was debated. okiokinl introduced the thread by writing, "when does a mashup drift away too far from the concept? for example, what if someone adds their own beats and synths bits…" (2009). World Famous Audio Hacker responded, "Heh. A number of us do that already and still call it a mashup" (2009). Lee Spoons disagreed:

> I would say a bootleg or mashup… is something that consists solely of bits of other people's records…. However if you're going to add your own beats or synths (i.e. from a DAW [Digital Audio Workstation]) or even guitar, rather than sampling them off something, then that's heading into remix territory really. I think "cheatlegs" was the term I used during a very drunken conversation with Jez a while back... I suppose I like the whole idea of bootlegs where you're taking *music that's already out there* out of its original context. (2009)

There is no concrete rule that mashups must contain only sampled material. However, the overwhelming majority of mashups do not use any original material. Producers that do add their own musical content tend to add additional percussion or synthesizer in a supporting role to the sampled material, and a track with extended, prominently featured sections of non-sampled material would generally not be considered a mashup.

Songcraft

As noted earlier in this chapter, most mashups adhere to a song form with discernable sections, structure, and interesting arrangement of samples. GYBO feedback often includes discussion of the structural elements of songcraft. For example ToToM commented on one mashup, "It lacks a bit of structure and doesn't work perfectly (there's something to fix into the spoken bridge part) but this is nice to hear" (2009). DJ

Earworm's 2009 installment of the "United States of Pop" received much praise focusing on arrangement and structure. Kai commented, "Incredible work once again! This is even more addictive than your last couple of USOPs. I've always admired your ability to tell a story by cutting around with sources. Congrats on all the highly deserved success the track is getting! Inspiring stuff, keep 'em coming" (2009). CjR Mix added, "Absolutely phenomenal. A masterclass in editing" (2009), and A+D commented, "I've woken up every morning for the past three days with the newly-crafted chorus (and sometimes one of the verses) lodged in my head. This is nothing short of brilliance, and Earworm deserves every bit of accolades, attention, and kudos he's receiving from this complete gem of a track" (2009).

Recognizability

It is important for the samples used in a mashup to be recognizable. There is no attempt to obscure the source from which a sample has been taken. Quite the opposite, every attempt is made to preserve the recognizability of a sample. This means that, as mentioned above, mashup artists try to manipulate the pitch and tempo of the samples as little as possible. This also applies to the use of effects to manipulate the sound of samples. John Shiga writes,

> Despite the panoply of effects at the disposal of [Sony's] Acid users, using them in mash-up culture involves a surprising degree of restraint. The desired effect is not to reveal to audiences the fact that recordings are representations, the conventional interpretations of which can be deconstructed with intensive sound-processing to the point of unrecognizability. Rather, as a GYBO [member] put it, talent in this technological setting is defined as the capacity to recognize shared properties between different songs, or the capacity to reorganize the musical and aural relations of recordings so that they sound like they are components of the same song… The intense referentiality of mash-up

> style depends upon modest use of sound-manipulation tools; attempts to exploit the recording-as-representation in such away that it no longer refers to something recognizable will be difficult to use as symbolic currency in this remix culture (2007: 103).

This is in contrast to other sample-based genres like hip-hop and electronic dance music in which the DJ or producer often attempts to disguise the samples that they have used or use samples that are relatively unknown (Butler 2006: 61, Schloss 2004: 85-86).

Genre Clash

While some mashups combine samples from a single genre, as demonstrated above with the "I Want ABC Back" example, the ability to combine distinct genres into one track is celebrated in the community. Genre clash was consistently mentioned in interviews as a quality that made mashups enjoyable. When I asked Mr. Fab about his criteria for a good mashup, he responded:

> Wow that is kind of like asking what makes a good song that you like. It is pretty much all the same laws of music. Well, with the mashups it goes beyond, you know, "having a good beat and I can dance to it." With mashups we like the idea of the genre clash. If it's rap versus rap it has to be really good otherwise I am probably not going to really bother with it, but if it's rap versus classical or something like that, if there is a really unusual genre clash, two completely different worlds, that is definitely something I like. Sometimes that can be really funny.
> (Los Angeles, CA, June 9, 2009, quoted with permission)

When I posed the same question to DJ Adrian and The Mysterious D, Adrian also mentioned the importance of clashing genres:

> For both of us really, the mind-fuck genre clash is really the hook of the mashup and the more genre-clash it is, obviously it has to work. I don't want genre clash just for the sake of genre clash if it's not in key or just doesn't fit. When it fits you know that it fits, it just magically works. That is really what we are looking for, we are looking for that mashup that just magically works effortlessly and where you don't even hear the original

> the same way again. It is like, "oh this is the way it was meant to be." That is really what we are looking for.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

Genre clash is appreciated because it demonstrates a mashup artist's ability to hear similarities between stylistically disparate material and requires considerable technical ability to combine the samples. It is also appreciated because of the transformative effect that it can have on the way that a listener experiences the source material. As Adrian put it, the listener will never "hear the original the same way again."

Humor and Satire

In discussing the genre clash element of mashups Mr. Fab noted that combining two distant genres could have humorous results. Indeed the use of humor, often in the form of satire, puns and word games, is common to mashup production and is appreciated in the community. This humor ranges from the simple and sophomoric—combining Destiny's Child's "Bootylicious" and Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" to create "Smells Like Teen Booty"—to more subtle satire like lobsterdust's mashup "It's Fun To Smoke Dust."

lobsterdust's mashup combines Queen's "Another One Bites The Dust" with clips from a speech delivered in 1982 by Pastor Gary Greenwald. Greenwald was one of a handful of fundamentalist Christian pastors who claimed that musicians, especially rock musicians, were recording subliminal satanic messages into their records. These messages, Greenwald asserted, were recorded backwards, called "backmasking," and could be discovered by playing a record in reverse rotation (Vockey, 1985). The speech, which is sampled and looped to create a beat, includes a section in which Pastor

Greenwald explains that, when played backwards, portions of Queen's "Another One Bites The Dust" sound as though Freddie Mercury is singing, "It's fun to smoke marijuana." The mashup features Greenwald's explanation followed by that particular section of "Another One Bites The Dust," which lobsterdust has reversed to reveal the alleged message from Satan.

Satire is well represented in the work of mashup artists. The mashup artist G3RSt posted a mashup called "I Got New York" to GYBO that combined Frank Sinatra singing "New York, New York" and The Black Eyed Peas' "I Gotta Feeling." The mashup was generally well-received, but two responses criticized it for being too repetitive. G3RSt responded, "Exactly - that's also one of the points I wanted to make about this song. I Gotta Feeling just contains a few lines of lyrics and it feels like it's on repeat. LOL Thanks for the nice comment" (2009). A later reply by Apollo Zero added, "Actually i read some criticism about the state of today's pop song choruses.. all they do is repeat and there is not much to them, look at 'womanizer, womanizer, womanizer oh he's a womanizer, womanizer, womanizer, womanizer.…' Enough already! That gets on my nerves as well. lol" (2009).

Commenting on the state of contemporary pop or the derivative nature of a song is not uncommon. Satire is also used more broadly to comment on issues beyond popular music. In an interview Mr. Fab described a recent mashup project satirizing Fred Phelps, the founder of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas, which has been at the center of controversy for its homophobic protests of events such as military funerals:

> **Mr. Fab:** I was on [Fred Phelps'] website and he has got a capellas of his gospel group! So I took one of his songs and mixed it with the instrumental of the gayest song in the world "YMCA" by The Village People. I am sure that he would really appreciate that.

Liam: Is he the guy in Colorado that protests funerals?

Mr. Fab: Yeah, I don't know if he is in Colorado, but he is the "God Hates Fags" guy, so I mixed him with the Village People.

Liam: You should send it to him.

Mr. Fab: It would make his head explode.
(Los Angeles, CA, June 9, 2009, quoted with permission)

Puns and word games make up a large part of the humor in mashups. The puns are often found in the titles of mashups, or the juxtaposition of lyrics in a mashup, but they can also extend much deeper. Faroff explained to me how important word games are to the humor in mashups, and also the multi-layered meaning of his own mashup community pseudonym:

Faroff: I think that it is all about word games, the whole mashup thing. I have always been obsessed with playing with words and the meanings of things. That is what mashups are all about right? It is putting stuff together and also about coming up with a cool name for the song, for the artist, that combines the two tracks.

Liam: Like "Enter Toxman." [a mashup of Britney Spears' "Toxic" and Metallica's "Enter Sandman]

Faroff: I thought that was kind of cool. I was even thinking about having an album of mashes of, my plan was to send an email to some bootleggers to suggest it, of Amy Winehouse's a capellas with surf music tracks because a lot of her stuff really works well with surf music. You could name it something like Amy Beachouse… I tried "Rehab" with "Wipeout" and it works perfectly, but it was just because of the name… It is just about the pun, the word game… and the covers when you are designing the album artwork, I like that too, and now the videos. You can just extend the joke to different dimensions.

…

Faroff: I chose Faroff because it sounds a little stupid in English and a little stupid in Portuguese, but it works in both. In Brazil you have this dish called *farofa* were you just put a lot of things together and you mix it, and everybody knows what farofa means. Also farofa, when it is applied

> to an artistic context is kind of corny or cheesy, but poppy in a trashy way. "That is so farofa."
>
> **Liam:** Isn't that also what *brega* means?
>
> **Faroff:** Brega [with correct pronunciation], yeah. Brega is very specific, almost like a genre, but farofa is like, it is not only for music it's everything. Brega can mean corny, in general, but farofa is not really corny. Farofa is really pop, super pop like "Pump Up The Jam" or "Mr. Jones," that is quintessential farofa. I thought this was pretty cool. This is really about mashups, it is mixing and using really pop stuff with no prejudice. So farofa, I liked this name in Portuguese. Then I realized that it could also make some sense in English because "far off" is something that is out of the way, it is far off. Also, because of off with two "F"s. I have always been fascinated with Eastern-European stuff. So Faroff could also be, it sounds like an Eastern-European name like Orloff, Sergei Faroff… On MySpace there was someone called Faroff already. Actually a 15 year old from Poland… I didn't want to put DJ Faroff, because, first I never saw myself as a DJ because I never really DJed I was just making mashups so I didn't really feel comfortable. I am not a DJ and that is for to the actual DJs. That is like putting doctor in front of my name without being a doctor… So I had to come up with the domain name and I put Fan Faroff. I don't know why I put Fan Faroff. Maybe because it is like fanfare. It is like a triple word game, I don't know. So I put Fan Faroff. A lot of people call me Fan Faroff in Brazil because *fanfarra* [fanfare in Portuguese] is much more used in Brazil than fanfare in the U.S. because fanfarra means the act of having fun and not worrying about stuff, in Brazil. Living life like a fanfarra, people say that in Brazil. Or, *fanfarrao* is a guy who is just not serious about anything, "he is just a fanfarrao." So, Fan Faroff made the joke funnier in Brazil. It is all about playing with words I guess so maybe the word is a mashup per se.
> (Cambridge, MA, April 8, 2009, quoted with permission)

Lyrical and Thematic Interplay

Combining samples in such a way that they lyrically or thematically complement or comment on each other is a skill that is held in high regard by the mashup community. It is relatively uncommon that a mashup artist is able to combine two or more songs that work together both musically and lyrically, but it is something that was often cited as a

goal in my interviews with mashup producers. Mr. Fab expressed his admiration for mashups that work on both a musical and lyrical level:

> Sometimes there is a really good technical sound mashup, but it just isn't that interesting as one where the two songs are kind of commenting on each other. Sometimes it means the theme of one song is sort of commenting on the theme of the other song. Sometimes it means that you have got two different, totally different, genres but they seem to be talking about the same thing. Voicedude from Orange County, he is really good at that. He took the Johnny Cash song "Man in Black" and he took the Will Smith song from the movie, the theme song, "Men In Black." They have nothing to do with each other, but he somehow got them in the same key and it impossibly sounds like they are talking about the same thing. That is what I really like, if you can get the tracks commenting on each other. It's pretty unusual. Most people just try to get it in key and on time, but if you go that extra yard that is really great.
> (Los Angeles, CA, June 9, 2009, quoted with permission)

I asked dj BC if he thought much about the lyrics in his mashups and he responded:

> Yeah, I am thinking about lyrical content, clever titles, lyrics that interplay with each other. Definitely always working to make something that's clever in addition to sounding good. So, for example, I have a huge stash, or archive, of a cappella files. It's all stuff that I downloaded or ripped from singles or that sort of thing. And so, for example, I was making a track, I don't know maybe six months to nine months ago, and I had a nice instrumental of "I Wish That It Would Rain" by the Temptations which I got from a karaoke Motown CD and it is the original instrumental track from the song. I started making a beat around it and after I did that I was like, "okay well what can I use for this?" and I started going through my stuff and trying different things. I'm not sure what ones I tried before I landed on "Let It Rain" by Fat Joe and Little John. I was like, "oh, well Rain and Rain." So then at that point it's just a matter of what part to I want to be the verse, what am I going to do on the chorus. A lot of times I will try to have interplay between two different artists on the chorus in some way or another and how they lyrically complement each other.
> (Phone interview, October 14, 2008, quoted with permission)

Earworm, like dj BC and others, also pays specific attention to the lyrical and thematic content of the songs that he samples. He is known for making mashups in which large numbers of samples are joined together by a common theme.

> **Liam**: So when you are constructing a mashup are you thinking in terms of thematic and lyrical similarities as well as what is going to work musically?
>
> **Earworm:** Oh for sure. It can happen from either angle. For instance, I was listening to that Beyonce song, "If I Were A Boy," and all the sudden it was like, "oh, that sounds just like 'Free Fallin' [by Tom Petty]." So it wasn't so much the meaning as it was the chords. It isn't even the same chords, but many of the notes in the chords are the same, they really reminded me of each other. And you know you find out what words do relate. I was like, "oh, it ["If I Were A Boy"] is kind of about a girl complaining about this guy who is taking her for granted. And then he [Tom Petty] is really singing about, in a way, being free." Then I was thinking, well for her his freedom is just really annoying. So I said, this could be kind of a conflict, the male version and the female version. So you just, you can take almost two random songs and you just see what in them relates to each other.
> (San Francisco, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

Earworm's account of finding thematic commonality demonstrates how much mashup artists reinterpret and recontextualize the sources that they use. Earworm's account is also striking in its similarity to a description from dj BC. BC explained to me how he went through a similar process of constructing a new lyrical meaning from disparate sources:

> How do they lyrically complement each other? It's just sort of a tweaking process of trying to make everything fit together… I did a track called "Knights on Fire." I used Beverly Knight's "Keep This Fire Burning" which is a love song about, you know, keeping somebody in your love, your love alive. And then I used Bruce Springsteen's "I'm On Fire," which is a song from a male perspective, obviously because it's Bruce singing. He's talking about, it's almost like he's been forbidden, it's like a teenage love song kind of thing. It's like he's being forbidden to be with this woman and so he's on fire. He is consumed by this. So [the mashup] sort of throws both songs into a different light. They're both love songs. It's like they are singing to each other but they both have a completely different understanding of what the "fire" is. I am actually really proud of how that worked out lyrically, and I like the song as well. How it worked, but it went sort of beyond being clever and funny and you can listen to it and think about the meaning of the two songs
> (Phone interview, October 14, 2008, quoted with permission)

Although it is not often that a mashup meets the aesthetic goal of lyrical as well as musical interplay, the mashups that do succeed on both levels are met with praise.

Conclusion

Mashups comprise a unique genre, distinguished from other types of remix and popular music by their exclusive reliance on samples taken from preexisting recordings, and the combination of those samples into a structurally coherent new song. The selection of sources is incredibly important to the success of a mashup, both structurally and creatively. The selection of sources is often the result of inspiration, informed trial and error, the use of a database, or as part of a challenge, contest, or album project that requires the use of certain sources. Arranging samples into a coherent whole with distinct sections and following some recognizable song form is a second crucial aspect of the creative process. Mashups, unlike DJ mixes, sound collage, or other types of exclusively sample-based music, are intended to follow the norms of popular song form. Mashup artists demonstrate their creativity and production skills by arranging samples to create new stand-alone songs out of prerecorded material.

In addition to their ingredients and form, mashups are distinguished by the communally determined and enforced set of aesthetic principles that guides the production and critical reception of mashups by community members. Aesthetic values are subjective and differ from one individual to the next in any musical community, but common themes presented themselves over the course of interviews with mashup artists, online research, and participant observation. I organized these themes into seven aesthetic principles that are valued by the community: combination, reliance on samples, songcraft,

recognizability, genre clash, humor and satire, and finally the difficult-to-attain goal of lyrical and thematic interplay of sources. These principles are by no means the only ones by which mashups are judged, but they are the most commonly encountered within the mashup community.

Chapter 3

Clubs, Computers, and Radio: Sites of Mashup Distribution and Reception

This chapter explores the key sites of mashup reception and distribution, as identified by members of the mashup community and through my own online and offline fieldwork. This account is not intended to be an exhaustive listing of all the various places where mashups are heard and shared, but rather an examination of the sites that the community deems most important and which are most frequently encountered by community members and discussed in community forums: clubs and concerts, various sites on the Internet, radio, periodic commercial releases and collaborations with the recording industry, and the video game *DJ Hero*.

Clubs and Concerts

Mashups are a form of popular dance music commonly encountered in settings such as nightclubs and concerts. Throughout the course of my research I have attended a number of such events across the U.S., including Bootie club nights in New York, Boston, Portland, OR, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, as well as a Girl Talk concert in Portland, OR. The Bootie club events are the largest, most successful, and most well-known mashup club nights in the world; Girl Talk is the most successful major touring musician who performs mashups in a concert setting.

Bootie

DJ Adrian and The Mysterious D started Bootie in San Francisco in June 2003. A+D are a married couple who live in San Francisco. Adrian has a background in rock music, having played and performed in several bands before starting Bootie. He is the lead singer and founding member of Smash Up Derby, a live band that performs mashed-up covers at Bootie San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York, as well as performing outside of Bootie at various clubs and events in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Mysterious D has a background in the nightclub scene in San Francisco and brought her knowledge of the club scene and club promotion to the creation of Bootie.

Bootie has grown considerably since starting at a small punk rock club. Today there are regular Bootie club nights in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland, OR, Boston, New York, Paris, Munich, Berlin, Vienna, Brisbane, Helsinki, Cork, Vilnius, Lithuania, Rio de Janeiro, and Second Life. In addition to the regular events, Bootie has thrown one-off club nights in Chicago, Salt Lake City, Brasilia, Beijing, Hong Kong, Mexico City, Copenhagen, and annually at the Burning Man Festival. A+D have attended all the Bootie nights at least once and they run Bootie San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland, and New York. Local mashup producers and club promoters are handpicked by A+D and given permission to run the other Bootie events around the world.

Although all of the different Bootie nights that I attended had unique elements, there is a standard format. The music usually begins between 9-10 p.m. with DJ sets lasting until midnight. At midnight there is a “Midnight Mashup Show” consisting of a live performance ranging from burlesque dancers doing choreographed routines set to mashups, to a Smashup Derby performance, to the occasional guest appearance by a sampled artist playing or singing along to a mashup of their work (cf. Thornton 1996: Ch.

2 on the role of these "PAs" [public appearances] in UK club contexts). DJ sets resume after the Midnight Mashup Show and continue until closing.[22]

Each of the Bootie club nights has a set of local "resident" DJs from the area who are regularly featured, but the clubs also routinely host guest DJs. For example, in April 2009 the crew from Bootie Munich toured the United States Bootie nights. Their performances in New York and Boston featured a Midnight Mashup performance involving dancing in lederhosen while chugging beer out of enormous glass steins. Similar tours occur frequently.[23] In general, the mashups played at Bootie are up-tempo because they are intended for dancing; DJs usually only play slow songs at the very end of the night as they are winding the evening down. Bootie San Francisco is unique amongst the U.S. Bootie parties in that it is located in a two-story venue that is large enough to have two separate stages with DJs spinning simultaneously on both floors.[24] Often times while the main stage plays a wide range of different mashups, the upstairs room will be dedicated to a particular theme. For example, one night when I was in attendance the DJs upstairs only spun mashups that featured Madonna; on another night the upstairs room had an "electro" theme and all the mashups sampled electronic dance music.

DJs who perform at Bootie and other live mashup events have the advantage of getting direct feedback from the crowd. A+D explained to me how this can have a positive affect on the DJs abilities as a disc jockey as well as mashup producer:

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[22] Bootie nights outside of the United States tend to begin later in the evening and end in the early morning (as is the case with other electronic dance music club nights). DJ Schmolli, the resident DJ and organizer of Bootie Munich, told me that they normally start around midnight and end at 5 or 6 in the morning.

[23] Most recently the U.K. based mashup group The Kleptones performed at Bootie San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Portland in March 2010.

[24] The upstairs stage is considerably smaller, but offers a good-sized dancing area and separate bar.

> **Mysterious D:** Another thing that I really like about the Bootie parties is that the Bootie parties create their own mashup stars. You get somebody in there doing the resident DJ every month and you watch and he becomes a better bootlegger because he is out exposing his music to more people, more interaction, and feedback.
>
> **Adrian:** You get immediate feedback. It's the difference between recording your music in a studio and playing it live in front of an audience. You get the immediate reaction. You can see whether a track works or not as opposed to putting it on the Internet and hoping that people put up comments.
>
> **Mysterious D:** And when you are DJing and you are collecting tracks and playing tracks you are constantly kind of immersing yourself in a culture that you can't get on iTunes or in a record store. You are immersing yourself in a culture and hearing what other people play, how it works, what people are commenting on, what they like or what they don't, even the early part of the night before it becomes a dance club when you are just playing interesting stuff.
>
> **Adrian:** One of our DJs… he was like, "once you start to play it there is just that wow factor. People are like, 'Wow!'" and you just want to get the those decks moving and you just want to keep doing that, keep delivering the wow.
>
> **Mysterious D:** From my career experience you have got it both ways. There is a flipside of that, which he doesn't see because he only plays Bootie parties, you get the high highs of being the most exciting DJ people have heard but then you also have a series of, not so much now but definitely in the years that we have been doing this, people that are like, "Can't you just play the original song?" You have both sides. You have to take the bad with the good, but it is addictive. If you can handle the people being annoyed by their song getting screwed up, excitement, it is absolutely worth it.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

The live feedback of an audience is something that is difficult to replicate in other sites of mashup reception and distribution.

Bootie Club Nights in the United States as of March 2010					
	Boston	**Los Angeles**	**New York**	**Portland, OR**	**San Francisco**
Venue	Afterlife Lounge	Echoplex	BLVD	Red Cap Garage	DNA Lounge
Venue Type	Bar/lounge	Club/concert venue	Club	Club	Club/concert venue
Capacity	100	800	700	285	1500
Frequency	Monthly	Twice/month	Quarterly	Monthly	Three times/month
Organizer	dj BC	A+D, Paul V.	A+D	A+D	A+D
Cover Charge	$5	$5-10	$5-10	$5-10	$6-12

Table 4: List of United States Bootie nights and basic information

From April 2009 to March 2010 I attended Bootie club nights in Boston, New York, Portland, OR, San Francisco, and Los Angeles (see Table 4). As of this writing these are all of the regular Bootie events in the United States, although there are periodically one-off Bootie nights in other cities. The most recently added night is in Portland. I attended the debut of Bootie Portland on February 26, 2010 at the Red Cap Garage.

The Red Cap Garage is a gay-identified dance club in an area of Portland that has historically been a center of gay nightlife. Bootie is not identified as a gay or straight event and a common feature throughout all of the Bootie nights in the U.S. is the diversity of the crowd (in many regards, not just sexual orientation). The Bootie events that are run by A+D all share a playfulness regarding sexual orientation and gender that is present in the advertising and performances featured (drag performers and burlesque dancers are common). This playfulness was certainly on display at Bootie Portland. As my wife and I waited in line to pay and have our wrists stamped a small group of men in their twenties walked past us. As they displayed their stamped wrists to the man collecting money at the front door, one of them yelled jokingly, "You know us girl; we already paid." The doorman laughed and let them through.

The crowd at Bootie Portland mirrored all of the Bootie events that I have attended in its striking diversity. Despite its location in a gay-identified club with semi-nude male dancers and a drag performer, there appeared to be a substantial number of straight and lesbian individuals/couples in attendance (based on my observations of people dancing and engaging in other romantic behavior such as kissing). The crowd was a smorgasbord of different types of people beyond just sexual orientation. A multitude of

different styles were on display. Some attendees were dressed in provocative attire that would be out of place anywhere other than a dance club, others dressed casually in a variety of styles—ranging from hipsters in skinny jeans and ironic t-shirts, to preps in collared shirts and khakis, to non-descript patrons in blue jeans and a plain t-shirts. There was also a significant amount of ethnic diversity, which is not as common in Portland as in other cities with larger minority populations.

Bootie's name is a direct reference to "bootleg," the U.K. term for mashups. However, "Bootie" also intentionally invokes pirate themes (mashup artists are committing acts of "piracy" by making and distributing mashups, pirate treasure is called "booty"), and is also a reference to the butt, as in "shake your bootie." For the opening night in Portland the club had a pirate theme. Patrons in pirate regalia received discounts on drinks and the club featured an area where you could be photographed in front of a seascape complete with a palm tree and life-size inflatable cartoon pirate. The photo station was called the "Butt Pirate Photo Booth."

Throughout the night a group of three men wearing matching outfits consisting of nothing but bandanas, briefs, and striped shirts (which somehow only covered their shoulders) danced on a stage at the front of the dance floor accompanied by a tall drag performer wearing a tight, striped, midriff-baring shirt and tattered skirt that looked like something from *The Pirates of the Caribbean*. The dancers on the stage appeared to be there in an official capacity, but the pirate theme was also present in the audience. One couple, who looked to be in their fifties, were dressed from head to toe in lavish pirate outfits complete with velvet jackets and tri-corner hats, frilly lace collars, and puffy shirts. The rest of the crowd was far more subdued in their pirate emulation.

The pirate theme was also reflected in the décor. The Bootie décor at all the club nights is an amalgamation of professional club promotion and DIY aesthetic. The decorations typically feature numerous professionally made “Bootie” banners hanging in the club, and the bar and seating areas are canvassed with professionally printed, glossy, postcard-sized full-color fliers advertising upcoming Bootie events (see Figure 1). Right alongside these sleek fliers and banners are black-and-white computer printouts and photocopied Bootie posters, as well as pirate-themed confetti and tablecloths that wouldn’t be out of place at a child’s birthday party.

Figure 1: Bootie Portland flier featuring mashup image of Jon Bon Jovi and George Michael. (Image used with permission of DJ Adrian and The Mysterious D)

Far from being tacky or thrown together, the less professional-looking aspects of the Bootie décor provide a touch of humor. In my interviews with A+D as well as other DJs involved with Bootie events, they described a deliberate attempt to create a welcoming atmosphere, hoping to attract as diverse an audience as possible and appeal to those who might not otherwise go to a nightclub. While discussing the growth of the Bootie franchise of club nights, dj BC (the organizer and host of Bootie Boston) said, "It is a very specific thing. It is really trying to be inclusive and play all kinds of stuff and make it really accessible. The crowd is going to be jumping [around] and knowing things [sampled songs], and everybody and anybody is welcome and is going to hear one of their tunes" (phone interview, October 14, 2008 quoted with permission).

The attempts to draw a diverse crowd have been successful. The diversity of the crowd in terms of race, gender, age,[25] sexuality, and appearance at all the Bootie events that I attended was impressive. This was a contrast with the Girl Talk concert as well as other non-mashup nightclub and concert events that I have attended (cf. Thornton 1996: Ch. 3 for an analysis of how club crowds typically break down along various axes of "subcultural capital"). It was especially impressive that DJ Adrian and The Mysterious D were able to attract this type of crowd to the first Bootie event in a new city. This example draws attention to the forethought and concrete preparatory work that goes into fostering a diverse and open scene at Bootie nights.

Bootie's welcoming atmosphere is not a coincidence, but the result of careful planning. In my interviews with Bootie organizers and DJs, the desire to foster an open,

[25] Although all the events are 21 and over and the age range is generally mid-20s to mid-40s, older attendees are certainly welcomed and would not be out of place in the way that anyone over 35 would likely feel out of place at a Girl Talk concert.

fun, and inclusive atmosphere was a common theme. Adrian explained to me how mashups are an ideal format for creating this atmosphere:

> **Adrian**: The great thing about mashups, I think, is that you can introduce an older audience who maybe stopped listening to pop music in their teens or college years, to new contemporary pop or R&B, or basically just a new song by pairing it up with a song from their adolescence that they absolutely love. The flip side of that is the new generation of kids coming up that maybe aren't familiar with older music, basically kind of giving them a little bit of a history lesson. The entry point is because it is mashed-up with the latest Britney or Beyonce song.
>
> **Liam:** It's interesting that you mention that because a couple of weeks ago I interviewed dj BC and he was talking about how one of the things that all of the Bootie club nights have really tried to do is be welcoming to anybody that wants to show up.
>
> **Adrian:** It really is about that. It is about bridging cultures, bridging eras. [The Mysterious D] describes it as the Wall Street executive dancing with the indie record store clerk. Everyone, all cultures and sexualities and races, can all unite on the dance floor. The one unifying trait amongst the Bootie fan would have to be, probably, you have to be open minded. If you are a musical purist, if you can't stand to hear your favorite song being manipulated, then you are probably not going to be into Bootie. And there are people out there that just do not want their favorite band or their favorite song fucked with. They don't want to hear the latest rap vocal dropped on top of their cherished '80s song. That's fine, but it just feels like we live in an iPod culture. Songs being shuffled. We are living in such an accelerated culture where I don't think people necessarily listen to music the same way that they did 10-20 years ago. You throw stuff into your iTunes playlist and you put it on random or shuffle and you might hear a ballad and then you hear a rock song, or you might hear a hip-hop song. I feel that that's the kind of culture that we are living in and mashups definitely lend [themselves] to that.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

Adrian envisions the dance floor as a site of cultural intermezzo (Back 1996), where people from different backgrounds can mingle. Furthermore, mashups are the ideal sonic backdrop because they combine such a diversity of popular music genres. Whereas scholars like Back (1996), Lipsitz (1994), and Zuberi (2001) have focused on the importance of intercultural/transnational UK genres like bhangramuffin, mashup artists

foster diversity in other ways by combining music from different historical periods, different genres, and different "scenes." For example, DJs at Bootie will often play mashups that feature artists who have traditionally been associated with gay dance clubs like The Scissor Sisters, Cher, and Madonna, in an attempt to welcome both the mainstream pop- and dance-loving crowd and the usually large gay and lesbian crowd.

In an interview with DJ Paul V., a resident DJ and local organizer for Bootie Los Angeles, we went a little bit more in-depth about the makeup of the crowd. He explained some of the steps that are taken to foster diversity, such as careful attention to the venue chosen, the staff, and even the price of admission[26] (which ranges from $5 to $12 with discounts for those who arrive early):

> **Liam:** The crowd, like you said, they seem to have more of a connection to the music, but in terms of the make-up of the crowd…
>
> **Paul V.:** Well that is the interesting thing. We have never identified the club as gay or straight… There is like a queer inclusive vibe that we have always put out and the crowd is exactly that. The crowd is completely as mashed-up as the music. It's not: you're gay, or you're straight, or you're this, or you're that. It is just the most friendly, everyone's exactly equal, kind of playing field, and it's just infectious. It's very infectious. Everybody just kind of jumps in wholeheartedly to the whole vibe.
>
> **Liam:** And compared to some other places that you have worked that is noticeably different?
>
> **Paul V.:** Most of my events up until Bootie were mainly gay-mixed. Bootie is probably like 60/40 straight/gay. Dragstrip 66 [Paul V.'s long running Los Angeles club night] is maybe just the opposite like maybe 70 gay, 20 or 30 straight, but similarly has that friendly, inclusive vibe. I think nowadays, unless you are a DJ or a promoter who is super focused, or very specific about what crowd you want, if you only want a sort-of wealthy heterosexual, dressed-up crowd, and that is what you go for, you won't find many gay people there.

[26] There are those who are excluded by any cover charge, but when compared to other dance club events (or concerts like Girl Talk's in Portland which cost $25-$60) the admission prices for Bootie events are relatively low.

Here in Silverlake and Echo Park, which is the east side of LA, Silverlake is a very gay neighborhood, it always has been, and if you go to anything here, a bar, a restaurant, a dance club, whatever, it's going to be mixed with gay people who are also not gay people that don't want any straight people around because there is a lot of that too. It can be equally, "we only want to be with people like us." Whereas in Silverlake, it has always been way more inclusive, way more like, "yeah whatever, as long as you are having fun and I am having fun, and you don't dis me, I won't dis you."

When A+D first approached me, I knew immediately it had to be on the east side. There are a lot of reasons, I said one of them a minute ago. Once you get close to Hollywood, and the Hollywood clubs, you deal with all of this other stuff that is so detrimental, separate from what you want to do. You have to deal with, usually, like gorilla security people, really expensive parking, really expensive alcohol, a dress code. There is just a whole set of obstacles to making your party go off, and people don't want that. Especially like the security stuff. That is the first energy that you get when you arrive, and if you are getting treated like a brainless dolt by some gorilla guy, you're not going to separate the event from the venue. You are just going to say, "what a douche bag, what a horrible club Bootie LA is." So that stuff is really important, and I knew, having dealt with the Echo staff and how they operate, that they would be cool, and they would welcome a gay-mixed whatever crowd, and didn't have to take the stance of, "okay we are going to assume that the crowd are idiots so we are going to act like idiots right off the bat." In other words, if you act like an idiot, then you will get that back. A lot of security people will do that right off the bat, no matter how cool or chill the crowd is. So that is the great thing about the east side, is that you just get a less intense, more friendly energy all around, which is really crucial. Even the bar staff needs to be friendly, all that stuff is really important.

Liam: Wow, those things all make sense. I had never really thought about how crucial all those elements are… When you talked to [A+D] about setting up Bootie LA, did they say this is sort of the feel that we want it to have, this sort of inclusive…

Paul V.: Well they knew, because with Dragstrip, they knew from going there that that is what we were able to pull off… A+D might have alluded to that and said it has to have these things. But we knew that we were on the same page on the importance off not just the inside of the venue, but all of the things that come attached to it.

…

Paul V.: I actually think a lot of our crowd is a crowd that is fed up with a lot of the club scene because they deal with all of the stuff that I have said

> to you. Because, after a while that is a buzz-kill and it goes on. It is real prevalent in a lot of the Hollywood clubs. You know it is weird, we have a really, really good-looking crowd, but we also get a lot nerds, a lot of, sort-of big girls, people over 40, god forbid, but my point is that those people don't feel welcome in a lot of places, because we live in an ageist, bodyist society.
>
> The nightlife scene is not kind if you are not a skinny, well-dressed, perfect hair, perfect teeth, whatever. I'm really proud that those people, whatever they are, the misfits, I call them the misfits, feel like Bootie can be their place, because, again, in a weird way, I would way prefer the misfits over the hipsters. Because, like I said, they are so happy and into the music, and it has never been about, do we have celebrities showing up, or the beautiful people? That is so rampant in Hollywood. What happens in those places is that you are inside a room that is about seeing and being seen. They don't give a crap about the music, they don't give a crap if they are going to run into their friend, they want to go home and say, I was hanging out with Drew Barrymore last night… We have never been about the roped-off VIP area. That is such bullshit.
> (Los Angeles, CA, June 7, 2009, quoted with permission)

The organizers of Bootie have attempted to create an environment in which people from all different backgrounds can come together and enjoy music. By de-emphasizing some of the more superficial trappings of nightclubs, the Bootie organizers have sought to attract an audience that is predominantly interested in the music that is played rather than the "scene" at the club. I asked Paul V. about this:

> **Liam:** Since you are also working in other non-mashup night clubs, how do you feel the mashup scene, the crowd or the feel of the club, how it compares to other night clubs?
>
> **Paul V.:** I have to say this, attached to that question: Bootie LA, or the Bootie brand, it's so music-driven for the crowd. In other words, we have never had a crowd that comes and stands around waiting to be impressed. They are so into the music and they start dancing at ten o'clock, which if you are a DJ, is unheard of, and they don't stop until we turn the lights on. It's got this unique connection to the crowd, and I have other clubs that have that too, but the level that it happens at Bootie is really unique. It really is.
>
> I tend to play mashups wherever I play. They are just perfect. I've been playing for a long time and I've played some songs so much that if I never hear them again I'm happy, yet people still want to hear them. Mashups give you this amazing opportunity to be able to play things. They

> [the crowd] know the songs, but it is going to be a whole different way than they have heard it, and you are also giving maybe something else that they love. You have almost double the chances of turning someone on. The interesting thing about Bootie is that you're not just playing a song that you know and love, you might be playing three of them at once. It is like, "oh my god, I love Lady Gaga, oh my god I love the Eurhythmics." And then there is the element of surprise so if it is a mashup and, if it is a new one, it starts off and it is music, the crowd is dancing, and they are like, okay I'm dancing to "Sweet Dreams Are Made of This," but I know that Annie Lennox isn't going to be singing. What's going to be the other half? What's going to be the vocal? There is this shriek, or this smile, that happens when the vocal comes in.
> (Los Angeles, CA, June 7, 2009, quoted with permission)

Adrian and The Mysterious D also explained to me how the structure of mashups is conducive to attracting an audience that is engaged with the music and how this can attract people that might not otherwise go to a nightclub:

> **Adrian:** The other thing that we love about mashup culture is that there is a cleverness to it. There is something smart to it. It's not just mindless dance music. Especially in a club environment, you can come to the club and just mindlessly dance if you want to, but at the same time you can also be mentally engaged by what you are hearing. It's a kind of name-that-tune guessing game. Even if you aren't into dancing in a night club…
>
> **Mysterious D:** At Bootie, in addition to being a club night it's kind of for people that appreciate this music and people meet in person, producers meet in person. The other thing that I like is we get people constantly that don't go to night clubs and don't like night clubs that will come to Bootie and enjoy it because there is much more there to feed off of than just the dancing and dance music.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

Part of A+D's strategy of selecting venues is also conducive to attracting audience members that are engaged with the music and might not normally visit night clubs. All the U.S. Bootie events, regardless of the size or type of the venue, feature a large space for dancing as well as areas for sitting at the bar and around the venue. This allows those who don't like to dance to sit, watch others, and enjoy the music without having to awkwardly stand still on the dance floor. Because mashups provide the "name that tune"

aspect that Adrian mentioned, audience members who choose not to dance can be actively engaged by listening to mashups and trying to identify the songs being mashed together.

In addition to making mashups and running Bootie, A+D act as an important bridge between members of the mashup community and those who may know little about mashups, or listen to them only casually. They have built Bootie to appeal to as broad an audience as possible, even those who may dislike nightclubs, and they see their role as introducing the "best" of the mashup artist community to a wider audience. At each Bootie club night free CDs are distributed to the audience, featuring the best recent mashups as selected by Adrian and the Mysterious D. A+D also post a monthly Top 10 list on their website, and release an annual "Best of Bootie" album both physically (as a CD distributed in the clubs) and as a digital download available on the Bootie website.[27] Adrian described their role in the community this way:

> **Adrian:** The thing is there are a lot of people who do not idly surf around the net downloading random mashups that they find. It really helps to have people like us kind of becoming curators for the scene. We are kind of like quality control, and then really kind of packaging it in a club format. Because there are so many people that come to our club that don't sit around GYBO and slog through the, I mean you have been on GYBO, there is so much interference and there is just a lot. There is a lot to slog through. Not all of it is good, it is actually really nice to be able to bring the best of mashup culture to an audience and have them appreciate it and also bring the producers together too and give them an audience that obviously knows what they are in for and not only appreciate it but absolutely goes nuts for it.
>
> **Liam:** So you find that at the Bootie club nights that there are a number of people there that are not part of the online community.
>
> **Adrian:** Oh absolutely. There is definitely a segment that is there that follow us. We post a Top 10 they go and download it. But there is also an audience that just shows up because they know it is a good party. They are

[27] <http://www.bootiemashup.com>

> familiar with the mashup concept but they are not necessarily active users slogging around MP3 blogs and filesharing sites trying to download stuff. They just come out because they know it is a good party.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

A+D's efforts to bring mashups to a larger audience via Bootie nights, Top 10 lists, and best-of albums have been successful. Most of the attendees at Bootie events are not members of the mashup community; they do not belong to GYBO, make or DJ mashups, or take part in other aspects of the web-based, worldwide community besides attending Bootie. Significant numbers of people are exposed to mashup music through Bootie club nights.

Girl Talk

The artist known as Girl Talk (Gregg Gillis) has exposed a large number of people to mashups via his own celebrity status and wildly successful touring. Girl Talk does not consider himself a part of the mashup community (as discussed in Chapter 1), nor does he necessarily believe that he is making mashups (although I would argue that his music fits the definition of "mashup" as understood by most scholars, producers, and fans). Because he does not associate with the mashup community, Girl Talk does not promote the community or the music of other mashup artists as A+D and other Bootie DJs and organizers do. Nonetheless, it is very likely that many listeners have been introduced to the genre via Girl Talk's music or concerts and that some have gone on to seek out other mashup producers, thereby discovering GYBO and Bootie nights.

I attended a Girl Talk concert at the Roseland Theater on Thursday, September 17, 2009. The Roseland is an established Portland concert venue that hosts a mix of local and national popular music acts. The venue holds 1400 people and was packed to

capacity for Girl Talk. The concert was one of several hundred live music events around Portland that comprised the five-day Music Festival Northwest, sponsored by the local weekly independent newspaper Willamette Week. Festival-goers had the option of purchasing either a $60 wristband (allowing access to every event in the festival), or individual tickets to specific shows. The Girl Talk concert was $25 for an advance purchase ticket.

The doors opened for the concert at 9 p.m. and the concert bill had two opening acts. I arrived at about 10:30 p.m. to find a line of 200-300 people outside the venue waiting for admission. This line was for people who had purchased wristbands and were not guaranteed entrance. I had purchased a ticket for the night's event and was allowed to skip the line and proceed to the metal detector/frisking/search station. Hastily made signs were taped on the wall in various locations proclaiming that the show was sold out and no additional tickets were available.

The performance space of the venue takes up the second and third floors. The room is a large open square with a stage on one side and a balcony around the other three. The concert space is sparse and darkly painted with very dim lighting. There is no seating on the main level, only in the balcony. Because the night's concert was all ages, the balcony had been cordoned off as a 21-and-older section where alcohol was served. I made my way to the balcony.

Unable to convince my wife to attend a late-night, work-night concert, I was alone. I determined that the balcony would be the optimal spot for observing, while simultaneously minimizing the awkwardness of being a non-dancing wallflower. Thankfully I was correct on both counts. From my vantage point I was able to see most of

the crowd as well as the stage, which was completely bare save for a banner advertising the music festival and a rectangular folding table that held Girl Talk's two laptop computers, a microphone, and two hefty stage monitors pointed towards the center of the table. On the stage behind the table was a large projection screen.

The crowd was strikingly young. The majority appeared to be in their teens to mid-twenties. I was surprised by the youthfulness of the crowd, especially on a Thursday night during the school year. The crowd was also quite homogenous. The vast majority of the audience was white (this may be a reflection of the demographics of Portland rather than the makeup of Girl Talk's fan base), and, with few exceptions, dressed in a similar hipster style. Tight black jeans, vintage t-shirts, and straight-brimmed baseball caps worn slightly ajar adorned many audience members.

There was a palpable tension while the audience awaited Girl Talk. Moments before his entrance, his name, and then various images and video from previous Girl Talk concerts were projected onto the screen. Over the speakers his name was repeated over and over with accelerating speed, encouraging the audience to chant, "Girl Talk, Girl Talk, Girl Talk." The crowd obliged and his entrance to the stage was met with raucous applause and the familiar rock concert sound of fans screaming with excitement.

What began as a typical concert experience with an adoring audience focused on a star performer quickly took a different shape. Within moments of Girl Talk beginning to play music, members of the audience had completely surrounded him on the stage. These audience members were not crashing the stage; they were quite welcome. The concert became a dance party. The stage was full of audience members for the entire night and they seemed to come and go as they pleased, with only a handful remaining on the stage

for the entire concert. When not tending to his laptops (the second laptop appeared to be unused) Girl Talk danced among the audience members.

Dressed in grey sweatpants, sneakers, a black headband, and a plain white t-shirt, he blended in with the crowd around him. It is rare in my experience that performers of Girl Talk's level of fame would let the audience get so physically close to themselves or their equipment. Presumably, with the click of a mouse or stroke of a key, any one of the audience members on the stage could have altered the performance.

In a concert setting the eyes of the audience are drawn towards the performer. When the performance is entirely laptop-based this can pose a dilemma. How does the performer appear to be performing and not just pushing "play" on his laptop? Girl Talk has negotiated this issue in a number of ways. First, because he is creating his mashups "live,"[28] he is regularly interacting with the laptop. Additionally, by allowing members of the audience on the stage throughout the performance, he is letting audience members see him work. Girl Talk is constantly performing while onstage, whether he is at his laptop or not. He is known for dancing wildly, leaping into the crowd, and even undressing during concerts, which provides visual entertainment for the audience. Finally, Girl Talk has negotiated the issue of laptop performance by doing his best to turn the concert setting into a dance party. As at a dance club or house party, much of the audience throughout the night was too busy dancing with each other to bother to stand and watch Girl Talk manipulate his laptop.

Girl Talk concerts have become known for a party-like atmosphere. Throughout the concert confetti, beach balls, and balloons were thrown and dropped into the audience

[28] Girl Talk does not play one pre-recorded mashup after another as a many club DJs do. Instead he uses an audio program that allows him to combine samples in real time (see "Performance" section of Chapter 1).

by stagehands in matching yellow sweat suits. One particularly interesting feature used throughout the concert was a leaf-blower with a special attachment for mounting toilet paper in front of the stream of air. When the leaf-blower was turned on the toilet paper would quickly unfurl, toilet-papering the audience. Toilet paper, confetti, and balloons were occasionally thrown in Girl Talk's direction. Even when hit with a large spool of toilet paper, he did not react but simply remained focused on his laptop.

Girl Talk has succeeded in creating organic-feeling dance parties writ large. At this point in his career, it is likely that most of the audience that night in Portland knew what to expect from his concert. Those who didn't could simply look to the screen on the stage for cues. For the first thirty minutes of the concert, video of *other* Girl Talk concerts was projected onto the screen. This video achieved two purposes: first, it served as instruction to the audience ("This is how people act at my concerts"); secondly, by projecting video onto the screen behind him, Girl Talk extended his immersion in the crowd. An audience member on the dance floor would see the crowd around them, the crowd on the stage, and a crowd beyond the stage on screen with Girl Talk in the center of it all. Although I was unable to interview Girl Talk, I believe it is fair to assume that he has intentionally sought this atmosphere. He is clearly the star of the show, but he acts more as the facilitator of an experience than the center of attention of a concert.Girl Talk has repeatedly declared to the media that he is not a DJ—and even sells Girl Talk t-shirts at his concert with the slogan "I Am Not a DJ" printed on them—but his performance

style and the atmosphere at his shows certainly bring DJ culture to mind (Brewster 1999, Thornton 1996).[29]

Internet

The Internet has become an important site for the distribution and reception of all music, but Internet distribution is particularly important for mashups because so few can be sold commercially due to copyright restrictions. The Internet is such a vast and quickly changing landscape that an attempt to catalog the websites that feature mashups would be woefully incomplete and quickly out of date. Instead, I have chosen to look at two broad categories of websites: those created and maintained by community members, and those that are external to the community.

Community Maintained Sites

The single most important site for the mashup community is GYBO. Get Your Bootleg On is a central forum where all things related to mashups are discussed, news is posted, new mashup projects are advertised, mashups are shared and critiqued, and much more. GYBO is a forum, meaning that it is comprised of numerous different message boards that are categorized by subject. For example, there are message boards devoted to discussing new mashups, news, and "off-topic" messages. Each of these message boards contains numerous "threads." Any user can create a new thread and other users can reply to it (see Figure 2). This format has been the backbone of GYBO since its founding. There have been experiments to add other features. Beginning in 2009 GYBO featured

[29] In press interviews Girl Talk has defined himself neither as a DJ, nor as a mashup artists. Instead, he argues that he is doing something original and unique that is more akin to making new music on a laptop then spinning someone else's recordings (Bowie 2006, Coleman 2008).

social networking, allowing members to create pages and blogs hosted on GYBO. In effect this was an attempt to create a miniature Facebook for the GYBO membership. The features never became very popular and were removed in the December 2009 site update. Another short-lived addition was a real-time chat room that was nearly always empty. Because the community is dispersed and spread over many time zones, members are often logged on at different times and a real-time chat function was therefore impractical. Additionally, most GYBO users' primary activity on the site is listening to and commenting on mashups created by other community members. This process requires the time to download (or stream) the mashup, listen, and reflect. The instant chat function did not facilitate this process.

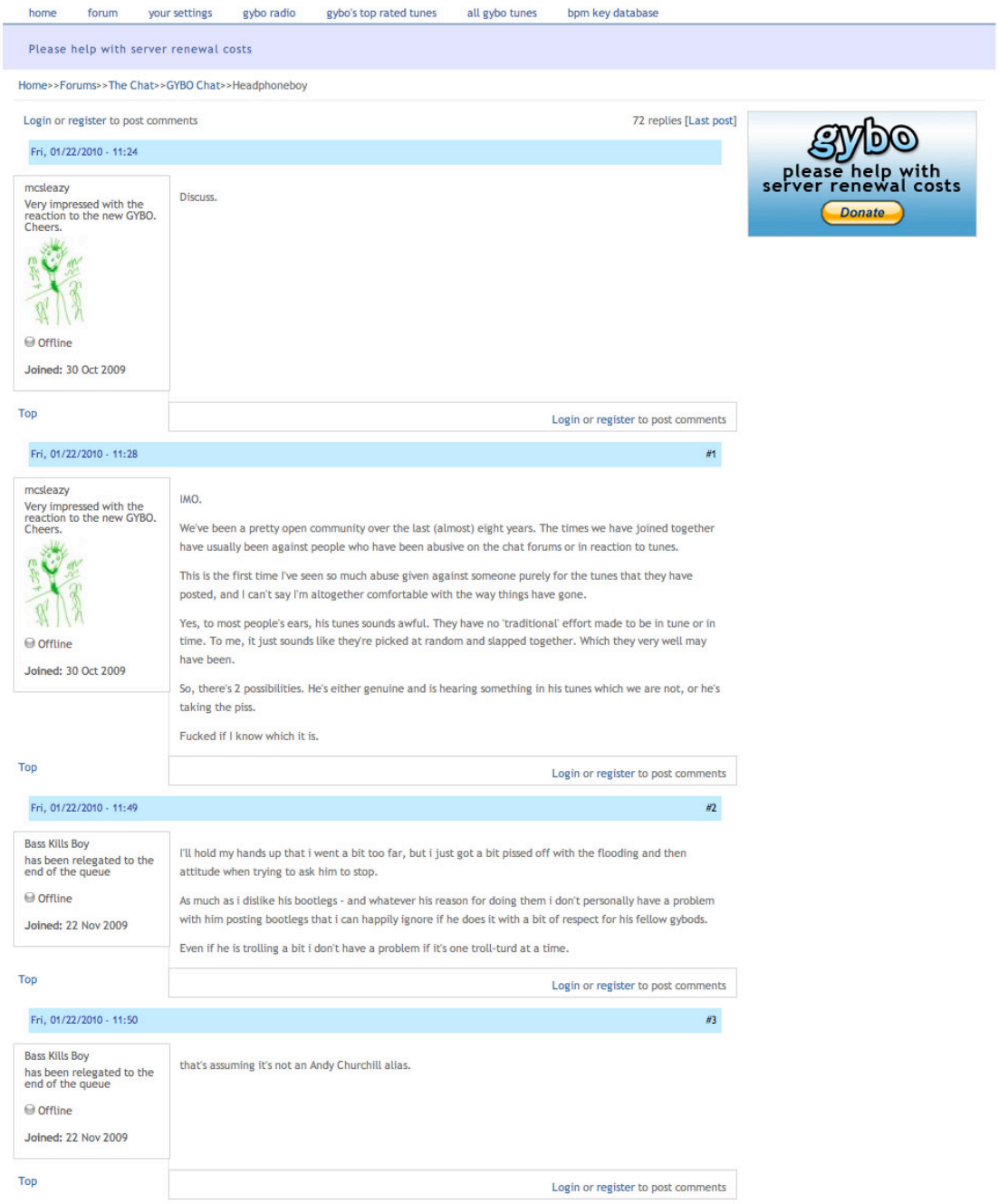

Figure 2: GYBO thread from January 2010.

While GYBO is the central meeting point for those in the community, it can be somewhat daunting for newcomers. Mr. Fab described it to me as a sort of guild; GYBO is not for the casual user. The forums are filled with posts and replies that can be tedious and time-consuming to sift through. GYBO contains, or links to, more mashup-related content than any other source on the Internet, but specific content can be difficult to find. The most recent site update has attempted to alleviate this and make the site more user-friendly by listing newly added mashups chronologically on the homepage and for the first time allowing streaming of those mashups.

GYBO also now has a chart system in which members rate mashups and the week's highest-rated are displayed on the homepage. Overall, GYBO users seem to have accepted the new rating system, although there has been some complaint that members are allowed to rate their own mashups.[30] As okiokinl pointed out, "why is it even possible to give yourself a rating? cant that be changed? its just a bit unfair, i never rate my own tunes, and im pretty sure people go over the tunes fast sometimes and only pick the ones with star ratings [to listen to], to be sure they have a good one" (2010). Indeed, the ratings likely influence which mashups are listened to most frequently. As dj BC pointed out, this is also the case with the number of comments that a mashup generates (see Chapter 1). The more comments, or higher the rating, the more likely it is that members will try out a particular mashup.

Alternately, the rating system could be democratizing. Before the advent of this system, newer and less-established mashup artists have generally received less attention

[30] Mashups generally receive only a few votes each, so if a producer gives their own mashup the highest rating (5 stars) it can greatly impact the average.

when they post a new mashup. With the new ability to stream music it is simpler and faster to listen to a mashup. It is also much more likely that GYBO users will listen to a larger selection of mashups than they did previously (when one had to leave GYBO and download an MP3 in order to hear a track). Mashups by new members are now more likely to be listened to and voted on. This opens the possibility that mashups by less well-known artists, but with a high rating, could attract the same type of attention that would previously have been reserved for new work from established mashup artists. While these changes may prove to be more long-lived than previous features, it is likely that GYBO will continue to appeal to a specialized audience.

Other sites maintained by community members have a broader audience beyond those in the mashup community. One such example is Mashuptown. Mashuptown is a blog, a format that is easier to browse casually than a forum. The editors of Mashuptown post much of the same musical material that can be found on GYBO, but the user does not have to search through numerous posts to find it. Additionally, whereas GYBO is an open forum, there is some editorial review that takes place on sites like Mashuptown. Only some of the mashups currently available, as selected by the site's administrators, are posted on Mashuptown.

As discussed above, A+D maintain websites for the Bootie events where they host a monthly Top 10 and post other information relating to the various Bootie events. Like Mashuptown, the Bootie site features a user-friendly blog-style layout. Also like Mashuptown, the Bootie site has a much more narrow focus than GYBO and features content that has been through a "curatorial" filter, to quote A+D.

A+D have the benefit of DJing at numerous Bootie nights a month and are able to take their editorial process a step further by playing their "best of" selections for a live audience to gauge the response. A+D described their process for selecting the Top 10 to me this way:

> **Liam:** What do you guys do to put together the Bootie Top 10?
>
> **Adrian:** People send us tracks, there is a small spattering of that.
>
> **Mysterious D:** Some bootleggers we have helped to develop. There is a guy locally here who we helped to develop, so we get his tracks sooner, but GYBO, Mashuptown.
>
> **Adrian:** Mashuptown, Mashupciti.
>
> **Mysterious D:** All it is — we have been doing this for so long – [is] the tracks that we feel are the best tracks, but not only that we try to make sure that there is diversity in the Top 10. We won't sacrifice the Top 10 for it, but I would still like to have at least one track representing different things. You wouldn't want to have all indie tracks, or whatever, but we do nine out of ten sometimes if that is what the good work is.
>
> **Adrian:** Some months are better than others.
>
> **Mysterious D:** It depends on what's there. Some tracks are road tested; most of them are road tested so that we can get a feel for if it is just our opinion, how it goes over.
>
> **Adrian:** We will play it out at the club. That's why a lot of times the Top 10 might seem, especially to avid mashup fans, like "oh god this track is so two months ago." Well, the reason it's not appearing on our Top 10 is because we are playing it out and seeing how the crowd reacts to it.
> …
>
> **Mysterious D:** Sometimes we have to fight over it.
>
> **Adrian:** Oh yeah.
>
> **Mysterious D:** There are two of us.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

Externally Maintained Sites

Many Internet sites that feature mashups are not maintained by community members. My first encounter with mashups was through a blog called BoingBoing.net. BoingBoing is among the most popular blogs on the Internet and features content covering a variety of different topics including, periodically, mashups. BoingBoing's audience is significantly larger than the mashup community and so sites like BoingBoing are a very important means of exposure. In an interview with A+D they explained how a mention of the Best of Bootie 2006 album on BoingBoing drew so much traffic to their site that it shut the server down:

> **Liam:** I think the first time I heard a mashup, there was a link on BoingBoing the blog to…
>
> **Adrian:** It shut us down.
>
> **Liam:** It did?
>
> **Adrian:** It crashed our server.
>
> **Mysterious D:** They did it the second year and we planned ahead. But what was the first one you heard?
>
> **Liam:** I think it was just a link to the 2006 Best of Bootie.
>
> **Mysterious D:** That is the first one that BoingBoing ever did. That is the first time we ever actually tried to push it out a little more and BoingBoing found it and we realized how massive that was because for the entire year, not only did it shut us down which caused a pile of drama, someone even hosted a mirror site for us, remember Adrian that first year, so that we could keep it live. It was just amazing for that and the same thing with 2007 and hopefully they will BoingBoing it again when the 2008 comes out because it is massively popular.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

YouTube is another popular site for the distribution and reception of mashups. Many mashup artists create music videos to accompany their audio mashups. Some of the

mashup videos are made by the same artist who created the audio mashup; other videos are created by members of the community who specialize in video remixing. One such producer is VJ Brewski (VJ refers to "video jockey," as opposed to "disc jockey"). VJ Brewski is an Australian video remixer who has created video mashups for numerous mashup DJs and occasionally performs at Bootie events. Video remixers like VJ Brewski are important for the community because, through sites like YouTube, video mashups have the potential to reach so many people. There are also video mashups that are not made by community members, but instead are the work of fans of a particular mashup (fan-created videos inspired by fan-created mashups). Regardless of who makes them, a music video can greatly increase the popularity of a mashup.

When I interviewed Faroff in April 2009, he was just beginning to create video mashups. He explained that video mashups added a visual element to his DJ sets as well as driving online traffic to his work. He noticed that the audio link for any particular mashup generally receives far fewer web hits than the video link (Faroff 2009)—a fact that lends additional support to Auslander's claim that "the music video occupies the place formerly held by the sound recording as the primary musical text" (Auslander 1999: 93). Mashup videos also fit nicely into the practice of sharing and commenting on "viral videos" on sites like YouTube.

Mashups are also shared online via peer-to-peer networks. During a discussion of the early days of the contemporary mashup scene before GYBO, Mr. Fab explained how he used to use Napster to find music:

> **Mr. Fab:** With the new millennium we finally got a new computer, I had never had a computer so it was all new to me. We had just gotten married and my wife said, "We should get a computer." I'd heard about this whole Napster thing and I was like, "wow, you can get songs over the computer."

> I had a very non-technological upbringing; we didn't have much growing up. So, I would go on Napster and I would find all these songs that had been suppressed for copyright reasons, like Evolution Control Committee and Negativland stuff. I was like, "wow, you can now make any type of music and put it on the Internet." So the mashup, or bootleg music in general, really started, I think, with Napster.
> (Los Angeles, CA, June 9, 2009, quoted with permission)

DJ Paul V. also mentioned using peer-to-peer networks to search for mashups by simply using "vs" (versus) as a search term, because many mashups titles will follow the "artist A vs artist B" format. Other mashup producers have mentioned using peer-to-peer networks like Limewire, Kazaa, bittorrents, and the newsgroup network Usenet. While these are still used by members of the community, the emergence of sites like GYBO, Mashuptown, and artists' personal websites has significantly lessened the use of p2p. Web-based file-hosting services like Rapidshare, Megaupload, and Mediafire, have also contributed to a decreased reliance on peer-to-peer networks. Currently, peer-to-peer networks are used mainly for the distribution of larger files which may be too large to cheaply host on a website.

The use of peer-to-peer and other free or very inexpensive forms of Internet distribution are also important for mashup creation. Mashup producers are first consumers; they listen to music and then remix it. The availability of source material, in the form of popular music, is vitally important. The volume of freely available music through peer-to-peer and other forms of Internet distribution has enabled more access to the music that mashup artists remix. Although the mashup artists that I have interviewed tend to have extensive collections of purchased music, I have heard from more than one mashup producer that it would be difficult to make mashups if producers had to buy all of the music that they sample or audition for use in a mashup.

The use of peer-to-peer networks and file-hosting sites to download mashup source material, or to distribute mashups, is one of the activities that puts mashup community members at odds with the music industry (a topic explored in detail in Chapter 6). However, there is also a history of cooperation between the music industry and the mashup community. These cooperative efforts, backed with the sophisticated publicity resources of record companies, are another important means of distribution and reception because they can potentially reach such a large audience.

Cooperation Between Mashup Artists and Record Companies

One example of this cooperation is the long-running record company strategy of releasing music to nightclub DJs in the hopes of creating buzz for a song with club play. This practice has been going on for decades with all genres of popular music. Periodically record companies will provide a mashup producer with an advance copy of a track in the hopes that the resulting mashup will drive the popularity of the original song. A recent example involved collaboration between Bootie Los Angeles and a public relations firm that was working for Interscope records. Interscope had just released a single, "Just Dance," by the then-unknown artist Lady Gaga and wanted to generate excitement for the track. DJ Paul V. told me the story in an interview:

> **Paul V.:** The first [artist to appear at Bootie Los Angeles] was Lady Gaga, which was a year ago [i.e., in 2008], but she didn't sing, we didn't really know her.
>
> **Liam:** Nobody really knew her then.
>
> **Paul V.:** Yeah. I knew who she was because her PR people got a hold of me. That is how this all came about. This PR company was working with a label and said, "We want to release what looks like an illicit CD, but we are going to pay for it, and we will give you thousands of them as promos.

> We want you to mashup this artist Lady Gaga who is going to be huge." I'll be honest with you, when I first heard "Just Dance" I thought, "okay, its alright." But in the back of my head I'm thinking, "this is going nowhere. I am glad that they got a hold of me, and it's great to have these CDs but no one is going to give a shit." So I did it, DJ Earworm did [a mashup], there were two of them on the CD. Bootie SF gives them out, we give them out everywhere really because they are a Bootie mashup CD.
>
> The PR people then got a hold of me and said that she was in LA for Gay Pride weekend last year, and she wants to show up and do a bunch of things. And I said, well what if she comes to Bootie, we will debut my mashup and she can dance or sing along to it. So she shows up with two dancers and does this vogue thing to it, which was actually, after four and a half minutes, got a little tired. Then she introduced Smashup Derby, and then she left to go do some gay circuit event after that. We were all like, "oh that was kind of cool, another unique moment." Maybe about five people in the crowd had heard of her: the gays. It was the gays believe me. But, you know, no harm no foul. It wasn't like playing this mashup and having this woman, who no one knew who she was, doing this [mimics a vogue dance move] was going to ruin the night. Well, we all know what happened. Fuck, it blew up huge. So now the thousands of CD that we thought we were going to have to toss, we can revert back to them because she is on her third number-one single now.
> (Los Angeles, CA, June 7, 2009, quoted with permission)

In addition to exposure in nightclubs, record companies can benefit from a song being mashed-up because it can give new life to material that may be old or over-exposed. Paul V. explained:

> More and more mashups now are finding a way to be legally released. I think that is just by virtue of how many there are, but also the artists. Most of the artists [sampled artists, not mashup artists] that I have dealt with, the smart ones, are happy that [mashups] exist. Because, let's face it, if there are ten mashups of Lady Gaga, and you are sick to your stomach of hearing "Just Dance" or "Poker Face" as is, and you can hear it ten different ways that you love, that is going to keep the life of that song alive, and maybe somebody has never heard "Poker Face," but is going to go, "that vocal is really cool. Who's Lady Gaga?" Then go to her site. I think there is a great circle of connection. You don't suffer from a mashup, it serves the artist.
> (Los Angeles, CA, June 7, 2009, quoted with permission)

Two relatively recent examples that support DJ Paul V.'s point are the commercial releases of "Rapture Riders," by Go Home Productions, and "Doctor

Pressure," by Phil N' Dog. "Rapture Riders" was a mashup combining Blondie's "Rapture" with the Doors' "Riders on the Storm." The mashup was popular in mashup and dance circles in the United Kingdom and was eventually released on a Blondie greatest hits album. "Doctor Pressure" was a mashup combining the electronica musician Mylo with Miami Sound Machine. The mashup was quite popular (also mainly a U.K. phenomenon) and was included on the re-release of Mylo's album, an example of giving a new look to a current hit in danger of over-exposure. Both "Doctor Pressure" and "Rapture Riders" were popular mashups before being given an official release by a record company. That is, a mashup artist created the mashup independently and because of its success a record company decided to release it. There are also examples in which a record company is involved from the beginning of the process, as in the case of the 2004 EP *Collision Course*, which was a collaboration between Jay-Z and Linkin Park. The album, produced by Linkin Park's lead singer Mike Shinoda, consisted of six songs, each of which was a mashup combining a Jay-Z track and one from Linkin Park (some material was re-recorded by the artists as well as using samples from previous records). The album peaked at number one on the Billboard 200. Despite its commercial success, the album was generally disliked by members of the mashup community due, in part, to the fact that the project did not involve anyone from within the community.

The mashup work that DJ Earworm has done on commission with the popular rock group Maroon 5, singer Annie Lennox, and singer/rapper Sean Kingston are more recent examples of commercially sanctioned mashups. I discussed this work with DJ Earworm, who predicted that an increasing quantity of mashups will be released commercially in the near future:

Liam: Have the mashups led to any commercial remix work?

Earworm: Yeah, yeah, commercial mashup work. Some of the stuff on my site has been commissioned. I just finished this thing for Annie Lennox, mashing up all of her hits and I did that for Maroon 5 too, and I am about to do it for Sean Kingston. It is really picking up.

Liam: So they will give you access to the masters?

Earworm: Or the stems. For Annie Lennox I got all the Pro Tools tracks, for Sean Kingston they just sent me the stems, like sub-mixes. It is happening more and more. Actually, there is about to be an explosion of commercial mashups. Not everyone knows it yet, but I can tell it is going to happen. Whether it is single artist [a mashup using only songs by one artist or group], which makes it a lot easier [to license], hopefully some that are cross-genre [multiple artists sampled].

Liam: So you think that it is impending, this explosion of commercial mashups?

Earworm: The record companies are trying to figure it out, they're still trying to figure it out.

Liam: Are you ever privy to meetings where they are trying to figure it out?

Earworm: No but I talk to a number of them and they're trying to figure things out. It seems like right now the easiest thing is these single artist mashups. They are a lot easier to approve because you just get that artist and then hopefully the publishing company, or whoever owns their publishing. Even with the Annie Lennox [mashup], she couldn't use The Eurhythmics because that is under a different ownership.
(San Francisco, CA, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

Despite Earworm's optimistic predictions for future collaboration between the recording industry and mashup producers, the industry still actively marginalizes mashups through cease-and-desist orders and the enforcement of expensive and complicated licensing procedures (discussed in more detail in Chapter 6).

Radio

The Internet tends to be the focus of much attention in regards to the dissemination of popular culture, but more traditional sites of reception and distribution are still very important. One such site is commercial radio. Radio airplay continues to be a major component in record companies' publicity strategies. Mashup artists also recognize the dramatic effect that commercial radio airplay can have on a song's popularity. Getting a mashup played on the radio is a great coup for a mashup producer because it can lead to press coverage and potentially commercial remix work. Radio airplay is sought after and many mashup artists will submit their work to DJs and radio stations in the hopes of getting it played on-air. When a song does make it on the radio the news is usually posted on GYBO, to the congratulations of other community members.

There are a few mashup producers who are also involved with the radio industry and have hosted shows featuring mashups. Currently Virgin Radio France has a regular show called Zebramix hosted by French mashup artist and celebrity DJ Zebra. The Zebramix features mashups by DJ Zebra and others. In the United States DJ Paul V. and Party Ben have both hosted shows on commercial radio that featured mashups. DJ Paul V. has worked professionally in the radio industry for several decades; he described his show to me in an interview:

> I had a radio show and did radio on a station here [Los Angeles] called Indie 103.1 which is now off the air unfortunately. I started off, the first thing that I ever did is I asked them if they would want to do something called the Mashup of the Day which would be me picking a mashup and voicing an intro, "Here is blah blah blah, vs. blah blah blah, mashup of the day." Then that led to a Friday night DJ mix called the Smash Mix which was inspired by Party Ben's Sixx Mixx which was on Live 105 [San Francisco]. He did that at, like 6-6:30. I did mine on Friday 5:30-6, so it was kind of the same thing. Something cool for the drive home on a Friday. I kind of became the de facto mashup guy in LA. A lot of people

> think that my career started as a mashup DJ, or that that's all I do, because I got so entrenched in it. But that's okay. I've had worse things hurled at me.
> (Los Angeles, CA, June 7, 2009, quoted with permission)

In general the mashups that are played on the radio are distinguished from the rest of a station's programming. In Paul V.'s case the "mashup of the day" or a particular block of time devoted to mashups was designated as separate from the rest of the day's programming. Mashups are not often heard on commercial radio and so when they are it is usually in the form of a special program, or preceded by an introduction. I am not aware of any commercial radio stations in which mashups are routinely played as part of the station's "normal" rotation. In large part this is because mashups generally do not fit with the standard formats of commercial radio. Many mashups feature a "genre clash" and don't fit within a single-genre radio format. I discussed this with Squid, the host of The Modern Mix on Portland, Oregon's alternative format station 94.7 FM. The Modern Mix is a weekly program featuring a variety of lesser-known new music and remixes. Each week during the "Bootlegger's Dozen" section of the show, Squid plays a block of mashups back-to-back. Squid explained how he seeks out mashups that fit the station's alternative format and does not play "out-of-format" mashups on the air:

> **Squid:** I look at if they are an artist that we can play because we are an alternative station. We're not going to be playing Rihanna or Britney Spears and stuff. I don't mind playing really old classic stuff. I'll play a Beatles mashup with some other random old-school Motown person, that's fine. I would download it, listen to it, and if the beats weren't wonky, I would probably play it, but I would also look at peoples' comments on the GYBO side and figure out if it was even worthy… But then I would instantly take out cuss words before I put them in my iTunes. There were some Nine Inch Nails ones that were pretty fantastic back in the day that were just laced with the "F" word so it took a while.
>
> …

> **Liam:** Have you ever played anything that was really out of format on the Modern Mix?
>
> **Squid:** No. One of my favorite ones is out of format; it's Queens of the Stone Age and Britney Spears. It is awesome. It's not like it is the greatest, they work so well, I just find it really entertaining and I won't play it on the air. I got interviewed by The Oregonian [Portland's daily newspaper], one of the guys came out and we talked for a while and I said this is my favorite one, but I will never play it on the air. Just because I don't want to go against what we're doing here at the station. I have some great ones, The Grey Album is amazing, and I have not played anything from it. I try to stay alternative and oldies pretty much.
>
> **Liam:** So there is sort of a cut-off. If it's not a contemporary R&B singer, if it's an R&B singer from the '60s…
>
> **Squid:** That's fine, but I wouldn't do anything… It's not worth it. There's some good mashups that are [out of format], but I don't even bother listening to them, don't bother downloading them, I just don't care because I'm not going to play them.
> (Portland, OR, November 19, 2009, quoted with permission)

Squid's decision to follow the strictures of 94.7's format may have prevented him from playing some mashups, but it has also protected him from a backlash from listeners and advertisers.

Party Ben, like Squid, hosted a regular show on San Francisco's alternative radio station and he described to me the negative reaction from audience members when he began playing mashups on air that had elements from non-alternative genres:

> **Party Ben:** It's hard to remember, I think that back in the day, there was a very separate, "cool" rock music and "dumb" pop music. It is still kind of that way, but in the post-Nirvana era it was like "the two shall never meet." So this idea, the horror that Christina Aguilera could go over The Strokes, and it might sound good to fans of both artists, was this shock to everyone. It really felt like it captured this moment where certain cultural barriers were falling down and at the same time, the technology allowing people to make mashups like this was becoming more widespread. It was a weird combination of factors, I think.
>
> **Liam:** At the time, did Live 105 have a strict format? Were they an "alternative" station?

Party Ben: Yeah. Live 105 has always had a pretty strict format. Its been the "alternative" station for about twenty years now. It has, at one point, when I started working there, it was known as the wild station. They would play a lot of U.K. imports, and weird stuff just because they were kind of holdouts from the New Wave days. Whereas other stations had, in the post-Nirvana era, switched to being all Alice in Chains all the time. Live 105 did that but also had the other stuff too, which kind of made it a weird mish-mash. Live 105's history is a whole other story and I could go on and on about it. But, it got taken over by CBS radio and they turned into a very mainstream, Howard-Stern-led station for a while and ratings were terrible, and they decided to try something different and that was when The Sixx Mixx came on. They brought in a goofy program director who wanted to try new things so we started playing a lot of really awesome music again. He wanted to give other shows and new things a chance and it coincided with my taking over the production reins. That is when The Sixx Mixx started, so there were times when Live 105 has been a little edgier than your typical station, but its bread and butter has always been Nirvana, Foo Fighters, that sort of stuff.

Liam: When you would play, you were talking about the post-Nirvana, rock and pop can't be in the same place, so when you would play a mashup on there…

Party Ben: Yeah it is very funny, and it is something that I forget because nowadays nobody cares. But when I first started the show, The Sixx Mixx, was '03 and people would be furious, I had to be so careful about putting a hip-hop song, anybody black basically, whether it was an R&B singer, or a hip-hop singer, if they were white maybe you could get away with it. But the minute I put Jay-Z, or Aaliyah or something over, especially a track in the pantheon, like a Nirvana or something "serious," people would call and be sputtering with rage. People would be cursing me, "how dare we touch Nirvana with dirty, dirty Destiny's Child, because they are terrible, they are bad."

It was dumbfounding to me. I understood, I mean the show was a mainstream show and I wanted it to appeal to a mainstream audience, so obviously I wanted to try and balance, I didn't want it to be me just playing Foo Fighters songs. Part of the fun of the show was this surprising element of "holy crap, a Destiny's Child song on Live 105 over Nirvana." But it was always a balance, because you had to do the surprises but people would just flip. Half the people calling would be like "I hate you, you are the devil, you have ruined Nirvana, I am never listening to Live 105 again." It was insanity. People were furious.

Now, over the course of about a year or two, that started to go away. I don't know if those people who didn't like it just tuned out entirely, but I also think there was a certain kind of cultural shift. You

> started to see things like the Linkin Park mashup album that they did with Jay-Z, and stuff like that where suddenly hip-hop became okay to like. There were more crossover things happening. But at the time there was a weird undercurrent of racism in a lot of people's reaction. "How dare you? These black artists aren't real artists, and Nirvana, that's actual music that's respectable." It was this whole, "do you people realize what you are saying?" Granted, all of our musical distinctions are based on race, gender, and totally nonsensical ideas about what makes quality, but the way that that put it into such sharp relief, this is what alternative radio is: not girls, and not black. It was laid out for you right there because people lost their minds. But then it was really amazing watching it turn around.
>
> In '06 we started a thing called Mashup of the Week, where I would pick something that people were into and then we would put it into, basically, heavy rotation for that week, like maybe a thirty spin rotation for the week. The first one we did was the *Grease* "You're The One That I Want" song with Snoop and Dre "The Next Episode." Which is great, and ridiculous, and hilarious, and neither of those two songs have anything to do with Live 105. Neither song could be further from Live 105's playlist and it was a phenomenon. It was the biggest thing we played, people were calling to request it, it was our number one requested song every night that week, and for like a month afterwards we had to put it in a little spike rotation because people were crazy for it. It was kind of cool we came all the way from "don't you dare touch Nirvana" to this point where we are playing *Grease* mixed with Snoop and people are rooting for it. It was funny to see, but for sure there were negative reactions.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 10, 2009, quoted with permission)

Party Ben's description is in keeping with A+D's assessment that mashups can offend musical "purists," and also that larger shifts in popular culture may be making these "purists" less common. Party Ben's experience with mashups is also reflective of the descriptions of Bootie, and mashups in general, as a site of cultural intermezzo. A mashup of Destiny's Child and Nirvana not only can reveal cultural distinctions based on genre, but also, as Party Ben noted, the distinctions based on race, gender, sexuality, and more, that are implicated in popular conceptions of what makes up a particular genre.

Going "Viral"

Occasionally a mashup comes along that, through a combination of production and artistic skill, choice of source material, timing, and good fortune, becomes a sensation and reaches all of the sites of distribution and reception that have been discussed. One of the most commercially successful albums of late 2004 and early 2005 was Green Day's *American Idiot*. The album had several hit singles including "Boulevard of Broken Dreams." "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" is built on the same chord progression as the 1994 hit "Wonderwall" by the English band Oasis. As is customary for popular music, "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" was released as a single before the November 2004 release of *American Idiot*. As the popularity of that single was soaring, Party Ben created a mashup called "Boulevard of Broken Songs" combining the track with "Wonderwall" by Oasis and other lesser-known material. Party Ben played the mashup on his radio show and it quickly became a hit.[31]

"Boulevard of Broken Songs" was a hit in clubs, on the radio, and received considerable press coverage, but the speed with which it spread was due to the Internet. Going "viral" is enabled by Internet communication but also affects traditional sites of distribution and reception. I interviewed Party Ben in June 2009 shortly before he left for a two-month tour of Europe. Party Ben jokingly described his upcoming tour as his last-gasp attempt to capitalize on the fame that was generated by "Boulevard of Broken Songs." We discussed the nature of "viral" fame and he recounted how fast and how far "Boulevard" spread:

> **Party Ben:** It's a funny position to be in at my weird level of Internet fame because I am basically, at best, I'm as famous as the "cat on a Roomba" video, you know what I mean? A lot of people watched it, but nobody has any idea who made that. It's not like it is real fame… It's a

[31] The mashup, and the attention that it received, led to a full-length mashup album of Green Day called *American Edit*. Party Ben and team 9 collaborated to create the album.

very interesting phenomenon that I have had a couple of little mashup hits that have gone on the radio in Europe and different radio stations and clubs and people on the Internet know about me. I went on tour in 2007 and even in a random college town in Poland where we went, Plock, Poland, people knew who I was at the club… Granted, it wasn't a crowd of a thousand people screaming my name, but a couple of kids knew who I was. It is a really interesting situation. It is tough to try to make it all happen without, say, an agent. It would be awesome to be Paul-Oakenfold-famous and get $20,000 for showing up and pressing play and standing there, but I'm not doing that. But, at the same time, just the fact that I can do it is cool considering that I have never had an actual release, or anything official, the fact that I can do it is cool.

Liam: Maybe you might even be more like "keyboard cat," that's the most recent [viral video].

Party Ben: Yeah maybe I am more like "keyboard cat," somebody is behind me pressing my hands onto the keyboard for sure.

Liam: Do you think that these kids, for example in Poland, how do you think they found out about you?

Party Ben: I have no idea how anyone ever finds out about anything. I keep track of stuff. As a radio employee, former radio employee, and even as a geek just in general my whole life, I have always kept track of what songs are being played where. I like to look at charts, to see what radio playlists are. I like to see what's happening. I've done this, especially ever since I have become interested in mashups, I've always watched them very closely to see what mashups are getting played different places, and then to see what of my own are getting played different places. Obviously it is hard to have an exhaustive list of all that because they aren't official things and so it is only random. Some stations will list them on their playlists, other stations will play them but not write down who made it. So I have kind of watched things happen and I have seen some mashups really get enormous, like hit potential.

I think the two biggest that I have seen were "Doctor Pressure" which was semi-officially released. That was the Mylo and Miami Sound Machine [mashup] that Phil N' Dog produced and it was on [Mylo's] album. When he re-released the album it was like a bonus track. That was massive, that was everywhere. And then I think also "Rapture Riders" by Go Home Productions. That also, I think to a lesser extent. By the time it got an official release, it was on a Blondie compilation album, it had kind of died down a little bit so it wasn't quite released fast enough to be on time to capture the mania that it had when it first came out. I'm going to be the first person to be self-deprecating, but "Boulevard of Broken

Songs," at a time I think was on more radio stations than both of those by a long shot. It was insane.

Liam: Was that initially on *American Edit*?

Party Ben: Boulevard is a whole story. The first time that anything happened that combined Green Day and Oasis, made by me, was on my show The Sixx Mixx, which was a Friday evening show, a 6 p.m. show, every Friday on Live 105. The episode, I made it as part of an episode, it wasn't its own mashup it was just part of the show where I just played a bunch of stuff and stuff just went crazy all the time. It was like the last thing on the show that aired, I think, October 1st, 2004.

I remember people around the station would listen to the show and they would tell me that they liked stuff, and they would tell me, "Oh that was kind of boring," or, "that was cool, what was that?" I remember distinctly that it finished, the show finished, and you know how the end of the "Boulevard" mashup has that big Aerosmith ending, I remember walking out of the studio, the show ended, and I walked out of the studio and everyone at the station was dumbstruck. People where like "what have you just made?" Instantly the phones were lit up for an hour. People were calling, instantly it was this thing, and I was like "Jesus something happened." Adrian at Bootie made a flyer image for the Bootie flyers of Liam [Gallagher] and Billy Joe that night. Immediately I was like "something has happened here." So I cut it out of The Sixx Mixx and re-mastered it a little bit and posted it up on my website.

That is all that I ever did. I think a lot of people think that I must have, a lot of things get sent to radio stations. I know working at a radio station, we didn't go looking for anything. Every record label brought us stuff. We were lazy bastards. That is how all radio stations are. Nobody is out there combing the Internet for the next hot hit. Well, I was, but very few people do that. So I started getting calls from people, and emails from people, like "hey, I am in Dallas and I heard your mashup on, whatever, Edge 94," and "I'm in Boston and I heard it." Then they started to come from weirder places, they started to come from the U.K., and then from France, from Germany, Europe started to get it, and then the calls started coming in from South Africa, and they started coming from Singapore, and emails from program directors in American Samoa. A program director from a radio station [in American Samoa] was like, "this is the biggest thing that we have ever played on our radio station, what the hell, it is our number one song, it is our number one request." Japan, it was insane. And I had never sent it to a single person.

I didn't promote it, I didn't talk about it, and then my sister calls me from Nebraska and says, "they are playing your song on the local rock station in Kearney and they are talking about it like they didn't know what it was, but they said that it was popular so they have to play it." She would start to hear it everyday. She works in an operating room, she works as

part of a kidney transplant team, so they would be in the operating room and it would come on and she would be like, "this is my brother's thing," and no one would believe her they were like, "your brother isn't in Green Day, what are you talking about?" So she just gave up, but that is the phenomenon that it was.

I have absolutely no idea. I think that people just handed it off to each other. I think, maybe the record label might have had a hand in saying, "hey, here is this cool thing." When we first started playing it on Live 105, we made an agreement with the record label that, if it was registered, if the song was played on the radio, the Broadcast Data System that detects music would track it as the original Green Day song so they would get credit for a spin. So that was our way of appeasing them. I have a feeling, someone at the record label told me off-the-record that the Green Day song, if you look at the chart record for "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" it goes to number one on rock airplay and then it goes down, and then it goes back up to number one. That is extraordinarily rare for songs to do that. Someone at the record label said that, internally, unofficially, they credit the mashup with bringing it back up to number one. But of course there is no way to tell because we credited it to [Green Day].

But it was the kind of thing that, to this day, I have no idea. The same thing happened, it happens to me all the time. I have no idea how, Chris Moyles from Radio 1 [BBC] is playing the heck out of my stuff right now and I don't know how he found it. For a while the Snow Patrol vs. Police mashup was like the biggest thing in Ireland and there were stations feuding about who got it first and calling me in the middle of the night to do interviews… I never have any idea.

When we produced *American Edit* the album, that came later, me and team 9 [another mashup artist], I did send like a hundred copies to press. I sent one to *Spin*, I sent one to *Rolling Stone* hoping that we might get a review. We got like four reviews, so that is the one promotional thing that I have done. But other than that, I just put stuff on partyben.com and then the next thing I know somebody is calling me from American Samoa. Why I say it is like "cat on a Roomba," it is that sort of thing. Where did you hear about "cat on a Roomba?" I don't know. Somebody said in an email, "look at 'cat on a Roomba'" and so I went and said "look at that." I think that it is very much that kind of phenomenon where people are telling other people and the next thing you know it is a thing. It has been funny to have that happen, because, for a while "Boulevard" was so huge, I felt like I was the most famous not-famous person, for a brief moment in '05. Absolutely nobody had any idea who I was, but millions of people were hearing my song all over the world, or my version of songs I guess I should say. But, a very strange kind of Internet age phenomenon.
(San Francisco, CA, June 10, 2009, quoted with permission)

DJ Hero

A new and potentially very important site for the distribution and reception of mashups is the videogame *DJ Hero*. *DJ Hero*, like the successful *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* franchises, is a game that allows the player to simulate playing music in front of a crowd. In *DJ Hero* the player performs the role of a DJ. Using a game controller in the shape of a turntable and cross-fader the player follows on-screen cues which, when successfully completed, result in the simultaneous playback of a mashup (for an in-depth discussion of this type of game play see Miller 2009). The game includes a large selection of mashups, the bulk of which were created by members of the mashup community in the United Kingdom, as well as by celebrity DJs. There is also additional content available that can be downloaded and played in the game for $5.99 per "Extended Mix Pack." The sales of *DJ Hero* have been relatively slow. According to the most recent sales data[32] 800,000 copies have sold in the U.S. This number is substantially less than the initial releases of *Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero*, although Activision has argued that *DJ Hero* was the "#1 new intellectual property by revenue in the U.S. and Europe for calendar 2009."[33] Despite slow sales, Activision has announced a sequel to the game, and *DJ Hero* will continue to bring mashups to a large audience and introduce many people to the genre.

DJ Hero is so new that it is difficult to determine what effect it is having, or will have, on the genre and the community, but it is a hot topic of discussion. The "Official DJ Hero thread" on GYBO was extremely active, receiving 364 replies — far more than any other post that I have encountered. When I asked Squid, the host of The Modern Mix, where he thought people were encountering mashups he said, "Well now they are hearing

[32] <http://ps3.ign.com/articles/106/1061553p1.html> Accessed March 12, 2010.

[33] <http://investor.activision.com/releasedetail.cfm?ReleaseID=438403> Accessed March 27, 2010.

them on *DJ Hero*, the new *Guitar Hero* for the DJ… When I heard that they were doing that, I was like whoa, that's going to hopefully spark it up again because the word mashup has died a little bit" (Portland, OR, November 19, 2009 quoted with permission).

Adrian and The Mysterious D are full-time mashup producers, performers, and mashup club promoters. Perhaps more than anyone else, they carefully analyze trends within the mashup community and the broader realm of popular music and culture related to mashups. In an interview several months before the release of *DJ Hero* A+D speculated about its possible effects:

> **Liam:** There is something still sort of underground about mashups.
>
> **Mysterious D:** We're wondering how that is going to change right now because we found out that *DJ Hero* is 100% mashups… We don't know if this is going to be good or bad for us. We are very curious to see in October what this is going to do. It's either going to blow this thing up in a way that will help us never have to explain it and make us more successful, or it is going to get people so sick of it, make it mainstream, we have no idea what to expect. [Adrian] thinks it's going to be good, I'm paranoid that it is going to be bad for us.
>
> **Liam:** In some ways, one thing that I have been thinking about, and I don't know if you guys would agree or not, but it seems like because of copyright, because mashups can never be sold…
>
> **Mysterious D:** That keeps it permanently underground. You don't see it on the commercials, it's not in the stores. We've thought about that, and realized that's exactly why Bootie keeps lasting and growing versus a trend that burns itself out because there is no way for it to be burnt out.
>
> **Adrian:** The average person can't go to a record store…
>
> **Mysterious D:** But that's why when *DJ Hero* happens, that could change that and then…
>
> **Adrian:** No, no, no. Here's the deal. Unless…
>
> **Mysterious D:** Let me skip ahead of you real quick, because what could happen, before you talk I think I know where you are going with this, if it becomes popular enough, they've already got the licensing, they will just

> start releasing them and then it becomes part of the mainstream, it becomes chart music and then that is when it becomes mainstream, then it is in your commercials.
>
> **Adrian:** The only thing that I am thinking is if it becomes popularized, then suddenly all the licensing loopholes and red tape that has prevented most mashups from being released, suddenly the record labels are going to make it real easy. Everyone's going to be signing off on it…
>
> **Mysterious D:** And that's what could kill it.
>
> **Adrian:** It's true.
>
> …
>
> **Liam:** What's interesting is that, *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band*, especially the first couple *Guitar Hero*s because there was a lot of classic rock and a lot of metal and I think that it actually spawned a whole lot of interest [in those genres].
>
> **Mysterious D:** [Adrian and I] have talked about this.
>
> **Adrian:** It bumped the sales of all of those artists. All these bands that were not selling records, it was like old tired classic rock, they are not selling and suddenly, the median age of a music buyer, or a music downloader really, because who buys music anymore, are teenagers. So you've got all these teenagers who are now listening to music from 20-30 years ago and really loving it and it is all because of *Guitar Hero*. So yeah, and the thing that we heard about *DJ Hero* is that the company that is handling the licensing, and the reason that they were able to do it is because the licensing guy was able to go [to the record companies] and say, "look, look at the sales spikes to all the artists who contributed to *Guitar Hero*."
>
> **Mysterious D:** Money talks, they made money off of letting those songs be used so it makes sense to allow this.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

The subject of licensing is an important one that will be discussed in more detail later in the dissertation, but in short, the ability by the creators of *DJ Hero* to get the licensing rights for mashups could potentially open the way for the "explosion" of commercially released mashups that DJ Earworm predicted.

Conclusion

Mashups rely on many of the same sites of distribution and reception as other types of popular music: clubs and concerts, radio, the Internet, and recently video games. Unlike other types of music, mashups are only rarely commercially released due to copyright issues. As a result, the reliance on non-commercial distribution is very important. A considerable amount of the distribution of mashups is community-supported. Members of the mashup community run Bootie. Mashup community members maintain GYBO, Mashuptown, and other Internet sites. This is also true of the radio. Much of the radio exposure for mashups has been thanks to members of the community who are also involved in the radio industry. There is the occasional mashup that becomes a mainstream hit and breaks through, but because mashups are not normally backed by record companies, the networks of mashup distribution and reception are mainly run by the community.

Although the lack of support from the recording industry has its disadvantages when it comes to distribution and promotion, it also has its advantages. The community has a significant amount of control over the shape and content of the sites of mashup reception and distribution. As a result, clubs like Bootie, forums like GYBO, and websites like Mashuptown reflect communally shared values of inclusivity, respectful feedback, and openness to beginners, and the mashups available at these sites are chosen by community members themselves.

Chapter 4

The Mashup Community Online and Off

The mashup community is a web-based dispersed community of fans and producers that is centered around online and offline community sites and events. As mashups become more common, more and more people are making and listening to them. As stated earlier, this dissertation is concerned with the community of artists and fans that are associated with GYBO and other community-run sites like Mashuptown, as well as the DJs, organizers, and some attendees of Bootie and other live mashup events around the world.[34]

In this chapter I have constructed a definition of the mashup community by combining the works of various scholars with specific ethnographic insights from the mashup community. Following the approach of mashup artists, I have taken pieces from several different scholars' theoretical approaches to community and combined them into a coherent, original whole. I argue that the mashup community is imagined, symbolically bound, plastic and porous, defined by activity, learned, dynamic, and dispersed. I examine the use of Internet communication, media, and other technology in the creation and maintenance of a physical and virtual mashup community, and suggest that the mashup community is a model of emerging trends.

Mashed-up Community Definition

[34] It should be restated that not all Bootie attendees are members of the mashup community. In fact, most are casual fans who are primarily interested in a fun night of dancing and music.

Imagined Community

The first ingredient of my amalgamated definition is the idea that community is an imagined construct. The imaginary nature of community was famously articulated by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. As part of his definition of the nation he wrote, "It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1991: 6). He continued, "In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (1991: 6). Anderson made a clear argument against the reification of the nation, and, by extension, the reification of community.

Anderson's broad theory is helpful in understanding the mashup community. Many members of the web-based mashup community do not have the opportunity to participate in physical community gatherings; they experience the mashup community exclusively online. For these members, the face-to-face component of the mashup community is, quite literally, imagined. Before they founded Bootie, DJ Adrian and The Mysterious D could only participate online because, at the time, the only mashup club event was Bastard in London. In a phone interview DJ Adrian explained how their perceptions of Bastard, based on participating in the online community (specifically GYBO), were quite different from reality:

> We didn't know it at the time, but [Bootie] was the very first club night of its kind. There had never been a club night dedicated only to mashups in the United States. There was a night in the U.K. called Bastard which we thought was like this giant club. We envisioned this giant London club and

> we kind of modeled Bootie after what we thought Bastard was. It wasn't until six months later that we found out that Bastard was actually this small little bar night in a venue like the size of our living room. We just had Cartel Communique, they are the guys who started Bastard, we just had them at Bootie guest DJing just a few weeks ago and they laughed and they loved that story. They would have these guest DJs come play Bastard and they would be kind of embarrassed at this old place that barely holds 50 people. But it has this sort of larger than life, especially on the Internet, reputation and it was the first club night dedicated only to mashups and bootlegs.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

Alternately, the mashup community could be seen as *less* imagined than non-web-based communities. In a web-based community what constitutes interaction is different than in a community that is not centered online. For most members of the mashup community, interaction consists of leaving posts on message boards, sending private messages and emails, chatting in chat rooms, etc. This type of communication can reach a much wider audience and one could conceivably know many more of one's "virtual" community-mates than would ever be possible in a solely physical community. When virtual community interaction is viewed as something distinct from physical community interaction, rather than as a pale imitation, it is clear that in a web-based community there is actually far more possibility to interact with far more fellow community members (cf. Boellstorff 2008 on Second Life).

Although the mechanics of community interaction are different for a web-based community, Anderson's larger point that community is imagined holds true. The mashup community is not one thing. It exists in its members' imaginations in a variety of different shapes and forms. In *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, published in 1985 just two years after the first edition of *Imagined Communities*, Anthony Cohen made an argument similar to Anderson's about the imagined nature of community. Cohen

wrote, "Community exists in the minds of its members, and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of 'fact.' By extension, the distinctiveness of communities and, thus, the reality of their boundaries, similarly lies in the mind, in the meanings which people attach to them, not in their structural forms" (1985: 98).

Symbolic Boundaries

Cohen did not attempt to define community outright. Instead he offered a description of the way the term is commonly used. At the beginning of *The Symbolic Construction of Community* he wrote,

> A reasonable interpretation of the word's use would seem to imply two related suggestions: that the members of a group of people (a) have something in common with each other, which (b) distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups. 'Community' thus seems to imply simultaneously both similarity and difference. The word thus expresses a *relational* idea: the opposition of one community to others or to other social entities (1985: 12).

Cohen asserted that the concept of community is used to express distinction between groups. These distinctions are marked by symbolic boundaries. It is, thus, the symbolic boundaries that enable the concept of community. Without such boundaries it would not be possible to differentiate one "community" from another.

Several mashup producers expressed the importance of defining community boundaries to me in interviews. Mashups are firmly associated with popular music and popular culture. As mashups become more popular there is some concern that the practice will become so widespread that the mashup community will cease to function. DJ Earworm put it this way,

> It [the mashup phenomenon] is growing so fast, it wouldn't function if GYBO grew as fast as the mashup phenomenon is growing. I am sure

> there are really talented people that I don't even know about that haven't gone to GYBO. But, yeah, there is definitely still a community. I wonder about its future because if this thing gets so large [then] it starts to get really diffused and it starts to become a part of pop culture.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

DJ Earworm's concerns underscore the importance of constructing symbolic boundaries. To many, mashups may already be inseparable from popular culture, but the mashup community creates symbolic boundaries that reinforce a sense of collective identity as well as distinction from other communities.

DJ Adrian and the Mysterious D expressed similar concerns and described their continual efforts to distinguish mashups, and by extension the mashup community, from the larger popular culture,

> **Liam:** You were saying that there are a lot of misconceptions about what a mashup is. Do you guys have a general definition for what you consider a mashup?
>
> **Adrian:** What I consider a mashup is, basically, a fully produced production or song using two or more, preferably disparate, genres. Taking two or more different songs and turning it into one song. It's not a part of a megamix. It is a fully realized new song where preferably it is greater than the sum of its parts.
>
> **Mysterious D:** In its best case it is greater than the sum of its parts or at least it brings something new to the table. That is where the misconception comes from. Also Liam, mashup is such a buzzword now, there are "mashup clubs" all over that don't play mashups because they just use the word as a buzzword. We get people that want to DJ that say, "I'm a DJ, I'm a mashup DJ." And then I ask for some examples of their work and they say, "Oh I play hip hop, I play electro, I mix it all together." That's not a mashup DJ. For us it has become difficult as the term became more and more popular, we feel we have to be very clear about it, it is a thing and it has to be a thing or else we don't have anything to describe what we do. If everybody is going to be able to use our term to describe everything then how do I describe what our club is?
> (San Francisco, CA, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

The concept of "boundary" is crucial to understanding the concept of

"community" and therefore it is important to understand what Cohen meant by "symbolic boundary." Cohen pointed out that there are a variety of boundary types. There are national and administrative boundaries that can demarcate a community, as well as physical and geographical boundaries (1985: 12). He noted that "not all boundaries, and not *all* the components of *any* boundary, are so objectively apparent" as the examples above (1985: 12). The symbolic boundaries are different than those examples because, "they may be thought of… as existing in the minds of their beholders" (1985: 12).

Cohen argued that symbolic boundaries are crucial for the understanding of community for two reasons. First, structural boundaries (as opposed to symbolic ones) are enacted and maintained by forces outside of the individual. Symbolic boundaries, on the other hand, are imbued with meaning on an individual basis and can differ from one person to the next. Understanding these symbolic boundaries gives a much better sense of what "community" means to individuals and groups. Second, while he acknowledged that there are structural community boundaries, Cohen convincingly argued that the structural boundaries are blurring and in their place symbolic community boundaries take on a much greater significance. Cohen wrote,

> The interrelated processes of industrialization and urbanization, the dominance of the cash economy and mass production, the centralization of markets, the spread of the mass media and of centrally disseminated information, and the growth of transportation infrastructure and increased mobility all undermine the bases of community boundaries. Each is a multi-pronged assault on social encapsulation, and one which results in an apparent homogenization of social forms (1985: 44).

The "multi-pronged assault on social encapsulation" that Cohen outlined does not, in fact, result in increased homogenization. Cohen explained that,

> This homogeneity may be merely superficial, a similarity only on the surface, a veneer which masks real and significant differences at a deeper

> level. Indeed, the greater the pressure on communities to modify their structural forms to comply more with those elsewhere, the more are they inclined to reassert their boundaries *symbolically* by imbuing these modified forms with meaning and significance which belies their appearance. In other words, as the *structural* bases of boundary become blurred, so the symbolic bases are strengthened through 'flourishes and decorations,' 'aesthetic frills' and so forth (1985: 44).

Cohen wrote this in 1985 before widespread access to the Internet. The notion of a global network of computers providing instant worldwide communication was still unheard of to all but the most technologically savvy. It is safe to assume that if Cohen were writing *The Symbolic Construction of Community* today he would have included Internet communications on his list of forces that are undermining structural boundaries between communities.

The replacement of structural boundaries with symbolic ones is occurring all the time, and the history of the mashup genre provides a good example. The contemporary mashup genre is inextricably connected with digital production methods and computer technology. However, as demonstrated in earlier chapters, there were precursors to the contemporary mashup scene that used analog equipment to mix and mash samples of pre-existing recorded music. As computer technology and audio editing software advanced, the same, or at least extremely similar, music could be made without the use of analog equipment. What was once a structural boundary—remix music could only be made on analog equipment by people with some level of proficiency on that equipment—disintegrated once computer technology allowed for a much larger group to create remixes. In the place of the antiquated structural boundary, symbolic boundaries were constructed based on "aesthetic frills" like performance practice, and audience expectations.

One such symbolic boundary is that between the mashup community and turntablists. Using two turntables and a cross-fader, a turntablist can mix two songs and create a mashup. This is a performance practice utilized by many turntablists today that stretches back several decades and is a clear influence on the contemporary mashup genre. To a casual listener a mashup created using two turntables and one created using a computer can bear a striking resemblance to each other. Both production techniques result in remixes, both take multiple pre-recorded sources, mix them together, and create a "mashup," and to confuse the issue further, the practitioners of both techniques often refer to themselves as DJs. Despite these similarities, members of the mashup community draw a clear boundary between turntablists and themselves (and so do turntablists). In an interview, DJ Earworm described how this boundary plays out in terms of GYBO participation:

> **Liam:** In terms of the mashup community, do you think of it as a community? How do you define that? What are your thoughts?
>
> **Earworm:** Oh yeah. Here's the thing, it is growing so fast that I can't say that everyone who is making [mashups] is part of a community because there are so many people doing it now, but there is this core of people that have been doing it, this whole GYBO thing that's definitely a community. I don't know how dominant it is over the mashup idea. I know that a lot of people that are respected in the mashup world are part of it but, some people, like Party Ben, I don't know if he got started there but he has been there forever, and A+D, and lobsterdust, Aggro1. A lot of great artists are part of that. But there are artists like Girl Talk, he is doing his own thing. I don't ever see The Hood Internet there even though they performed at Bootie. There is definitely, the whole turntablism end of the thing is nowhere to be found there.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

The lines of distinction between the mashup community and turntablists are based on the technical means of production, the musical product that is created, and a perceived difference in values between the communities. The first distinction is, perhaps, the most

obvious. Turntablists generally use analog equipment and vinyl records to create their mixes. Mashup producers use digital equipment and MP3s to create their mashups. Fueled by comments made by several high-profile turntablists in the press, there is a perception within the mashup community that turntablists believe that making a mashup using a computer requires less skill than mixing "live," or in real time, on turntables. dj BC explained this to me in an interview:

> There is this sort of hierarchy that, as an ethnographer, you probably learned about. Back in the day in the music schools there was a hierarchy of instruments. The further away from the actual act of playing music you were the more legitimate it was. So the composer was number one, and then there was the conductor [who] was number two, and then the vocalist was on the very bottom because their body was actually the instrument. It was like the less you touched the instrument the more legitimate you were. It's almost the inverse with the DJ culture. The more studio work you put into something the less credibility you have. You get people… who are like "I'm more legitimate than you because I'm using software to mix live and you pre-produced your tracks" even if their live thing sounds worse than the pre-produced track. Then you get people who are like, "Well I'm more legitimate" and this group is shrinking, "I'm more legitimate because I use vinyl, I scratch with vinyl." And those people now are using Serato and forgetting that two years ago they were condemning computer users. Then you get people who are ex-musicians and it's like if you are a DJ it's not legitimate because you are playing someone else's recording, or sampling instead of playing music yourself. You keep going back and it's basically "What is this crappy music you kids are listening to this rock and roll. It's too loud." And it keeps going back. It's just funny to encounter that and it's alive and well among that whole way of thinking and everybody has a different opinion about where you draw the line depending on how they make music.
> (Phone interview, October 14, 2008, quoted with permission)

dj BC demonstrates his disagreement with the opinion that using computers is somehow less authentic or legitimate than using turntables by tying it to now-antiquated arguments about the validity of rock and roll. In another interview, the mashup producer Mr. Fab expressed similar sentiments about comparative evaluations of the two production techniques:

> **Fab:** You know the whole controversy with Z-Trip?
>
> **L:** No.
>
> **Fab:** It is funny to think of hip-hop as being some old conservative style, but he is an old-school turntablist and he has made comments about the authenticity of mashups. He thinks if you are doing it on a computer it's not legit because to mix live takes skill in his way of thinking. Other turntablists are cool about that. But it is a completely different skill. It's apples and oranges.
> (Los Angeles, CA, June 9, 2009, quoted with permission)

Here again the dismissal of computer-based mashup production by some turntablists is linked with an "old-school" attitude. Turntablists who react against computers are likened to the rockers of the 1970s who denigrated the use of keyboards and synthesizers, or conservative parents of the 1950s who feared the onslaught of rock and roll.

Mr. Fab acknowledges that turntablism was an influence on contemporary mashups. Rather than engaging in a debate about which form of remixing is more legitimate or authentic, Mr. Fab describes mashups as having evolved from turntablism,

> It is the difference between hip-hop and the new century computer music. Z-Trip is still part of that '80s hip-hop turntable scene. We like some of those guys. I am a big fan of other DJs like Cut Chemist and DJ Shadow. We pay attention to those guys, but we are like the next step. They are kind of like, you had blues and then rock and roll split off from that. I got inspired by this, by hip-hop. A lot of us did. But then with computer technology it just created a whole new style and then it just split off.
> (Los Angeles, CA, June 9, 2009, quoted with permission)

The production method is the most concrete difference between turntablists and mashup artists, but another key difference is the musical product itself. Mashups are generally conceived as complete, self-contained, songs with a beginning, middle, and end. Turntablists typically do not focus on creating self-contained units, but rather construct longer DJ sets, also called megamixes, in which the samples used are much shorter, the DJ moves from one sample to the next at a more rapid pace, and the goal is to

demonstrate virtuosity and knowledge of particular genres of music rather than the creation of a new stand-alone song.

As the founders of Bootie, DJ Adrian and The Mysterious D are frequently in the position of explaining what a mashup is, and how it is different than turntablism. I asked them the same question:

> **Mysterious D:** I think that Adrian mentioned that it is especially surprising that a lot of people that come from DJ culture don't do mashups as well as people that come from musician backgrounds. What people don't realize is that mashup production is way more about song arrangement than an a cappella and some beats. It is so funny to watch a famous DJ and they think that anyone can make a mashup, but it is totally out of key, they don't change the music when the chorus comes in or the chords change. We find that most of out favorite producers, eighty to ninety percent of them, all were in bands or have some kind of musical music/band background.
>
> **Adrian:** Mashup producers are generally musicians or former musicians.
>
> **Mysterious D:** DJs are trained at lining up beats, so they don't understand… There is a lot of misinformation about what a mashup is, there is a lot of misinformation about mashup culture. So people don't really know what it is. So DJs will come from what they have been trained on which is lining up beats, lining up vocals. That will work occasionally, but the reality is that those usually make for bland or not so good mashups. It is really about how the song is arranged.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

Beyond the musical product, members of the mashup community ascribe to a different set of values regarding status and inclusivity than what they believe exists in the turntablist community. John Shiga addressed this, writing,

> Mash-up culture may be understood as part of a redistribution of the cultural knowledge and skills required for remix production to amateurs after two decades of institutionalization and professionalization. But mash-up culture is also distinguished by its disregard for the aesthetic values and notions of originality that developed around professional remixing during the 1990s… The mash-up community borrowed resources from DJ culture, but established its own parallel infrastructure, modes of validation, and ways of distributing knowledge, skill and credit; it thus

> acquired a degree of autonomy from professional DJ culture. Mash-up culture effectively demonstrates the extent to which connoisseurship and knowledge of subgenres has been overvalued in the discussion of ‘‘quality’’ (i.e., originality, canonicity, creativity) in the remix culture of professional DJs. (2007: 104)

When I discussed the differences between the mashup community and DJ/turntablist community with A + D, they expressed many of the same views that Shiga noted,

> **Adrian:** I would have to say that the mashup community as a whole is really open compared to other communities that might be a little bit more elitist and a little bit more separatist. Especially in DJ communities there is a lot of this kind of, you want to keep things secret. There are all sorts of places in the Internet where, secret boards, where people post their tunes but no one else can get them kind of thing. Mashup community is exactly the opposite of that. It is open, posting things publicly, so everyone can download it and enjoy it. Bootie has mimicked that online culture in a live club setting. We have people come up to us and are like, “hey I’m a DJ,” give us your stuff and if we like it we book them…
>
> **Mysterious D:** And we always give out the free CDs. We are anti-DJ-culture DJs.
>
> **Adrian:** There are a lot of aspects of DJ culture that we don’t really like and a lot of it is all around that elitism and that kind of old-school boys club thing.
>
> **Mysterious D:** And I’ll add, the us-and-you, I’m entertaining you, rather than we are partying together. Bootie is very “we” oriented versus us-and-you, and that comes from the bottom up because it starts with somebody sharing a tune for free to get it out there. That sharing mentality, that user-created art or music…
>
> **Adrian:** It’s fan-created content basically and like most fan-created content, you wan to get it out there and share it with everyone and this happens to be fan-created content that you can dance to and throw a party around.
>
> **Mysterious D:** That’s good you should write that down.
>
> **Adrian:** I’ve already used it.
>
> **Mysterious D:** Fan-created content that you can dance to. We are always looking for tag lines.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

Plastic/Porous

Teasing out just what Cohen meant by symbolic boundary also requires looking a little more deeply at what he meant by "symbol." Cohen wrote, "Symbols, then, do more than just merely stand for or represent something else. Indeed, if that was all they did they would be redundant. They also allow those who employ them to supply part of their meaning... Each [symbol] is mediated by the idiosyncratic experience of the individual" (1985: 14). And later, "[symbols] 'express' other things in ways which allow their common form to be retained and shared among the members of a group, whilst not imposing upon those people the constraints of uniform meaning" (1985: 18).

Cohen located symbols between communal meaning and individual meaning. They are plastic enough to accommodate individual interpretation and rigid enough to provide some sense of uniform meaning. Cohen connects his definition of symbol directly to his definition of community. He writes, "Symbols are effective because they are imprecise... Just as the 'common form' of the symbol aggregates the various meanings assigned to it, so the symbolic repertoire of a community aggregates the individualities and other differences found within the community and provides the means for their expression, interpretation, and containment" (1985: 21).

Here an example from my interview with mashup producer DJ Matt Hite is illustrative:

> **Liam:** In addition to mashups it seems like you also do some remix work. What, to you, is there a boundary between mashups and remix and if so what is that?
>
> **Matt Hite:** There is some. I think it is, for me personally, and I know it is probably different for a lot of other people, for me personally, I think that I

> can do a mashup quicker and sort of get an idea out there a whole lot quicker and get a lot of satisfaction from it and have it be something that other people enjoy. Whereas as I am doing remixes or things like that, it is a learning process for me too because I am producing more of it and I am more involved in the actual musical composition of it. Although I am usually in my remixes incorporating samples, loops, things like that, but it is more musical to me at least from a composer's standpoint. So it is more challenging for me personally and it is really because I don't have a ton of musical composition and playing skills…
>
> **Liam:** In your mashups do you ever use original beats or things like that?
>
> **Matt Hite:** Yeah I do. There have been some that I do, I don't know if you have heard my Cassie vs. Yazoo, most of that was just the bass line and the actual beats throughout the whole thing are programmed by me and I am really just using a synth loop from Yahoo, from Yazoo, sorry, Yahoo, boy, you know that you have lived in Silicon Valley for too long when you mistake Yazoo for Yahoo, with the Yazoo synth line and the laughter and also the Cassie vocals sped up really fast. There have been other ones that I have done where I do more of the production.
>
> **Liam:** Do you get any feedback? I know there are some mashup artists that try to be really strict about all pre-recorded samples. Do you ever encounter any of that?
>
> **Matt Hite:** Absolutely. A lot of people are like, "A mashup is pretty simple. It should be this plus this and they should be different genres." Some people definitely feel that way because that's what they know, for them, helps them rock the crowd if they are a DJ. Some of the people that are producing mashups are really just musical bedroom type people and they are not out there playing a club so they may have a different vantage point of what's acceptable.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 13, 2009, quoted with permission)

DJ Matt Hite is a long-standing member of the mashup community. He frequently performs at Bootie San Francisco, was one of the editors for DJ Earworm's mashup how-to book, and is an active participant on GYBO. However, his opinions about the use of original music in a mashup diverge from those of other community members. Mashups are a symbol upon which a boundary is drawn. As Cohen argues, and as demonstrated by DJ Matt Hite's comments, symbols have different meanings to different members of a

community. In this case, because the concept of a mashup is a defining feature of the mashup community, the flexibility of the definition of a mashup also lends evidence to Cohen's argument for the flexibility of symbolic boundaries. If a defining boundary of the mashup community is that they make mashups, and different members of the community have differing ideas of what a mashup is, then it must certainly be a flexible boundary.

Cohen crafts a definition of community that is quite different than the integrative model of community offered by classic sociologists like Durkheim and Parsons. According to the integrative model, community is a construct that brings disparate beliefs, meanings, etc. into line with each other, breeding uniformity. Cohen argues that community is not integrative, but aggregative and that it does not foster uniformity: "The triumph of community is to so contain this variety that its inherent discordance does not subvert the apparent coherence which is expressed by its boundaries" (1985: 20). "Community" functions exactly like "symbol", remaining flexible enough to contain difference while providing some sense of commonality.

So far my bootleg definition of community samples two main sources. First, as effectively argued by both Anderson and Cohen, community is an imagined construct that fosters a sense of connection among its members, and distinction from other communities. Second, from Cohen, communities are demarcated by symbolic boundaries and it is these boundaries that effectively allow for one community to be differentiated from another. It follows that understanding these symbolic boundaries is crucial to understanding community.

Cohen argues that community boundaries are not fixed and, because they are symbolic, different members of a community will have different definitions of its boundaries. In addition to the malleability of the boundaries themselves, there are objects that can cross them. Bowker and Star call these "boundary objects":

> Boundary objects are those objects that both inhabit several communities of practice and satisfy the informational requirements of each of them. Boundary objects are thus both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites. They are weakly structured in common use and become strongly structured in individual-site use… Such objects have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation. The creation and management of boundary objects is a key process in developing and maintaining coherence across intersecting communities (1999: 297).

As has been demonstrated above, mashups are an example of a boundary object. Members of the turntablist community, the mashup community, and others use the term. Although the specific meaning of the term varies from community to community, and member to member, there is enough commonality for a mashup to remain recognizable from one community to another. The addition of boundary objects to my working definition of community further reinforces the view that communities are imagined constructs with borders that are malleable and porous.

The boundaries, or borders, of a community do not act as a wall of absolute separation. The borders of a community are porous and allow for the inflow and outflow of ideas, people, beliefs, etc. For example, GYBO, ostensibly a forum devoted to the mashup community, allows members to post remix as well as "original" music (not sample-based) and covers of other artists' music. DJ Matt Hite is one of many members of the mashup community who also makes remixes and DJs "live" with turntables. These

community members are able to belong to multiple musical communities and move seamlessly between them because of the porous nature of symbolic community boundaries. This constant movement has two important consequences. First, the size and shape of a community is constantly in flux with no center. Secondly, a community is not a closed system. It is an open system that is always shifting.

Communal Activity

Community is also defined by communal activity (Becker 1986) or what Lave and Wenger call communities of practice (1991), and what Strauss calls social worlds (1978). The concept here is relatively simple: communities exist when people do things together. Lave and Wenger write, "A community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage" (1991: 98).

In DJ Matt Hite's experience, it wasn't until he was part of a community of practice that he felt like he was making mashups:

> **Liam:** How did you get started making mashups?
>
> **Matt Hite:** Well, it's a good question. Where does anything start? I think I probably got really interested in actually making mashups proper as something that was on purpose, probably six years ago or so. I think it is really, it is just because I started to meet other people who were doing it and sharing the interest with other people. I had always been doing digital music production, digital music editing, things like that, but it's when you finally give a name to something and everybody gets together and decides to play it in the same place it becomes a mashup.

> **Liam:** Six years ago would have been right about the time that Bootie started and right after Freelance Hellraiser, 2ManyDJS, that same…
>
> **Matt Hite:** The same era definitely. I really started making them for people to play at clubs back when [DJ Adrian and The Mysterious D] first opened up at a really small, shoebox bar south of Market, Bootie, and they basically started finding people in the area who were mashup producers, mashup DJs, and I had been tooling around with that for a while before that and came down and met them, really started getting involved, at that point when they started the club.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 13, 2009, quoted with permission)

Matt Hite is fortunate to live in the Bay Area near San Francisco where he is able to interact with other members of the mashup community in person and attend and DJ at mashup events. However, GYBO and other virtual sites function in the same manner.

GYBO is certainly a community of practice and, as with physical sites like Bootie, it allows community members to partake in community activities together. In this regard the mashup community is different from the web-based music community that Wilson and Atkinson studied. In their article on the Internet-based rave and straightedge communities in Canada they argued, "Straightedge [community] can be organized but not wholly experienced online" (2005: 300). While this may be the case with the Canadian straightedge community (whose members come from a much smaller geographical area than the world-wide mashup community) it is not the case for the mashup community. There are many members of GYBO who live in areas where there are no physical community spaces. While some are able to travel to community events, others are not, and these community members do experience the mashup community solely online. Additionally, as pointed out above, there are people who attend mashup community events and never visit GYBO. While it is the case that the mashup community is both online and offline, one need not experience both to be a member.

Learned and Dynamic

Another defining aspect of community is that it is learned. Lave and Wenger have developed a good model for understanding the process through which one learns to be a member of a community. They call this process legitimate peripheral participation (1991). Legitimate peripheral participation is the way that a "newcomer" takes part in "peripheral" aspects of community membership. Over time, with the help of established community members, or "old-timers" as Lave and Wenger call them, a newcomer participates in more and more elements of the community.

Lave and Wenger's model is straightforward, but their use of the word peripheral is problematic because it carries the unintended implication that peripheral participation refers to participation on the margin, or fringe, of a community. Instead, they use peripheral to refer to those elements of community in which newcomers can participate. By participating in these activities, newcomers can be a part of the community despite not having learned to participate more fully. Lave and Wenger explain, "Peripherality suggests that there are multiple, varied, more- or less-engaged and -inclusive ways of being located in the fields of participation defined by a community. Peripheral participation is about being located in the social world. *Changing* locations and perspectives are part of actors' learning trajectories, developing identities, and forms of membership" (1991: 36).

The use of peripheral is also problematic because it can imply a dichotomy between periphery and center. Lave and Wenger explicitly counter the notion of a communal "center":

> Given the complex, differentiated nature of communities, it seems important not to reduce the end point of centripetal participation in a community of practice to a uniform or univocal 'center,' or to a linear notion of skill acquisition. There is no place in a community of practice designated 'the periphery,' and, most emphatically, it has no single core or center (1991: 36).

Peripheral is not in contrast to central, and peripheral participation does not lead to "central" participation. As Lave and Wenger explain,

> *Central participation* would imply that there is a center (physical, political, or metaphorical) to a community with respect to an individual's 'place' in it. *Complete participation* would suggest a closed domain of knowledge or collective practice for which there might be measurable degrees of 'acquisition' by newcomers. We have chosen to call that to which peripheral participation leads, *full participation*. Full participation is intended to do justice to the diversity of relations involved in varying forms of community membership (1991: 36-37).

Legitimate peripheral participation then, is the process through which newcomers become full participants in a community of practice by interacting with, and learning from, old-timers.

One way that legitimate peripheral participation is on display in the mashup community is in GYBO posts. Any member is allowed to start or respond to any post. GYBO does have moderators who will periodically intercede and may delete or edit a post if it is in violation of GYBO rules.[35] The moderators are generally long-standing members of the community who volunteer and are approved by the GYBO administrator McSleazy. Actions by moderators to modify or remove a post are one way that "old-timers" instruct "newcomers" on being a part of the community. This is also seen in the feedback to new mashups posted; as discussed in Chapter 2, comments often include

[35] <http://www.gybo5.com/forum/topic/general-rules-and-guidelines-rough-guide> Accessed March 12, 2010.

constructive criticism that helps to educate less experienced mashup producers in the aesthetics of the community.

Legitimate peripheral participation extends beyond an individual's process of becoming a participant in a community. A community is made up of its members and it stands to reason that it members are what shapes a community. As Lave and Wenger point out,

> Legitimate peripheral participation refers both to the development of knowledgeably skilled identities in practice and to the reproduction and transformation of communities of practice. It concerns the latter insofar as communities of practice consist of and depend on a membership, including its characteristic biographies/trajectories, relationships, and practices… Legitimate peripheral participation is intended as a conceptual bridge—as a claim about the common processes inherent in the production of changing persons and changing communities of practice. This pivotal emphasis, via legitimate peripheral participation, on relations between the production of knowledgeable identities and the production of communities of practice, makes it possible to think of sustained learning as embodying, albeit in transformed ways, the structural characteristics of communities of practice (55).

As an individual learns to be a participant in a community s/he is also changing that community. Therefore, community is dynamic and constantly changing. The tutelage of old-timers insures that communities will not change drastically, but the influx of newcomers insures that communities cannot remain static.

Using bits and pieces from the work of numerous scholars I have advanced a definition of community that has six components. Community is: 1) an imagined construct; 2) used to express distinction and demarcated by symbolic boundaries; 3) plastic and malleable with porous boundaries; 4) defined, in part, by common activity; 5) learned, and; 6) dynamic.

Dispersed

In the case of the mashup community, and a number of other emergent communities, a seventh item must be added to the list: community is dispersed. Dispersed communities fit the above criteria but with an important addition. A dispersed community is spread worldwide and has multiple communal sites both online and offline. More importantly, the online and offline are intertwined and the community exists on a spectrum between the two. Different community members interact with the physical and virtual sites in different ways and, while some community members might only participate in one or the other, both the online and offline sites are important.

As Internet-facilitated communication becomes more and more present and inextricable from everyday life, Internet-based dispersed communities will continue to grow and develop. Faroff—a mashup producer who splits his time between Cambridge, MA, and Brazil—discussed the unique nature of dispersed community and his prediction that it is a model for future community development:

> **Liam:** One of the things that I am interested in and trying to write about right now is the relationship between the online community, like GYBO, and then places like Bootie Boston were there is a physical community of people that listen to mashups. Do you find any similarities or differences in the way that you exist in GYBOland versus the way that you exist as a physical mashup artist?
>
> **Faroff:** It's funny I have never been such a big Internet freak before, maybe I am one now, I don't know. It is funny because you have these characters, these figures that you don't even know and that you have been talking to for so long and you never saw. Oh, so this is the famous [dj BC], this is [Spencer For Hire], this is Atom. It is kind of a weird thing, but then you are already friends with them knowing them before personally because you have been talking to them for so long [online]. It's funny but it is wonderful. I see this whole thing as where we are going in terms of culture and stuff, because you don't need to be restricted to your location, your physical location. You can just expand your connections

> and get to be inspired and inspire other people that you have never thought of before.
> (Cambridge, MA, April 8, 2009, quoted with permission)

Dispersed community is unique in that it exists in a complicated mixture of online and offline space. Throughout the course of my interviews I asked about the connection between the Internet community and the physical community. The answers were varied, but a common theme was that the Internet community (specifically GYBO) facilitated physical community.

> **Adrian:** There is absolutely a mashup community. I would say the Internet is really the hub of that community because these are creations that are MP3s, people throw them up on the Internet, download it and share it…
>
> **Mysterious D:** It is computer-based art, so of course it is a computer-based community until you take it into the public realm which is what we have done with Bootie.
>
> **Adrian:** And then there are sub-mashup, Bootie itself has its own mashup community. I know our French parties, there is a whole French mashup community. There are definitely sub-communities.
>
> **Mysterious D:** It starts out with a community of producers and creators and fans that all connect virtually through the Internet and then in addition to that, as Adrian was saying, then there become communities created around each party.
> (San Francisco, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

In an earlier interview with A+D, The Mysterious D described how, in addition to creating local scenes, the various Bootie parties have begun to create trans-local Bootie communities:

> We have been really all about tying communities together and we are fans of music. So even if we are bringing out bootleggers at the club that nobody in our audiences at the club have ever heard about or care about we are so awestruck. We have been able to meet everybody and connect with everybody. There was a certain time in Bootie history where we were booking our favorite bootleggers until every one of our dream bookings got booked, and pretty much all of them but maybe a couple have gotten

> booked. Now we have the Paris party and Munich party and the Boston party. Well the Munich and Paris parties became good friends and then they are connecting with more people and all of the Booties are creating their own scenes and interconnecting.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

Mr. Fab related a story to me about how, in addition to facilitating larger physical community events like mashup club nights, the online community can create offline friendships:

> **Liam:** Do you have friends on GYBO that you communicate with on GYBO, or is it just mainly like business?
>
> **Mr. Fab:** No, we get pretty friendly. It is inevitable. You learn about people once you are in there enough. Yeah, I am pretty friendly. Except for the LA crew, I haven't met too many of them in person. There was a David Lynch tribute album and I knew that one of the other guys on board is a big David Lynch fan because he was real enthusiastic about the album and I saw that there was a David Lynch exhibit in an art gallery here so I sent him a personal message about it. So yeah, it goes beyond the music, we get friendly. I haven't heard of any marriages or hook-ups yet. The English guys they get together too and have a beer.
> (Los Angeles, June 9, 2009, quoted with permission)

DJ Matt Hite pointed out that while initial contacts were made online, he made a concerted attempt to turn those online meetings into offline relationships:

> I would say for sure there is mashup community all over the place. It is not really just necessarily centered on an online forum. For me, I met a lot of people through there but I have been able to transfer that into real friendships and also working relationships, colleagues, and be out there actually doing work with people and making money doing it. I have worked a lot with [DJ Adrian and The Mysterious D], worked a lot with Earworm, worked a lot with DJ Tripp, and also DJ John. We are trying to take it beyond online and we have real good relationships.
> (San Francisco, June 13, 2009, quoted with permission)

Online community facilitating offline community spaces is one model that exists within the mashup community, but it is not the only one. As A+D expressed, the various different physical sites start to become local hubs for mashup community. DJ Adrian

provided a little more detail about how this happens and how it can be different in different geographical locations:

> What we noticed when we started Bootie here six years ago, it was like people started coming out of the woodwork. "Oh you guys play this mashup music, I am doing this too." We met so many people and when we started it in LA that didn't really happen, it is starting to happen more recently where we are getting, that is how we met DJ Shyboy and some other people, but not quite to the extent that it happened in San Francisco where within a year there were like a dozen people. But Paris, that absolutely happened. When we DJed in Paris I made a joke that if an asteroid fell out of the sky and hit the club that we were playing at it would wipe out the entire French bootleg scene except for three people. It became a nexus point for this community and it was really, really wonderful to see that.
> (San Francisco, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

In contrast to the model of online facilitating offline, DJ Paul V., a mashup producer and resident DJ at Bootie LA, observed that many people who attend mashup community events are not aware of the online mashup community and actually become part of the online mashup scene though events like Bootie:

> **Paul V.:** [The crowd] either started off knowing exactly what a mashup was, or liked mashups but didn't know there was a name, like "oh yeah, I've heard of songs like that." I think what happens is that some might start off as sort of laymen mashup fans and then realize that, wow there is this whole movement. There is this whole community that creates this stuff and works with each other and does these clubs and whatnot. I feel like Bootie, another unique thing about it is that it does create a club community, a mashup community, it is all kind of connected.
>
> **Liam:** In your experience there are definitely people that come to Bootie, maybe they have heard mashups but they didn't know it was a genre, and then they get there and then they become more into mashups?
>
> **Paul V:** Yeah. It's funny we give out the free CDs and we run out of them inevitably and people are begging. I am like, "you do realize that every single song that you have heard in our club, and every single song on the CD we gave you we downloaded it from the Internet, every single one of them." There are maybe one or two exceptions where you have got a track only to be shared and you can't download it. 99.9% of the time what we are playing for you, you can go download it too.

(Los Angeles, CA, June 7, 2009, quoted with permission)

Mr. Fab pointed out to me that many of the people who attend mashup community events are not community members, and in fact, may not even be aware that there is a mashup community at all:

> **Mr. Fab:** There definitely is one [a mashup community], but it's online. It isn't really one specific place. It's not like, you talk about the punk days and everyone was hanging out at CBGB's, we are all hanging out at certain websites. You probably know about GYBO. It is very much a community because we don't have anyone else. We're considered outlaws by the music industry so we gotta put on our own shows do our own promotions, so it is pretty tight knit.
>
> **Liam:** With the online community, there are also these hundreds and hundreds of people going to the Bootie shows. Do they…
>
> **Mr. Fab:** They are just mainly just club-goers. They don't even really know how the music is made. It is kind of like the mashup community is our own little guild where we get together and swap ideas and swap music parts, new trade tips. But the club-goers don't even know about this stuff, they don't even log onto the websites or anything like that. They just go to Bootie and dance and have a good time and I don't even think a lot of them know that you can download this stuff for free… I think the audience is a different one from the community. There is some crossover I'm sure.
>
> **Liam:** What kind of crossover?
>
> **Mr. Fab:** Well there are people who start out as fans and then they get really into it and they want to make music themselves, that is certainly how a lot of people get into it. You have people who do go onto the websites just because it is a handy place to hear about all the new songs and then maybe they will see that there is a club event going on. But when I have gone to Bootie, and I have DJed Bootie and stuff, I've never even met any of those people, they don't even know what the websites are or anything, they have never heard of the artists that we play, or how mashup are made… I get the impression that they are overlapping but they seem to be two different groups.
> (Los Angeles, June 9, 2009, quoted with permission)

The nature of a geographically dispersed community can create unique problems. For example, certain artists may make mashups that are locally or regionally popular but

that do not translate to the wider online mashup community. Many of the mashup artists from the UK and Europe feature popular European artists in their mashups that a North American audience is less aware of. Faroff told me about the issues that he faced using Brazilian music in mashups:

> **Faroff:** My first goal was to mix/mash Brazilian music with pop music from the US or wherever. This is what I was doing because there was no one doing this and I thought it was going to be cool. It was just a hobby and if anything I would be able to spin it in Brazil because I knew some people there. I started doing stuff with Brazilian music but then I realized that there was a world market, this is my economist side speaking, you can speak to a larger audience if you switch to music that people actually know.
>
> **Liam:** Right, to worldwide pop.
>
> **Faroff:** I didn't have a whole lot of incentive to keep on doing stuff with Brazilian music because it just was a very restrictive crowd. So I started doing stuff with more international music and I also realized that the cool thing about mashups, what people really like is when you put two or more songs that everyone knows and they go "what is going on here?" Because if you mix two songs that no one knows, no one knows it is a mashup. Actually, I remember, after some time I had some mashups that I thought were actually cool enough I wrote dj BC an email. I am sure he doesn't even remember that, maybe he does. I sent him an email and he was like. "this is pretty cool I like it but I don't know any of the tracks that you are using so it could as well just be a song a track."
>
> **Liam:** It could just be its own…
>
> **Faroff:** It sounds like a regular track. Which was a compliment, but he didn't really know the songs.
> (Cambridge, MA, April 8, 2009, quoted with permission)

While Faroff's local Brazilian audience would recognize a mashup featuring Brazilian music with pop music from the United States or Europe, the larger mashup community might not be able to recognize those tracks as mashups. Faroff has encountered a similar issue with his website:

> **Faroff:** [Party Ben] said that he didn't like the fact that I don't have an actual webpage, just MySpace. Everyone hates that fact.
>
> **Liam:** That is a big deal on GYBO because you have to go to an external website to download. Everybody hates the third party filesharing. You have to put the little logo on it the, 3PFS.
>
> **Faroff:** Yeah, but my compromise now, is I have my MySpace and on the MySpace I have embedded the songs from Fairtilizer. So you are accessing my Fairtilizer page from my MySpace. For the mashup, the people that are really into mashups, MySpace is really bad. I don't think it is good either, but for the wider crowd, I think that people usually use MySpace. Especially in Brazil, they are now getting used to MySpace. (Cambridge, MA, April 8, 2009, quoted with permission)

The desire to appeal to a larger audience is nothing new to musicians, but in the context of a dispersed community it becomes more of a necessity. While there are local mashup scenes, the community is online and worldwide. Therefore, if mashup producers want their mashups to be well received by the online mashup community they face pressure to use music that is popular beyond a local area.

In addition to the pressures to make mashups that are widely recognizable, there is occasional tension between different geographical hubs of mashup producers. When this tension arises it is usually between European mashup community members and community members in the U.S. The contemporary mashup genre began in the United Kingdom and the U.K. is still home to many mashup producers. However, the most successful mashup albums, in terms of volume of media attention, and the most successful mashup club nights, based on attendance, have originated in the United States. As the creators of Bootie, A+D have faced a fair amount of negative reaction from some of the longer-term European members of the mashup community. A+D explained to me how this tension periodically crops up and can create an unpleasant feeling on GYBO:

> **Liam:** I was just going to say that in trying to create this really welcoming and open environment, it seems like that also, at least in what I have seen on GYBO, that also extends to the online community. A lot of online communities can get pretty nasty…
>
> **Mysterious D:** Have you been on GYBO for long? There is no difference. Believe me. We have been on GYBO for years and there were a lot of people that hated us the minute we became successful. Anytime something came up about us it would just go on. People would try to tear down all of mashup culture just to try to get at us… GYBO is in a better place now I think Liam. You are catching it at a good time. But believe me it is like every message board.
>
> **Adrian:** GYBO has definitely had its share of drama, had its share of warring factions. As far as online communities go, GYBO is probably better than most.
>
> **Mysterious D:** Really? This is my first online community Adrian and wow, if it gets worse than this I can't even imagine. It has been on its best behavior lately. But also Liam you have missed when the big blowups happen and there is the big wars and it is usually the U.K. people against everybody else because they started it damnit and they want you to know about it and they don't really like, if you have success then you are tooting your own horn blah blah… That is usually what happens and then it blows up into a huge thing with tons of pages and people posting pictures of LOL cats and then it calms down for a few days.
>
> **Liam:** LOL cats solve everything.
>
> **Mysterious D:** It always culminates in some LOL cats. Maybe it's finally transitioning onwards. Isn't Internet culture hilarious?
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

Party Ben, a mashup producer from San Francisco who has long been associated with Bootie, has encountered some of the same reaction. In addition to the U.S./U.K. tensions, Party Ben described his frustration with the difference in the way that a particular mashup was received by the local community in San Francisco versus the online community on GYBO:

> The general mashup community, when I make fun of it, it centers on Get Your Bootleg On, which I have always had a love/hate relationship with. Obviously it helped me immensely in working on my shows and on the

> radio and DJing, and helped me find really amazing stuff. Some of the people, it is all about the people, some of the people on there have been really nice, and others have just been, god when I first posted that Eminem remix. That Eminem remix that I did it wasn't the best thing in the world, but it was a phenomenon on Live 105. It was just a huge thing that flooded my email box with people asking me for it, they would [have] pay[ed] me $100 for it, I was taken aback by it. So I posted on the Get Your Bootleg On forum, and, granted the Eminem was overused and they were coming from that perspective, but [what] they posted, it was merciless. I was this guy who was like, "here is this thing I did," and there were four comments and they were like, "my ears are bleeding." It was the meanest cynical stuff, and I was like, "okay," and I didn't go back for like four years. Even then I feel like its been tough.
>
> It is a very Eurocentric kind of place and it is very much about some sort of integrity and I think that a lot of them think of me, or the Bootie crew, as sell-outs because we have had some success even though the success is just tiny in comparison to anything legitimate. There is a lot of resentment that we had a thousand people come to our club or I had a radio show, it is like "why does he get that?" It is definitely a little bit rough, but what's great is that there are all of these fantastic producers all over the world who I would never have found out about. They just post something on the bootleg forum or on their website and now I know about Divide and Kreate, he is the greatest producer and totally under-appreciated, or somebody like DJ Zebra, a compatriot of mine. We are basically like mirror images of the same person. He had a radio show on an alternative station and also did these mashups and stuff. Now he is like more famous than God in France, which is kind of funny because I will come over and do these little gigs and he is playing stadiums, he is massive.
>
> (San Francisco, CA, June 10, 2009, quoted with permission)

Increasing attention is being paid to web-based communities (Kibby 2000, Lee and Peterson 2004, Lysloff 2003, Wilson and Atkinson 2005); however, as Wilson and Atkinson point out, "Existing research… tends to focus on either online or offline subcultural experiences, without uncloaking the links between these subcultural worlds" (2005: 277). I have attempted to demonstrate here that, as Wilson and Atkinson argued, the online and offline sites of mashup community have distinct features but are interconnected. As with the rave and straightedge communities that Wilson and Atkinson discussed, the Internet sites are used to promote offline community events (2005: 287).

On GYBO, for example, information about upcoming club nights and other mashup events are posted online to facilitate face-to-face gatherings. Beyond just advertising events, GYBO is used for organizing events. Periodically community members will propose an idea for an event, determine who is interested, and work out the logistics by communicating on GYBO.

Wilson and Atkinson also address the use of Internet as a space for defining a community in words, explicating community values, and debunking myths and misconceptions (2005: 298-299). GYBO is frequently used as a place where community members can pose questions and discuss community beliefs or values (as discussed in Chapter 2). GYBO members will also often use the forum as a place to point out inaccuracies in popular media reports about the music or the community.

Wilson and Atkinson convincingly argue that because "the Internet is part of everyday life, and not necessarily abstracted from it" (2005: 283), dispersed communities need to be examined in their totality. The online community cannot be separated from the offline. Dispersed communities, like the mashup community, are emergent. Given the constant advances and spread of Internet communication technology, more and more communities will be interacting both online and offline. The mashup community is an exciting model of a community formation that will only grow more common and more important to understand.

Conclusion

Anthony Cohen was wise to avoid putting forward a definition of community. Community is not one thing, in fact it is not a thing at all, and so no one definition is

suitable. Community is a concept that is overwhelming in complexity and variegated in form from one instance to the next. Cohen's approach was to analyze the common usage of the term and start from there. My approach has been similar. I have taken what I believe to be the central concepts from numerous different authors' writings about community and assembled a list. I believe that the aspects of community that I have put forward are a reasonable attempt to define the indefinable and balance between the extremes of universality, with broad theory, and specificity, with ethnographic insight.

The mashup community is imagined, demarcated by symbolic boundaries, plastic with porous borders, defined by common activity, learned, and dynamic. Just as important, the mashup community is web-based and dispersed. The online and offline are constantly interacting with each other in complicated and changing ways. The online sites of community interaction are extremely fluid—GYBO alone has undergone three significant overhauls in as many years—and the physical sites are located all around the world. Understanding the interaction and overlap between the online and offline community spaces is a significant challenge, but it is one that scholars must undertake if we are to understand community formation in a world where Internet communication is increasingly inseparable from daily life.

Chapter 5

The Voice of the Mashes: Agency and the Democratization of Technology

Agency is a ubiquitous topic in scholarship about music and technology (especially popular music), and both scholarly and popular writing about mashups often focus on the subject. In both the popular and scholarly accounts of the mashup genre, mashups are often cast as either superficial recycled pop made with the computer doing all the work, or as the next step in musical creativity, moving us toward an Attali-esque era of "composition." No matter which side one takes in this argument, it's clear that mashup production was made possible by the democratization of technology: mashups are produced outside of the commercial recording industry and can be created by anyone who can access inexpensive audio editing software. In this chapter I argue that mashups offer a prime example of how the democratization of technology can enhance the creative agency of consumers of popular culture.

In the next section I offer a brief summary of key arguments about agency and popular music, as well as an examination of the treatment of this issue in the mashup literature. In the rest of the chapter I draw on my ethnographic research to analyze the relationship between mashups, agency, and new technologies of production. I examine how the uses of new technology are blurring traditional distinctions between the producer and consumer, weakening the authority of media corporations like record companies, and changing the expectation that an author, or industry, can control a work once it has been released.

Agency

In 2001, Tim Taylor summarized the most common arguments about popular music, mass media, and agency in *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology, and Culture*. Taylor argued that most scholarship on agency has proceeded either from a top-down, "mass culture" approach (typified by the Frankfurt School), or a bottom-up, "popular culture" approach (typified by the Birmingham School). Taylor's analysis is more sophisticated than a binary between these two schools of thought, but he makes a strong case for the dominance of their ideas. A quick glance at the bibliographies of contemporary works on popular culture, media, and technology will likely reveal the names Adorno, Horkheimer, Hall, and Hebdige. The French cultural theorists Attali and Baudrillard are also frequently cited, and, of course, Benjamin is virtually mandatory.

The scholar most associated with the Frankfurt School and its "mass culture" approach is Theodor Adorno. Thirty years ago, with the exception of Rose Subotnik (1976), Adorno's work was largely ignored by musicologists and ethnomusicologists (DeNora 2003: 35). Today his work is read widely, cited often, and Adorno has become a polarizing figure. His work is celebrated for attending to the impacts of musical structure on society and denounced for being overly deterministic. Tia DeNora writes, "Adorno's work represents the most significant development in the twentieth century of the idea that music is a 'force' in social life" (2000: 2), and, "Adorno did, arguably, more to theorise music's powers than any other scholar during the first half of the twentieth century" (2003: 3). On the other hand, Adorno and fellow Frankfurt School thinkers have been criticized for over-emphasizing the role of the "culture industry" and the effects of popular music on listeners, while deemphasizing the role of individual agency (not to

mention claims of classism and Eurocentrism). Adorno led the way in crafting a "hypodermic needle theory" (Wong 2003: 126) in which mass media fosters an uncritical audience, creating automatons who will bow to the culture industry, and, even worse, to fascism (Adorno 1991).

Both fans and critics acknowledge that Adorno's work lacked evidence (DeNora 2000: 2, Sinnreich 2007). Sinnreich observed that, "Despite his many claims, Adorno proposes no unifying mechanism for these myriad industrial assaults on individual liberty, and offers very little in the way of data, even anecdotally" (2007: 60). Because Adorno did not believe it necessary to conduct interviews or consult with the popular music listeners that he wrote about, his writing tends to devalue and dismiss the agency of the "mass media" consumer. Aram Sinnreich noted that Adorno "has little room in his model for individual agency. His hapless listeners are manipulated by the music industry into abnegating their own identities, lining up like a mass of iron filings in the presence of an electromagnet. The possibility of critical or resistant listening is entirely precluded by the totalitarian power of the sound itself" (2007: 59).

Adorno's faults are difficult to look past, and it is easy to point out the ways in which time has not been kind to his ideas about popular music. Collections like Lysloff and Gay's *Music and Technoculture* (2003) are replete with examples that highlight the inaccuracy of Adorno's critiques that "popular music divests the listener of his spontaneity and promotes conditioned reflexes" (1941: 22), or that the formulaic structures and repetition in popular music create "a system of response-mechanisms wholly antagonistic to the ideal of individuality in a free, liberal society" (1941: 22). Recent work by ethnomusicologists has even demonstrated "individuality" in settings

that, at first glance, seem to preclude, or severely limit, the possibility of agency such as karaoke singing (Wong 1993, 2003, 2004) and videogame playing (Miller 2007).

Adorno's scholarship on popular music, tainted by his own ardent dislike of the popular music of his day (including jazz) may have missed the mark, but Adorno and his Frankfurt colleagues have had a tremendous influence on the debate about mediation, technology, agency, and music. Their influence can be seen in more recent scholarly work that emphasizes music's role in creating and manipulating social structure at the expense of social agency (Attali 1985 [1977], Barthes 1977, Baudrillard 1983)—as well as in popular media decrying mashups as simplistic, limiting, easy to create.

A significant refutation of the "top-down" arguments associated with the Frankfurt School came from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Starting in the 1970s, Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige, and others affiliated with the Birmingham School were crafting an approach to popular culture that emphasized the uses of popular culture by individuals and groups, especially in the shaping of identity. Studies like Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979) showed that, rather than being helpless automatons, people were transforming the products they consumed and appropriating those products in ways never intended by the creators.

The Birmingham School made two important contributions to the agency debate. First, they brought studies of popular culture into the academy. Popular culture had been a subject of previous scholarship, but it was derided and not thought to be worthy of careful study (still an unfortunately common attitude in pockets of academia). The work of scholars from cultural studies showed that studies of "low-brow" culture were every bit as rich and intellectually engaging as studies of "high art." Additionally, such work

was significantly more resonant with the predominately working-class students and community around Birmingham, England.

The second important contribution was the use of ethnographic research methods. In addition to theorizing about why and how consumers consumed, cultural studies scholars advocated *asking people* about it. Ethnographic research was not new; anthropologists, sociologists, and ethnomusicologists had been using ethnographic methods long before the BCCCS. It was the application of those methods to the study of popular culture, specifically the study of popular culture in the West, that marked a significant change.

In addition to refocusing the debate to incorporate the views of consumers, the BCCCS and the cultural studies scholars who followed suggested that "mass media" was not strictly one-way communication from the "culture industry" to the consumers, but rather a site of negotiation and interpretation (Frith 1987, Hall 1973, Middleton 1990). Peter Manuel, an ethnomusicologist who has drawn on cultural studies, Marxism, and neo-Marxism in exploring the complicated relationship between producers and consumers of culture, wrote that BCCCS scholars and their adherents have "found an approach to be more fruitful which treats public culture, including popular music, neither as pure corporate manipulation nor as grassroots expression....Popular music and the mass media themselves are thus best seen as sites of negotiation, mediation, and 're-articulation'"(1993: 10).

The influence of cultural studies rivals that of the Frankfurt School theoreticians, but cultural studies has also been criticized. While Adorno, Attali, and others are critiqued for placing too much emphasis on the ability of musical structure to influence

society, cultural studies scholars are critiqued for placing too little emphasis on music's organizing power. On the turn towards cultural studies, Tia DeNora writes, "Studies [of music] moved from what music caused to what caused music" (2003: 2). DeNora, an Adorno scholar, is critical of the treatment of music as merely a reflection of society and without any generative power of its own.

DeNora's work is amongst the better examples of contemporary work on music and agency from outside of the realm of cultural studies or ethnomusicology. She is sympathetic to Adorno's argument that music can affect social structure, and applauds Adorno for having been "dedicated to exploring the hypothesis that musical organization is a simulacrum for social organization" (2000: 2). However, she criticizes Adorno for his lack of rigor in providing evidence for his claims. She writes,

> Because [Adorno] provides no machinery for viewing these matters as they actually take place, Adorno's work also has the power to frustrate; his work offers no conceptual scaffolding from which to view music in the act of training the unconsciousness, no consideration of how music gets into action. The weakness of Adorno's approach thus lies in its failure to provide some means by which its tantalizing claims can be evaluated. (2000: 2)

DeNora's *Music In Everyday Life* (2000) is an attempt to correct Adorno's methodological errors, while maintaining his focus on music's "force." DeNora uses ethnographic research methods to provide the evidence to support her ideas.

DeNora also tries to recast Adorno's theories about agency into a more palatable balance between the power of music and the power of the listener. In agreement with Adorno, she points out that control over mass-mediated music can be a source of control over society. She writes, "If music can affect the shape of social agency, then control over music in social settings is a source of social power; it is an opportunity to structure

the parameters of action" (2000: 20). However, DeNora moderates this claim by pointing out that it is the listener who gives music its power: "Examples of musical mediation (or reappropriation) highlight how music's semiotic force – its affect upon hearing – cannot be fully specified in advance of actual reception. This is because musical affect is constituted reflexively, in and through the practice of articulating, or connecting music with other things" (2000: 33).

Ultimately, in her attempt to modernize Adorno, DeNora finds it necessary to dismiss his rigid views on popular music and agency. She writes, "In none of these examples, however, does music simply *act upon* individuals, like a stimulus. Rather, music's 'effects' come from the ways in which individuals orient to it, how they interpret it and how they place it within their personal musical maps, within the semiotic web of music and extra-musical associations" (2000: 61). Furthermore, she writes,

> There is little evidence in favour of a behaviourist conception of music's powers in respect to agency, though… it is perhaps to be expected that certain, to some degree predictable, associations between music and action have come to be established and maintained to varying degrees. Arguments such as those advanced by Aristotle or the Parents' Music Resource Centre, that certain melodies are 'conducive to virtue' or destructive of well-being are non-explanatory; they do not offer any account for the mechanisms through which music comes to produce its alleged effects. On its own, music has no more power to make things happen than does kindling to produce combustion (2000: 60).

Perhaps DeNora's admiration for Adorno is what prevented her from adding his name alongside Aristotle and the Parents' Music Resource Centre in the above quote, but it certainly belongs there.

Agency in Mashup Literature

Within the mashup literature there is a general consensus that the use of technology by mashup producers to make and distribute their work has provided an outlet for increased agency. Phillip Gunderson declares that, because the production and distribution of mashups is largely outside of any marketplace, mashup production may be a harbinger of Attali's era of "composition." He writes,

> When artists cease to be constrained by the demands of the market (which include both studio executives' demands for a hit single and the restrictive demands of today's consumer, who has been conditioned to dislike any music that makes *its own demands* on the listener), they may pursue other logics internal to their work. In Attali's age of composition, the idea of aesthetic autonomy appears on the horizon. (2004)

I question Gunderson's claim that mashups would fit into Attali's "composition." I think that Attali would most likely consider mashups to be a part of the preceding age of "repetition." Attali wrote, "Reproduction, in a certain sense, is the death of the original, the triumph of the copy, and the forgetting of the represented foundation: in mass production, the mold has almost no importance or value in itself; it is no longer anything more than one of the factors in production" (1985 [1977]: 89).

Despite Gunderson's optimistic outlook, he does not attribute much agency to the consumer. He argues that popular music consumers have been "conditioned" to seek out non-challenging music. This attitude is reflected in a later comment in which Gunderson seems to imply two classes of consumer: those who exert agency and seek out "good" music, and those who passively accept what is foisted upon them. He writes,

> As consumers become accustomed to looking for good music online, they will need to rely on commercial tastemakers less. They may, indeed, find the industry's 'pushing' of mass entertainment increasingly odious. To approach the same issue from a slightly different angle, file sharing threatens to dispel musical ignorance and the industry that profits there from. Music fans trained to think that the major labels are the only sources of music worth listening to discover in the Internet a repository of innovative, challenging music—music, indeed, whose

> only evident failing has been that it is perhaps too innovative and too challenging for benumbed Clear Channel Communications listeners. (2004)

So while Gunderson embraces the possibilities of new technology to increase interaction with popular culture, he reserves his praise for mashup producers and a select group of music listeners. Kembrew McLeod, on the other hand, applauds a wider array of consumers of mashups, and other types of popular music that use sampling. McLeod argues that, "Making a mashup requires you to listen carefully and in a new way, looking for the perfect song that will hilariously undermine the authority of another… Even 'passive' listening in the age of sampling can be very active, especially when a familiar song fragment sends us rummaging through our memory banks for a match" (2005: 85). Despite McLeod's enthusiasm for the intellectual act of recognizing samples in mashups, his statement does not address those listeners who would seek a less cerebral reception. Is dancing to a mashup, even if you don't recognize the samples, any less active? Gunderson's "Clear Channel listener," and McLeod's privileging of "active" listening echo the Adornian dismissal of less-cerebral music reception. As Middleton pointed out, "For Adorno, 'after Beethoven' any type of listening other than contemplative cognitive effort is necessarily regressive. Other listening modes – for instance, those where music is associated with activities of various kinds, the sounds perhaps impinging on muscles, skin, nerves, as much as conscious thought processes – have a long and continuous history" (1990: 58).

There is agreement in the literature that mashup producers pose a threat to the status quo and present the possibility of destabilizing the recording industry. Gunderson writes,

> Part of *The Grey Album*'s vibrancy comes from the way it *highlights* the

> culture industry's specious opposition of white 1960s Brit-pop and twenty-first century black American hip-hop. In the contemporary climate of administrated music, in which radio bandwidth has been exploded into a stelliferous system of synchronic generic differences (classic rock, alternative rock, 'urban,' classical, country, etc.) and which interpellates a corresponding 'type' of consumer, *The Grey Album*'s juxtaposition of the Beatles and Jay-Z takes on the character of a musical contradiction in terms. (2004)

William Levay also addressed the power of the mashup producer to challenge existing structures in the making and dissemination of popular culture:

> Vidler [Go Home Productions], like a generation of remixers before him, has blurred the boundary between consumer and composer, roles that in most art worlds have been kept distinct. To the capitalist culture industry, as described by Frankfurt School thinkers Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, this blurring is a politically charged act threatening to its hegemony… Despite the fact that, traditionally, the audience has been relegated to the role of interpreter/consumer, in the act of remixing the consumer short-circuits the system by co-opting support personnel and assuming the role of artist. In its various guises, from the live remixes of reggae and disco DJs, to hip-hop sampling, to Vidler's mash-ups, the remix represents, for some, a hopeful antidote to Adorno and Horkheimer's pessimism about the hegemony of the culture industry; however for others, it is ultimately a validation of the pervasiveness of capitalist commodification. (2005: 23)

Like Levay and Gunderson, McLeod uses mashups as an example to support his arguments about larger trends in popular culture. He is primarily concerned with copyright and he uses mashups as an example of what he views as producer/consumer activism, and also a way to demonstrate flaws in copyright law. Although McLeod's article provides an insightful argument about the problems with copyright law, and he has constructed a history of mashups and their precursors that was very helpful to this work, he does not appear to hold the music in very high regard. He implies that mashups are simple to make (2005: 83), and he simultaneously applauds the agency of mashup producers and accuses mashups of reinforcing Adorno's critiques of popular music. McLeod writes,

> Mashups allow people to participate in – to make and remake – the pop culture that surrounds them… Despite my appreciation of them, I do not mean to idealize mashups because, as a form of creativity, they are quite limited and limiting. First, because they depend on the recognizability of the original, mashups are circumscribed to a relatively narrow repertoire of Top 40 songs. Also, mashups pretty much demonstrate that Theodor Adorno, the notoriously cranky Frankfurt School critic of pop culture, was right about one key point. In arguing for the superiority of European art music, Adorno claimed that pop songs were simplistic and merely made from easily interchangeable, modular components. Yes, Adorno was a snob; but after hearing a half dozen mashups, it is hard to deny that he is right about that particular point. If pop songs weren't simple and formulaic, it would be much harder for mashup bedroom auteurs to do their job. (2005: 86)

I agree with McLeod's first point, that making mashups provides a way for anyone to participate in the construction (or reconstruction) of popular music. However, I do not agree with his argument that mashups are limiting, or that they reinforce the Adornian belief that popular music is simplistic, repetitive, and formulaic. McLeod is not alone in this belief; it is seen often in media reception of mashups and other scholars have made similar arguments (Gunkel 2008: 500, Serazio 2008: 84). These arguments are based on false premises about how and why mashups are made (as I discussed in Chapter 1).

Regarding the limitations of working with recognizable music, I argued in previous chapters that this "constraint" actually allows for a great deal more diversity in mashups than many other genres of music. A mashup might combine hip-hop, country, techno, bubblegum pop, etc. So long as two or more songs are mashed together, the genre is open to sampling from all types of music. Furthermore, when considered in its totality, the "relatively narrow repertoire of Top 40 songs" is not, in fact, that narrow (nor does it accurately describe the range of source material used in mashups). While some popular music has a short lifespan, most of it remains recognizable (if not popular) for years, or

even decades, after its release. Some mashups draw samples from the most recent popular music, others reach back across the history of recorded music (or even beyond, as in the case of mashups which sample recognizable classical music like Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, or Pachelbel's Canon). McLeod himself argues that one of the earliest contemporary mashups was Evolution Control Committee's 1997 "Rebel Without A Pause" which sampled Public Enemy and Herb Alpert's Tijuana Brass (2005: 86). The mashup sampled the Public Enemy song "By The Time I Get To Phoenix" from their 1991 album *Apocalypse 91… The Enemy Strikes Black*. Although the album was successful, "By The Time I Get To Phoenix" never charted[36] and was certainly not played on "Top 40" radio at the time. The Herb Alpert sample was taken from the album *Whipped Cream and Other Delights* released over 30 years earlier in 1966. Nonetheless, both songs were sufficiently recognizable for the purposes of a mashup. Today, more than a decade later, those samples would still be recognizable to a large swath of listeners.

McLeod's claim that mashups prove Adorno's critique that popular music is simple and made of interchangeable parts was echoed by Michael Serazio who wrote, "The ease of creating a mash-up and the astonishing 'perfect fit' of wildly different songs also exposes pop's underlying 'part-interchangeability' (2008: 84). David Gunkel also picked up on this critique:

> The mash-up, in fact, seems to prove Adorno correct… The mash-up constitutes an extreme form of this mechanical substitutability and replication that Adorno attributes to all popular forms of music. In fact, mash-up artists seem to repurpose Adorno's indictment as if it were an instruction manual, deliberately substituting one chorus for another and rearranging details without regard for the original integrity of the whole. (2008: 500)

[36] < http://www.billboard.com/#/artist/public-enemy/1066> Accessed March 27, 2010.

I do not accept the premise that mashups are easy to create, nor am I convinced that 'part-interchangeability' is unique to pop music. I would argue that all genres of music display strong internal similarities in form and content. It is these similarities that define genres and styles of music. The same is certainly true of European art music. Furthermore in making this argument, McLeod and Serazio overlook the often times drastic editing and rearranging that is needed to fit two or more samples together in a mashup.

Although McLeod and Serazio invoke Adorno in their descriptions of mashups, neither of them raised Adorno's critique of pseudo-individuation, which is more difficult to dismiss than Adorno's curmudgeonly caricatures of popular music. In their essay "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" Adorno and Horkheimer argued that part of the insidious attack on individuality by the "culture industry" involves the promotion of pseudo-individuality. They wrote,

> In the culture industry the individual is an illusion not merely because of the standardization of the means of production. He is tolerated only so long as his complete identification with the generality is unquestioned. Pseudo-individuality is rife: from the standardized jazz improvisation to the exceptional film star whose hair curls over her eye to demonstrate her originality. What is individual is no more than the generality's power to stamp the accidental detail so firmly that it is accepted as such. The defiant reserve or elegant appearance of the individual on show is mass-produced like Yale locks, whose only difference can be measured in fractions of millimeters. (1993: 41)

It isn't too much of a stretch to view mashups as the most recent in a long line of industry-sanctioned rebellion. This argument underlies the assertions made by scholars like William Levay (2005: 36) and numerous music critics that any disruptive power in mashups will be (or already has been) subsumed and sanitized by the recording industry.

Adorno and Horkheimer's assertions of pseudo-individuality are difficult to rebut

because any example to the contrary can be dismissed by reasserting their central premise. The "culture industry" acts like the machine overlords in *The Matrix*, foisting a false perception of reality and individuality on a "generality" that is too numbed to understand what is really happening, much less to do anything about it. Mashups seem to challenge the recording industry on many levels, and mashup artists seem to exert individuality and agency by recontextualizing the culture around them—or is that just what the "culture industry" wants us to believe?

I have trouble believing in, or even conceiving of, the omnipotent "culture industry" that Adorno and Horkheimer theorize. But, perhaps, this is a matter of context. As Simon During points out, "It is important to remember the situation in which it ["The Culture Industry"] was written. The Second World War had not quite ended, and Adorno and Horkheimer were refugees from Nazi Germany living in the US. Hitler's totalitarianism (with its state control of cultural production) and the American market system are fused in their thought," and importantly, "It is also worth emphasizing that when this essay was written the culture industry was less variegated than it was to become" (1993: 29). Additionally, as Richard Middleton has explained, the 1930s through 1940s was a time in which, "the machinery of 'mass culture' worked to considerable effect" (1990: 35). However, even at the height of "mass culture," Middleton demonstrates that the recording industry was fragmented and certainly not the 'monolithic bloc' that Adorno and Horkheimer describe (1990: 37-38).

As an ethnomusicologist who has been heavily influenced by cultural anthropology and cultural studies, it is difficult for me to understand why the anti-agency views espoused by theorists like Adorno are still given any amount of legitimacy. Yet

scholars continue to repeat these views—e.g., Gunderson's comments about "benumbed" Clear Channel listeners—and Adornian denunciations of popular culture are commonplace in the popular press. Ethnographic insights have, I believe, irrefutably demonstrated that consumers of popular culture possess and exert agency in a plethora of creative and unpredictable ways. I agree with Taylor that "scholars who actually talk to consumers and find out what they are thinking and doing offer more insights into consumers and consumption" (2001: 203). At this point, scholars who theorize about agency, consumption, technology, and music, without conducting, or at least consulting, ethnographic research are doing themselves a disservice.

Agency In Practice

It has been clear from the beginning of my work with mashup artists that agency is alive and well and is not threatened by mediated popular music and technology. Perhaps the best demonstration of this is the fact that people are creating mashups at all. Mashup producers are voracious consumers of popular music. Like a DJ, a mashup producer needs to have a wide knowledge of popular music. Despite the countless hours that mashup artists spend listening to popular music, they are not becoming automatons. Quite the opposite, mashup artists' appreciation for popular music has served as a springboard for creativity.

Mashup artists demonstrate their agency by creating mashups and, far from unthinking compulsion, my interviewees discussed numerous different reasons for undertaking this creative work. A+D explained to me:

> **Liam:** When you guys go to make a new mashup where do you start? Do you hear a song that you think will work well for a mashup? How do you guys start?
>
> **Adrian:** It comes from such a variety of different sources. Where the inspiration comes to make a mashup. It can be a brand new song that comes out that we want to play at the club. So much of contemporary pop and R&B and hip-hop, especially with contemporary hip-hop, the instrumentation is so minimal. I don't really like minimal instrumentation and production. It's not my style, it's not how I grew up. I come from a rock background. I really like big full productions. So taking a song that I normally wouldn't like and turning it into a song that I do like is definitely one of those principle reasons for mashing inspiration. Another one is hearing an old song. We drive to LA all the time to do a party down there and there is so much random radio between San Francisco and LA and there will be an old song or a forgotten '80s hit or just something random and you will be like, oh my god this song is great we should do something with it and bring it to a new audience…
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

In just this brief answer Adrian mentions making mashups to feature a popular current song, to revive a forgotten hit, and to bring a song more into line with his personal music aesthetics. The latter reason is particularly intriguing. DJ Adrian is not only working with popular music that he likes, or that he thinks will be a hit in the club, he is actively changing popular music that he dislikes by adding elements that better fit his tastes. This is a common attitude amongst mashup producers. While there is a widespread appreciation for popular music, there is also recognition that popular music can be improved upon, and a common goal is to mix two or more tracks with the result being "better" than the originals (Frere-Jones 2005, Shiga 2007). DJ Adrian's comments also demonstrate that mashups are not solely made to be humorous or entertaining, as is often suggested in both scholarly and popular descriptions. Although humor is an important aspect of many mashups, and, like the pop music that they sample, many mashups strive for catchiness, there is a much wider range of artistic intent on display in

mashup production.

One such motivation for creating a mashup is to show the similarity between songs and to point out to the audience how one band may have been influenced by another. Far from simply demonstrating that popular music is repetitive or, as Adorno and McLeod suggested, made from "easily interchangeable" parts, these mashups seek to educate listeners about the history of popular music. The Mysterious D explained,

> Like Adrian said there are a thousand different inspirations for why we put something together. You will hear a song with a certain chord progression that reminds you of something current so you try to put it together or there will be some connection in theme or what the songs are saying. But there is also, one of my favorite ways to hear a mashup or be inspired to make one, is that you will find that somebody from like an Indie band right now sounds exactly like a band from the '60s and basically wrote the same song in 2007 that somebody wrote in 1968. To mash those two together is a statement on how recycled pop culture is and that a lot of the things that are current now, maybe the kids don't know, but they were popular before. That is another interesting reason to mash things up.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

Although The Mysterious D's comments about "how recycled pop culture is" have an Adornian ring, "recycled" in this context is not intended to be negative. Rather, I would argue that there is a valorization of the "recycled" among members of the mashup community. Demonstrating the continuity from one genre, or era, to the next is both a way of broadening one's view of popular music, and celebrating the idea of a well-crafted pop song regardless of the time period or style.

My intention here is not to list the multitudinous reasons that people create mashups, but rather to demonstrate that there is a significant element of artistic intent involved in mashup production. This artistic intent, this creativity, is proof that agency is alive and well even in a form of art that is completely enveloped in popular culture, technology, and mediation.

Democratization of Technology

In the literature on mashups, and on music and technology in general, discussions of agency are closely related to discussions about the democratization of technology. Computer technology and Internet communication have undeniably made technologies and materials required for the production, consumption, and distribution of music (and other media) available to a larger population than previously had access to them. The democratization of technology has been addressed in the literature as weakening the distinction between producer and consumer (Gunderson 2004, Sinnreich 2007), the power of the "culture industry" (Levay 2005, McLeod 2005), and the finality of "the work" (be it a musical recording, film, book, etc.) (Howard-Spink 2004, Serazio 2008).

The eroding difference between producer and consumer is a familiar trope in both popular media and scholarly literature. A mashup artist is at one moment a listener, and at the next a producer, but a producer in a different sense than those who do not remix the work of others. As William Levay explains,

> Consumers now occupy a different role in the art world: the producer who co-opts support from unknowing (and perhaps no longer living) collaborators. This upending of the social structure of the culture industry art world is a political act—a "mute periphery" making new sounds by remixing the old. It is a rejection of the outmoded metaphysical notion; an embrace of a postmodern vision that corresponds to the cut 'n' mix aesthetic practiced among people of the African diaspora, and readily audible in the popular music of Jamaica. (2005: 28)

Levay argues that the mashup artists are not just responding to the music that they consume, they are actually placing themselves in the production chain and adding their own creative interpretation. This addition has ramifications for the hegemony of the producers (and industry) as well as the sovereignty of their output. Levay writes,

"Recently, consumers have had unprecedented access to industry-caliber digital tools, allowing for more drastic recontextualizations, more disparate juxtapositions, and more remixes… If you find an audience, you challenge the culture industry's shared ideas about authorship, ownership, division of labor, and the commodification of sound. In the act of remixing, the consumer turns into a producer" (2005, 34-35). I hasten to add that one need not find an audience. Even if a mashup is never released, the mashup producer is still challenging the dominant ideas to which Levay refers.

The blurring line between production and consumption is an issue that mashup artists themselves are well aware of. Aram Sinnreich conducted survey research and interviews with a large number of mashup artists, other remix artists, music industry insiders, and a random sampling of American adults for his dissertation (2007). Among other topics, he asked about the distinction between artist and audience (or producer and consumer). The answers ranged, but Sinnreich found a high degree of ambiguity even amongst mashup artists. He writes, "there was widespread acknowledgment among the people I spoke with that the line separating artist and audience is difficult or impossible to locate definitively in a configurable music context" (2007: 186), and "the notion that both aesthetic production and consumption are fragmenting, with new roles and behaviors rushing to fill the untracked gray area opening between them and allowing an unprecedented degree of communication, collaboration and fluidity between makers and users, was echoed by many interviewees" (2007: 187).

I have also encountered uncertainty in interviews with mashup producers on this subject. In an interview, Faroff and I discussed a recent YouTube project by an artist named Kutiman. Kutiman spent countless hours culling through videos posted to

YouTube showing the video creator playing an instrument. He then made a video mashup by taking these disparate clips and combining them. By editing together and looping numerous unrelated videos he was able to construct new songs and music videos. YouTube users who simply uploaded videos of themselves playing an instrument were suddenly members of a collaborative band playing a part in a song that they never knew existed.[37] I shared my enthusiasm for Kutiman's work with Faroff, who is a Ph.D. candidate in economics at Harvard, and he responded,

> **Faroff:** I think [Kutiman] is part of a bigger thing. It is not clear who the artist is or who the audience is. The audience can become the artist, the artist can become the audience. It's no longer the big media imposing what you should listen to. If you don't like it you just go to the next artist. There is MySpace, Pandora, whatever, so many different options. The sovereignty of the consumer, as an economist would say, just choose what you want to hear. You don't need someone to impose your taste anymore, and music technology [allows you to] re-interpret your favorite artist the way you want, and the artists themselves are just realizing this. Radiohead has released separate parts of their songs, the tracks, the stems. Nine Inch Nails has done the same, I think Franz Ferdinand did that.
>
> **Liam:** Kanye West did that recently.
>
> **Faroff:** Yeah, it is what's happening right? It's YouTube, MySpace, everything. It is this big thing happening, and the mashups, I think they are synthesizing this whole thing. You create new stuff using stuff that exists already and combine it and recycle. I think it is amazing.
> (Cambridge, MA, April 8, 2009, quoted with permission)

In an interview with DJ Adrian and The Mysterious D, Adrian also discussed the transition from fan to producer:

> We didn't actually start making our own mashups until 2004. I feel like, because we were so familiar with mashup culture when we started making mashups, we knew exactly the kind of formula that works and what doesn't. We were fans who became producers and I think that is probably emblematic of a lot of mashup culture. I heard it called once fan-created content that you can dance to. We used that as a slogan once. That is really

[37] Kutiman's project, called Thru-YOU <http://thru-you.com/> is breathtaking, but its reliance on amateur musicians performing unknown songs places it outside of the purview of this dissertation.

> what mashups are. They are fan-created content that you put your own stamp on them. Fortunately we live in an age where the tools are very easy, it's like the punk rock for the new millennium. It used to be that you pick up a guitar and learn three chords and you can play punk rock. Now any kid can pick up the software and start pulling stuff together and become their own producer, their own remixer. But just like punk rock it doesn't mean that everyone can do it well. There are a lot shitty punk rock bands and there are a lot of shitty mashups out there too. But the fact that anyone can do it is really the democratization of music production. I think it is a really good thing.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

Adrian expresses the gray area between producer and consumer by labeling mashups "fan-created content."

Scholars like David Suisman (2009) and Tim Taylor (2007) have demonstrated the process through which music became a commodity in the United States during the period from 1880-1930 that saw the rise of the player piano (Taylor 2007: 284), the phonograph, gramophone, and the model for the music industry's division of labor that continues to this day (Suisman 2009: 9). One important aspect of the commodification of music was the movement that dominated much of the twentieth century, towards what Lawrence Lessig has called "read only" culture. Lessig explained:

> The twentieth century was the first time in the history of human culture when popular culture had become professionalized, and when the people were taught to defer to the professional. The "machines" that made this change possible worked their magic through tokens of RO [read only] culture—recordings, or performances captured in some tangible form, and then duplicated and sold by an increasingly concentrated "recording" industry. (2008: 29)

Lessig was careful to preface this statement by pointing out the shift towards "RO" culture was not absolute. "Nonprofessional creativity" did not disappear, but, for much of the 20th century, the production, reproduction, broadcast, and distribution, of popular culture was almost entirely the realm of industry. The blurring of the producer/consumer

is an important change to this model. Recent uses of media editing technology and Internet communication have allowed "nonprofessionals" to take part in the formation of popular culture. The "RO" model of the last century's popular culture thus may have been a detour from the broad participation in public culture that existed before commodification and is now returning with new "read/write" digital technologies. Henry Jenkins explains,

> If, as some have argued, the emergence of modern mass media spelled the doom for the vital folk culture traditions that thrived in nineteenth-century America, the current moment of media change is reaffirming the right of everyday people to actively contribute to their culture. Like the older folk culture of quilting bees and barn dances, this new vernacular culture encourages broad participation, grassroots creativity… This is what happens when consumers take media into their own hands. (2006: 132)

It is important to note that neither Taylor, Suisman, Lessig, Jenkins, nor myself would argue that the fundamental nature of human creativity changed as a result of the commodification of music or the contemporary uses of technology. The "folk" did not stop making music when record companies began to sell it. However, it is important to recognize that industry dominance over popular culture (especially popular music) in the twentieth century was, arguably, unprecedented, and that, as Jenkins noted, we are currently in a moment of change to that system.[38]

Beyond the disintegrating boundary between production and consumption, another issue that is often featured in scholarship about mashups and the democratizations of technology is the weakening of the "culture industry." Phillip Gunderson and William Levay have devoted the most attention to the destabilizing potential of mashups. While both wrote about *The Grey Album*, they arrive at different

[38] While the scholars that I have referenced in this section mainly discuss the West, this change has also been explored and analyzed in other parts of the world. Peter Manuel's groundbreaking work on "cassette culture" in India is one excellent example.

conclusions. Gunderson takes a more optimistic view. He writes,

> Grey Tuesday, in its scope and success, can be taken as something akin to the dawning of a consumer class consciousness – members of the Internet community had the collective knowledge and means to put a popular work of art into circulation without the support or permission of the recording industry. One could say that consumers have taken over the distribution of musical goods and services to the detriment of those who have heretofore controlled the means of musical production (2004).

For Gunderson, mashups are the musical realization of efforts by consumers to break free of the shackles of industry and even capitalism itself. Gunderson shares an Adornian view of a malevolent culture industry that, in complicity with the larger system of capitalism, seeks to keep consumers unthinking, complacent, and servile. By breaking the rules of this system, mashup artists are forging a path for others to follow. Gunderson writes, "That there would be a schism between the interests of consumers and the recording industry is hardly surprising; tension and antagonism characterize virtually all forms of exchange in capitalist economies. What *is* perhaps of note is that these tensions have escalated to the point of abandonment of the exchange relationship *itself*" (2004). Later in the article he writes,

> Artists like Danger Mouse may be taken as cultural prophets. They preach a new economics: the communism of simulacra, the unrestricted sharing of digital copies without originals. This new economics deterritorializes the culture industry; it threatens all industries that have traditionally profited as the producers and gatekeepers of information. Whereas communist regimes in the previous century could not withstand the onslaught of cheap commodities from capitalist countries, today we find capitalist countries increasingly vulnerable to the world's data commies. (2004)

Levay also credits mashup artists as pioneers who demonstrate new ways for consumers to express their agency and create. Like Gunderson, Levay believes that the deterioration of the producer/consumer distinction threatens the culture industry. Levay

writes, “Given the ease of do-it-yourself remixing and online distribution, more consumers have the opportunity to be artists. Those remixers who threaten the industry’s profit margin may be subsumed and brought closer to the center of the culture industry” (2005: 34). While Gunderson cautiously predicts the dawning of Attali’s era of composition, with control of mediated culture seized from industry by the people, Levay has a more pessimistic outlook. He writes,

> The industry is so powerful, so pervasive, it subsumes any underground or initially subversive form that could potentially sell records… With the remix at least, any form that is poised to undermine the culture industry’s hegemony, especially if it’s potentially marketable pop music, will be sanitized and brought into the fold. Pop music consumers in the cut ‘n’ mix school will surely continue to remix and mash up old songs to create genre-bending new ones. But the industry’s appropriation of the mash-up means listeners won’t hear it as the sound of dissatisfied consumers from the no-longer-mute periphery. Marketed to an audience exponentially greater than what the underground remixer could have hoped to reach, the potentially subversive art is reproduced and bar-coded, turned into a harmless fad or a profitable industry formula, and we all pay for it. (2005: 36)

Levay and Gunderson’s predictions are hard to assess. Gunderson’s vision of free, unrestricted sharing of digital content is difficult to imagine given the fierce legal and political campaign that multinational entertainment conglomerates are waging to retain control and revenue from digital media. Levay’s pessimistic prediction that eventually the “culture industry” will incorporate and sanitize mashups is less difficult to imagine, but still seems implausible. The same copyright and intellectual property laws that industry fights so hard to enforce have prevented the recording industry from incorporating mashups. As will be discussed in the next chapter, although the industry is working to ease the process of clearing samples in response to the popularity of sample-based music,

mashups remain difficult to produce and sell legally on any sort of large scale.[39]

I question Levay's gloomy outlook for other reasons as well. He implies that the incorporation of mashups would turn them into a "harmless fad." There are countless genres of music that are produced, marketed, and sold by the recording industry which are not "harmless fads." Why does Levay assume that mashup artists working within the recording industry would not have the same ability to create innovative, challenging, or even subversive work, as artists from other genres who have been working within the mainstream recording industry for years?

Both Gunderson and Levay attribute too much conflict to the relationship between consumers and the "culture industry." Levay argues that mashups are akin to a political revolt (2005: 23), and Gunderson that mashup artists are basically communist provocateurs (2004). These arguments demonstrate the problem with a lack of ethnographic grounding. There are certainly mashup artists who dislike the recording industry and see their mashups as subversion. But there are also many mashup artists, I would dare say the majority, who do not see their work as a political act. Rather, many mashup artists are fans of the output of the recording industry. As dj BC explained to me:

> If EMI wanted to release *The Beastles*, I would be totally into that. I would be like, "cool," I wouldn't be like, "F' you man." The thing about mashup artists is, I think that many of them are artists, and they are musicians in a sense and they really love music and that is why they are doing this. In fact, they love music more than most musicians do because they are living their musical life in service to other music. They are just doing things to existing recordings sheerly out of love of music and love of what a DJ can do for a listener and to a listener and also for an artist. To a degree they are

[39] This may be changing with the recent release of *DJ Hero* by Activision. *DJ Hero* contains dozens of mashups and all of the samples used in them were legally licensed. *DJ Hero*'s fate may well determine the future of legally released mashups. If *DJ Hero* is a success, it is likely that it will spawn video game sequels, and also an increased interest in mashups in general. The recording industry, which attempts to capitalize from any new trend, would likely be compelled to lessen the legal burdens on clearing the samples used in mashups and to start releasing them commercially.

> pushing the boundaries of that. As musicians of a type they have a lot of respect for people trying to make a living doing music. Many of us want to make a living doing music.
> (Phone interview, October 14, 2008, quoted with permission)

Mashup artists spend considerable amounts of time listening to, and working with, products of the recording industry. Additionally some mashup artists work for the industry in some form. The majority of the content for *DJ Hero* was produced by a handful of U.K. mashup artists and community members. DJ Earworm has worked with successful mainstream musicians like Annie Lennox, Maroon 5, and Sean Kingston to make official mashups of their work. Party Ben hosted a popular radio show on San Francisco's Live 105, Paul V. has been a successful radio DJ and is one of the few DJs nationwide whose input goes into creating the Billboard dance music charts. There are many other examples of mashup artists who work within the recording industry, and it is clear that the relationship between the mashup community and the industry is not nearly as adversarial as suggested by Gunderson and Levay.

The third issue that is implicated in the democratization of technology and given attention in the literature on mashups is the challenge to the control of a work. Consumers are increasingly using cultural products in ways that were not envisioned by, or intended by, the creators or the companies that market and sell those products. The aesthetic of remixing further challenges the notion that an artist, producer, or copyright holder can control a work once it has been released. As Levay explains, "Audience members (including DJs and bedroom producers), distanced from the originators both spatially and temporally, feel emboldened to treat recorded music not as the final word of an artist (the romantic view) but as source material for their own attempts at art-making" (2005: 28). Again referencing Hebdige's cut 'n' mix aesthetic (1987), Levay continues,

> The mechanical reproduction of sound changed not only how we consume music, but how we make music. The record industry, built on selling our communication back to us while making it difficult for peripheral artists to be heard, is vulnerable to new possibilities of music-making through the creative manipulation of commercially available material. In any art world, the audience plays the important role of receiving and interpreting a completed work. In the record industry art world, consumers have used available equipment, like turntables, mixers, and samplers, to actively recontextualize recorded material, to reinterpret a previously 'complete' work. (2005: 34)

Kembrew McLeod and Michael Serazio have also discussed how, with their ability to subvert industry-defined categories like genre, mashups challenge the artist's and industry's sovereignty over released work (McLeod 2005: 84, Serazio 2008: 87). Although new media technologies allow for increased ability to manipulate recorded material, the manipulation/expansion/repurposing of the work of others has long been an accepted component of music and art making. However, the increasing availability of computers, Internet connectivity, and editing software is certainly allowing more people than ever before to participate in remixing media.

Conclusion

From the Frankfurt Schools theorists of the 1930s and '40s, to the BCCCS forty years later, and all the way up to contemporary scholars like DeNora, discussions of agency have been, and continue to be, commonplace in the literature and scholarly thought about music and technology. The topic is often addressed as a debate between those who would bestow agency upon the listener and those who would not.

In addition to the debate about agency, the democratization of technology has been the subject of much work in the scholarly and popular literature on music and technology. Recent scholarship on mashups has demonstrated that the uses of technology

are changing the producer/consumer distinction, loosening the recording industry's grasp on production and distribution, and undermining the control of released works. These arguments are helpful in understanding current changes to the production and consumption of popular culture.

I have argued that mashups are an example of listeners/consumers exercising individual agency and becoming producers. Furthermore, I have argued that insights gained from ethnographic work with a variety of different groups of people demonstrate time and time again that consumers exert agency in imbuing mediated cultural products with meaning, and using those products in myriad and unpredictable ways. I have also shown that the expression of individual agency does not necessarily equal an act of resistance. Mashup artists come from a variety of backgrounds, have diverse opinions regarding the recording industry, and make mashups for myriad reasons.

But while mashups are not always an act of resistance, their creation and distribution does potentially put mashup producers on the wrong side of copyright law. Legal pressures have significantly affected the genre and community, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

"Turning Copyright Infringement Into Dance Floor Gold!": Copyright and the Mashup Community

In early 2004 DJ Danger Mouse released *The Grey Album*, a mashup concept album in which each track combined an a capella taken from Jay-Z's 2003 *The Black Album* with instrumental sections taken from the Beatles' eponymous 1968 album (commonly known as *The White Album*). Danger Mouse released only 3,000 copies of the album on CD, which he distributed to independent record stores and sent to media outlets. In addition to the physical copies, Danger Mouse posted the album as a free download on his website. Within weeks of releasing the album Danger Mouse received a cease-and-desist order from legal representatives for EMI Records, the parent corporation of Capitol Records, who control the sound recording rights for the Beatles' *White Album*. Danger Mouse complied with the order, removed the digital files from his website, and agreed to stop distributing physical copies.

Despite EMI's quick legal action, *The Grey Album* had already begun to catch the attention of critics and music fans online as well as in print media. After the cease-and-desist order was issued, the album's legal problems simply added to the growing media attention. By mid-February an activist group called Downhill Battle had begun organizing a day of online protest, arguing that *The Grey Album* was protected by the "fair use" section of the U.S. Copyright law,[40] and advocating for an addition to

[40] 17 U.S.C. § 107

copyright law providing a "compulsory right" for sampling.[41] Hundreds of websites joined in the protest and on February 24th, 2004, deemed Grey Tuesday, they hosted *The Grey Album* for download and/or changed the background color of their sites to grey. It has been estimated that over 100,000 copies of the album were downloaded during the 24-hour protest (Howard-Spink 2004). The participating websites also received cease-and-desist orders from EMI which, interestingly, included this statement:

> The artist, whose real name is Brian Burton, has agreed to comply with the order and will no longer distribute copies. "He just wanted people to hear the record," says a spokesman in the U.K. Reuters has also quoted Mr. Burton as saying, "[t]his wasn't supposed to happen . . . . I just sent out a few tracks (and) now online stores are selling it and people are downloading it all over the place." By further distributing The Grey Album, you will not only be violating the rights of those who own the recordings and compositions at issue. You will also be interfering with the intention of the very artist whose rights you purport to vindicate. [42]

EMI advanced a curious argument that by suppressing Danger Mouse's album they were acting in his interest and that it was those who would seek to spread Danger Mouse's work who were violating his wishes.

The Grey Album was neither the first nor last mashup to receive a cease-and-desist order, but it garnered the most attention to date, and provides a good introduction to the contested relationship between the recording industry and the mashup community.[43] Mashups combine the production techniques of sample-based music with

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[41] Current law allows for any artist to "cover" any previously recorded work. So long as licensing fees and royalties are paid, neither the original artist nor any other copyright holders of the original material can deny permission to cover a work. This is called a "compulsory right." Downhill Battle sought to extend this right to sampling. Currently the copyright holders of any work can deny its being sampled (the Beatles' catalog has rarely been sampled legally because the rights holders deny permission).

[42] The full text of the order can be found on a variety of websites including copyright scholar Kembrew McLeod's site at <http://www.kembrew.com/news/GreyCease.html>

the distribution methods of filesharing. In the past two decades the recording industry has fought vigorously to curb both. Although mashups differ in many ways from the commercially released hip-hop that has been the subject of sampling litigation, and mashup distribution plays out differently than the "piracy" of peer-to-peer filesharing networks like Napster, mashups been treated as a threat to profits and control of copyrighted material. By issuing cease-and-desist orders and enforcing complicated and costly licensing procedures, the recording industry has effectively exiled mashups from the commercial marketplace. Although the legal status of mashups is not clearly established, the recording industry treats them as a violation of copyright law because they contain unlicensed samples. With few exceptions, mashups are not commercially released or sold.

In this chapter I will show how legal strictures have affected mashup production and distribution practices. The first section presents reasons why mashups have been targeted by the recording industry and shows how producers' commercial aspirations have been stifled. I explore the implications of the fact that the industry's labeling of mashups as illegal has actually generated more attention for the music, and is accepted by many community members. In the second section I analyze mashup community discourse about copyright. With no industry backing, the community has become self-reliant. The DIY ethos of earlier types of marginalized music, like punk rock, pervades the community and community members have created their own systems for producing, distributing, publicizing, and performing mashups. The mashup community has also developed its own set of rules about authorship, intellectual property, and commercial

[43] It should be noted that Danger Mouse, a commercially successful producer and performer, is not a member of the mashup community and has not released any other mashups. Nevertheless the *Grey Album* was generally received as a mashup by the media and members of the mashup community.

sales. Selling mashups is tolerated only in certain circumstances, and community members are very careful that proper credit is given to the artists sampled in a mashup as well as the mashup producer. Finally, I look at the ways that the mashup community satirizes the recording industry's attempts to enforce copyright, and whether members of the community think of mashups as a form of active protest.

Mashups Marginalized

The relationship between mashups and the commercial recording industry was doomed from the beginning. Record companies and other copyright holders spent the late 1980s and much of the 1990s combating unlicensed sampling of copyright-protected material. As the sampling issue neared a resolution and systems were put into place for the commercial licensing of samples, the industry was faced with another threat to its profits and control: filesharing. Napster introduced a wide audience to online filesharing and ushered in a decade, and beyond, of litigation and lobbying by media companies to curb the spread of peer-to-peer networks (Katz 2004: 160-163). At the beginning of the new millennium, as the Napster case was grabbing headlines worldwide and online "piracy" was a hot-button issue, mashups started to gain popularity.

The music industry did not take kindly to a genre of music that combined the previous decade's threat of illicit sampling with the new threat of online filesharing. Because mashups are distributed over the Internet and through filesharing networks, and because they contain copyright-protected material, the industry initially treated them similarly to peer-to-peer filesharing systems. Party Ben explained the industry's reaction to mashups this way:

> I think it's partially due to the fact that the record companies got caught up in the whole "filesharing will destroy us." They just were manic about it. Profits were down and they blamed the Internet, even though there were about forty other better reasons: short-sighted planning, coming up with flash-in-the-pan artists based on individual singles and then trying to sell a whole album based on one song and ten shitty songs. Don't get me started on the record industry's idiocy, they decided it was the Internet's fault that they were losing money. Their whole thing was go after anybody who is sharing our songs for free.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 10, 2009, quoted with permission)

Party Ben and other members of the community insist that creating and sharing a mashup is different than the filesharing "piracy" that the music industry perceived as a threat, but the industry's reaction against mashups was no doubt informed by the contemporaneous emergence of peer-to-peer filesharing networks.

Mashups are at a disadvantage when it comes to mainstream commercial success for two reasons. First, as already discussed, because they use unlicensed samples, mashup artists are vulnerable to litigation and other forms of penalty such as cease-and-desist orders. The second disadvantage facing mashups is a result of the complicated ways in which copyright ownership is divided up between the numerous entities involved in the process of making and distributing a piece of commercially released music.

The distribution of royalties, securing of permission, and payment of licensing fees between the copyright owners is especially complicated and costly when numerous samples are used. Furthermore, any of the copyright holders can simply refuse to grant permission for the use of a sample. These factors mean that even if a particular record label is interested in releasing a mashup for commercial sale, it is an extremely difficult process and, because of the costs associated with royalties and licensing, has less potential to be profitable. Until the industry can find a way to profit from mashups, it is likely that they will continue the current scattershot issuance of cease-and-desist orders.

As Mr. Fab told me, "They are interested in the music, they say that they like the music. Every now and then someone tries to do a legit mashup and it is just such a colossal effort. But people in the music business don't say anything bad artistically. We know they are listening… it is largely the legal and copyright hassles. That is really the only thing stopping it" (Los Angeles, CA, June 9, 2009, quoted with permission).

As a result of legal and regulatory actions taken by record companies, mashups are simultaneously mainstream in form and content, and underground in production and distribution. Mashups typically sample popular music and follow popular song structures. Mashups sound like popular music and occasionally become well known through radio airplay, posts on blogs, attention from the media, and play in dance clubs. In this regard mashups are certainly part of the popular mainstream.

However, it is very unlikely that most mashups will ever be released commercially, and the creators and distributors are subject to legal action. "Underground" is typically used to describe types of music that are commercially, aesthetically, and possibly legally, unacceptable to the mainstream, or are intentionally kept out of the mainstream by their creators. The "underground" label was applied to the early days of punk rock (Duncombe 1997), hip hop (Rose 2008), and reggaeton (Santos 1996), amongst others, and is still used to describe artists or groups in these and other genres who are working outside of the established recording industry (Thornton 1996).

Mashups do not fit well into either category. They combine the two, creating a mashup of mainstream and underground. DJ Adrian explained to me:

> As much as this term has kind of fallen into disuse, there is still a bootleg element to what we are doing here. These are uncleared, unsanctioned, unlicensed tracks by the artist that then bedroom producers, DJs, and people like us are deliberately messing with in total violation of existing

> copyright law. That is part of the reason why even though you hear it in a club it might just sound like mainstream music, the fact of the matter is that you can't go on iTunes and buy it, you can't go into a record store and buy it, therefore there is always going to be an underground element to it. (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

To a certain degree, the community reinforces the "underground" and "illegal" markers that have been applied to the mashup genre. Despite the fact that the legality of mashups has never been tested in court, the idea that mashups are illegal, or at least on the margins of legality, is generally accepted by members of the mashup community. In fact, throughout the history of the mashup genre the questionable legality of mashups has been routinely commented on in the press and the community, and has been responsible for generating a significant amount of the attention that has been paid to the music. In a discussion with A+D about the state of copyright law and hopes that it would change, DJ Adrian said, "It's sort of a catch-22 because part of the appeal is, if mashups weren't illegal would they still be as much fun?" (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

Cease-and-Desist

The most direct way that the recording industry's enforcement of copyright affects the mashup community is through cease-and-desist orders. Cease-and-desist orders have been a nuisance for mashup artists since the beginnings of the genre. The typical cease-and-desist order is issued by the legal representation of a record label and sent to the owner of a website instructing them to take down material that is allegedly in violation of copyright. Cease-and-desist orders are not restricted to the Internet, they are also sent to publishers, distributors, and sellers of music (or any other product) that is

allegedly in violation of copyright. However, because it is so rare that a mashup is distributed in physical form, the mashup community generally only deals with C&D orders issued to websites.

Recently, dj lobsterdust received a cease-and-desist order for his mashup "NirGaga," containing samples from Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and Lady Gaga's "Poker Face." lobsterdust posted the text of the order to his website:

> To Whom It May Concern:
> EMI Entertainment World, Inc. ("EMI") is the owner and/or administrator of certain copyrighted content which is currently being reproduced, displayed, transmitted and distributed without authorization on www.djlobsterdust.com (the "Site"), including, without limitation, a sample and download of "Smells Like Teen Spirit" by Nirvana (the "Copyrighted Work"). The unauthorized reproduction, display, transmission and distribution via the Internet of the Copyrighted Work without our express permission constitutes copyright infringement in violation of Title 17 U.S. Code, Section 106(a) of the Copyright Act of 1976, and other international copyright laws. This e-mail shall serve as EMI's good faith notice to you that you are to immediately remove the Copyrighted Work, "Smells Like Teen Spirit" by Nirvana as well as any other unauthorized EMI material. Once the Copyrighted Work, has been removed from the Site, please send us written confirmation of the same.[44]

Similar "good faith notices" were sent to the website for Bootie, which hosted the mashup as part of their best of 2009 album, and even to the website for the St. Louis newsweekly *The Riverfront Times* for merely providing a link to lobsterdust's site in the context of a story about the mashup and an upcoming Lady Gaga concert in St. Louis.[45] Despite the established record company practice of releasing club remixes to drive the

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[44] <http://djlobsterdust.com/index.php/mashups/nirvana-vs-lady-gaga> Accessed January 23, 2010. This particular cease-and-desist order is somewhat unusual in that it does not name the infringing mashup, but instead incorrectly asserts that lobsterdust is hosting "Smells Like Teen Spirit" for download. The same wording appears in the C&D sent to A+D, and reflects what, I believe, is the generally sloppy and poorly researched nature of many of the C&D orders that have been issued concerning mashups.

[45]<http://blogs.riverfronttimes.com/atoz/2010/01/lady_gaga_mashup_nirvana_NirGaga_youtube_dj_lobsterdust_review_mp3_download_blog_link_emi.php> Accessed February 23, 2010.

sales of singles, record companies still seem to ignore, or dismiss, the potential for mashups to generate attention and positive press for a particular artist or song.

Another tactic used by the record companies is to send the notice directly to the Internet Service Provider that hosts the website that is allegedly offering infringing material:

> **Liam:** When you have received cease-and-desists how does that typically happen? What's the process?
>
> **Mr. Fab:** Well I've only heard it through my web host, and I find out because my site is gone.
>
> **Liam:** Really? So the web host just takes it off?
>
> **Mr. Fab:** My particular host gives no warning. Then I call them up and go, "where is it?" At one point I even talked with their legal representative and he just said, "you have to remove the offending material."
>
> **Liam:** Did they tell you which material that was?
>
> **Mr. Fab:** No, so I just took down everything.
> (Los Angeles, CA, June 9, 2009, quoted with permission)

C&D orders, like the one that Mr. Fab described, are intentionally vague and far-reaching. It is doubtful that the legal wing of any record company has the time, manpower, or interest to look and listen though all of the mashups on an artist's site and determine which actually violate their copyrights. Instead blanket threats are issued, like the statement in the C&D that lobsterdust received instructing him to remove a mashup that featured one specific sample as well as mashups containing "any other unauthorized EMI material." Record companies rely on their legal muscle to intimidate mashup producers into doing their work for them.

It is unclear how, if at all, cease-and-desist orders are enforced. In fact, because there has yet to be any litigation for the distribution of mashups, despite the fact that there

have been many examples of websites that refuse to comply with them, it is not certain that C&D orders regarding mashups *are* enforceable. During the online Grey Tuesday protest hundreds of sites hosted *The Grey Album* despite having received takedown notices. One site belonged to Kembrew McLeod. McLeod, a copyright scholar and activist, posted the order on his site. The cease-and-desist order demanded that he stop distributing the album, tell Capitol records who provided him the album, account for every copy of the album that has been downloaded from his site, and, "In addition, to the extent that you have already commenced distribution of The Grey Album, you must make payment to Capitol in an amount to be discussed. We demand that you contact us immediately. Unless we receive full and immediate compliance with these demands, Capitol will be forced to consider pursuing any and all available remedies at law and in equity."[46] McLeod did not comply with the order; in fact, as of this writing, the album is still hosted on his website, and he has faced no legal repercussions.

Even when a cease-and-desist order is successful in forcing the removal of material, it is often the case that mashup artists will simply repost the files after some period of time. Additionally, the nature of digital files is such that they can easily be reposted in numerous other places online. Mr. Fab explained how after his second issue with a cease-and-desist he moved his files to a file downloading service rather than hosting them directly:

> **Mr. Fab:** The second time it happened I started to not host stuff on my own site. Now they have all these free sites like Rapidshare and Mediafire, so now I bundle my stuff into albums and put them on there.
>
> **Liam:** And then your website will link to Rapidshare, or…
>
> **Mr. Fab:** Right. A lot of us do that now.

[46] <http://www.kembrew.com/news/GreyCease.html> Accessed January 23, 2010.

Liam: Has that been working?

Mr. Fab: It has been working so far. However, we have tried that with other sites. There was a site called Multiply which was [allowed you to] create your own music playlist. It wasn't a download storage site, you could design your own playlist and people could click and play and listen to it. Then they went through and wiped a lot of us out. All my accounts were gone. So you never know when it's going to happen. Rapidshare could do it someday. You never know.
(Los Angeles, CA, June 9, 2009, quoted with permission)

One might think that the mashup artists who have achieved the most widespread fame would also be the most likely to receive cease-and-desist orders, but this is not the case. For instance, DJ Earworm's year-in-review United States of Pop series has never generated a C&D. These mashups feature samples taken from each of Billboard's 25 most popular songs for the year, contain copyrighted material from all of the major record labels, and have attracted significant mainstream attention. The 2008 installment of the series made it to number 70 on the Billboard Pop 100 Airplay chart (Trust 2009). The 2009 mashup has also received widespread radio airplay and the video for the mashup (also created by DJ Earworm) was featured on the Billboard website.[47]

Inconsistencies like these have led to theorizing within the community about how and why some mashups receive C&D orders and others do not. There is a belief among some in the community that certain record labels are more litigious than others. This belief was demonstrated in a March 2009 thread on GYBO[48] discussing the hassle of video mashups being removed from sites like YouTube for copyright infringement:

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[47] <http://www.billboard.com/news/dj-earworm-s-mashup-of-billboard-s-top-25-1004055735.story#/news/dj-earworm-s-mashup-of-billboard-s-top-25-1004055735.story> Accessed January 23, 2010.

[48]<http://archive.gybo5.com/index.php?option=com_kunena&Itemid=3&func=view&catid=18&id=47433#47569> Accessed February 23, 2010

> **not I:** Ha, looks like UMG's [Universal Music Group] on the crazy train too. I just tried to upload my latest mash-up video, which I spent a lot of time editing, and am quite proud of, to Youtube, and I get this:
> Your video, Epic Wit Chu (Faith No More vs. Queens of the Stone Age), may have audio content from Make It Wit Chu by Queens Of The Stone Age that is owned or licensed by UMG.
> As a result, your video is blocked worldwide.
> What should I do?
> Hmm, what should I do? Go upload it somewhere else I guess.
>
> **boris:** if UMG hadn't have blocked it warners would have, faith no more is a warners band:laugh:
>
> **not I:** Yeah, I know, but it was worth a try.
> I was actually a bit surprised that it was UMG who got there first.
> We all know this, but it's worth repeating:
>
> Fucking fools! How does posting a mash-up video take away from your profits? On the contrary: if it's good it should encourage people to check out and purchase the originals (even though so few people actually buy music anymore, though I tend to be one of them). I hope you dinosaurs adapt or go under very soon, but the way you're proceeding, it looks like the latter! Farewell and Rest In Peace!*
>
> *The opinions expressed in this post are solely of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the GYBO forum.
>
> **timbearland:** I don't think you'd find many people here having a problem with what you've said. I mean I've even worked for Universal Music and I agree with you. They seem to usually be one of the better ones, so unusual if they are doing a Warners. Sony BMG seems best and most flexible, EMI and Warners historically the worst. UMG are usually in the middle.[49]

It is possible that certain record companies are more permissive of mashups than others, but there is no discernable pattern. Rather, major labels appear to issue C&D orders based simply on what catches the notice of the legal department. This may be the result of media attention, Internet buzz, the objections of a sampled artist, or just random luck.

[49] To clarify, when mashups (video or audio) are taken down from sites like YouTube it is not the result of a cease-and-desist order from a record company. Rather, YouTube and other sites that host user-uploaded content have agreements with media corporations that require the use of software programs which automatically detect and remove copyright-protected material.

However, while it is impossible to determine who will receive a C&D order, it is somewhat easier to predict who will *not*, as evidenced by the case of Girl Talk.

Girl Talk and Fair Use

Girl Talk releases his mashups commercially, albeit for a name-your-own-price "donation" to his record company Illegal Art. In addition to digital downloads his albums are available on CD and can be purchased at mainstream retailers like Amazon.com and even brick-and-mortar retailers like Borders[50] (although they are not available through iTunes). Girl Talk has become a commercially successful touring musician, playing to packed venues around the world. He is certainly on the radar of the major record labels whose work he is sampling without clearance, and yet the industry has not attempted to block him from selling his mashups with a cease-and-desist order.

This lack of action against Girl Talk's work has led to speculation that record companies are hesitant to confront him because of the likelihood that he and his label would not comply with a cease-and-desist order and would also not hesitate to take any ensuing legal case to court (Mongillo 2009). Considered from the perspective of the major record companies, issuing a C&D to Girl Talk is a considerable risk for minimal reward. Issuing a C&D to a musician of Girl Talk's level of fame would undoubtedly result in substantial press coverage. Based on Girl Talk's stated belief that his music is protected by the fair use section of copyright law,[51] and the fact that his label is known

[50] The name-your-own-price option was available directly from the website for Illegal Art. Girl Talk albums are sold for a set price through outlets like Amazon and no mention is made of the price being a "donation."

[51] Levine, Robert. "Steal This Hook? DJ Skirts Copyright Law." *New York Times*. Accessed February 23, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/07/arts/music/07girl.html>

for specializing in music that violates copyright law, it is unlikely that Girl Talk or Illegal Art would cooperate.

If such a scenario were to play out, the company that issued the cease-and-desist would be faced with two bad choices. They could either ignore Girl Talk's continued violation—a very public demonstration that cease-and-desist orders have no teeth—or they could pursue further legal action, which would require taking the case to court and risk a precedent-setting loss on the grounds of fair use. And what does the recording industry stand to gain? Besides halting Girl Talk's commercial releases, and whatever damages Girl Talk would be forced to pay if he lost a lawsuit, they stand to gain little or nothing. If a lawsuit were brought against Girl Talk and he lost, it would only reinforce the current understanding of copyright law in regards to sampling. It is in the recording industry's interest to keep any possible fair use arguments out of the judicial system.

The "fair use" section of United States copyright law limits the exclusive rights of copyright holders when the copyrighted material is reproduced "for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research" as determined by, but not limited to, four factors: "(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."[52] In his article "The Girl Talk Dilemma: Can Copyright Law Accommodate New Forms of Sample-Based Music?" David Mongillo argues that Girl Talk and other mashup artists' work would be defensible under fair use and offers a

[52] 17 U.S.C. § 107

point-by-point defense addressing the four determining factors listed above (2009). However, the "fair use" section of copyright law is subjective and, more importantly, fair use is an "affirmative" defense and not a right. As Michael Katz explains, the fair use defense "can only be put forth *after* a claim of infringement has been made. At this point the dispute has been taken to the judiciary and the remix artist, though innocent until proven guilty, must still pay to defend the disputed work, risk a judgment in the opponent's favor, or agree to settle and stop the disputed creative endeavors" (2008: 8). Because the fair use section does not grant a right, but only offers a possible defense, artists like Girl Talk would run the risk of losing in court and facing fines as high as $150,000 for each infringement.[53]

Although numerous legal scholars have used Girl Talk and other mashup artists as examples to argue for the need to reform copyright law to address the new forms of creativity that are possible with digital read/write media and editing technology (Katz 2008, Lessig 2008, McLeod 2005, Power 2007, Sunder 2006), until there is further judicial or legislative action mashups will remain in their current state of legal limbo. Mashups might be protected by fair use, but this can only be tested if a mashup artist is taken to court; even then the matter would likely be handled differently by different judges depending on the specifics of each case. In the meantime the recording industry will continue a strategy of issuing cease-and-desist orders (except to Girl Talk), enforcing complicated and costly licensing procedures and fees, and marginalizing the mashup genre by forcing it outside of the commercial marketplace.

[53] 17 U.S.C. § 504

Community Discourse

The first section of this chapter outlined the various reasons that mashups and the mashup community exist primarily outside of the commercial music industry. This section looks at the ways that mashup artist talk about important issues that are raised by their exile: authorship, originality, selling mashups, and illegality.

The mashup community has responded to its position outside of the commercial music industry by becoming self-sufficient and creating its own parallel systems of production, distribution, publicity, and performance. Due to the digital nature of mashup production and distribution, the mashup community does not have to rely on the systems of studio production and physical distribution that the industry can provide (cf. Lysloff's discussion of the modding community [2003: 33-34]). Furthermore, for reasons already discussed, mashup producers can't rely on industry help. Mr. Fab put it this way:

> Keep in mind, we don't get support from the music industry, we get little support from radio so we really do rely on each other. We have to do our own radio shows, our own podcasts, our own clubs, do our own artwork, our own videos. We definitely have to pool resources and I don't want to say that we are distrustful of outsiders, but we always have to worry about outsiders because they shut down our websites… So, I think we've become pretty tight.
> (Los Angeles, CA, June 9, 2009, quoted with permission)

Party Ben also expressed the way in which the mashup community's outsider status served to bring community members closer:

> Part of what makes it a community is, when you are screwing around with other people's music and technically breaking the law, there is a certain aspect of a punk spirit in the same sense that if you are playing some sort of illegal place with your little punk band you kind of develop this little spirit of "we are all breaking the law, but we are all doing it together."
> (San Francisco, CA, June 10, 2009, quoted with permission)

"Doing it together" means not only forging solidarity through resistance to copyright laws, but also adhering to an alternative set of rules about authorship and authentic artistic production.

Authorship

As I discussed in the last chapter, the distinction between artist and audience is blurred by remix music like mashups. Equally blurry is the determination of authorship. To whom does the credit for a mashup belong? The original artists sampled? The mashup artist? This question has repercussions for all musicians who use samples. Joseph Schloss begins his book about hip-hop production with an interview excerpt in which the producer Mr. Supreme discusses an argument with his mother-in-law about sampling. Mr. Supreme's mother-in-law argued that by sampling music that others had created (and recorded) Mr. Supreme was not creating art. Mr. Supreme responded by asking his mother-in-law, a painter, if she made the paint that she uses, or if she, like a sample-based musician, uses ingredients made by someone else to create her own art.

Although Becker has demonstrated that the notion of a single author of any piece of art is a fallacy (1982), there is a societal acceptance that the artist named on a piece of recorded music is the author. Aram Sinnreich's work has shown that neither the creators of "configurable" music (including mashups) nor society at large have determined who should be credited for music/art made from samples and reconfiguration of the work of others (2007).

Members of the mashup community disagree on the subject of authorship. In a recent post on GYBO discussing individuals from outside the community taking credit for mashups that they didn't produce, ACRoZ commented,

> Can't we just ignore these mashup thieves instead of posting about them. They either sell mashup CDR's on E-Bay or claim to be the Czech Republic's #1 DJ on myspace, it's the same old story every year. You think "how dare they take the limelight away from me, how dare they use my mashup to hook up with attractive women etc." It's really your ego getting in the way of things, when in reality they are doing no different from what the mashup artists are doing. If I was to hook up a computer to a tape recorder, record someone elses mashup on tape and claim it was mine, I could easily claim it was my own recording or production. Mashup artists do no different. I find people who repost my mashups with new credits all the time, who cares, at least more people are hearing what you mixed and you should be flattered that they "stole" your mashup. (2009)

ACRoZ makes the surprising argument that taking credit for someone else's mashup is no more an act of theft than making a mashup, and implies that mashup producers should not be upset when their work is misappropriated because their creations are not theirs to begin with.

Perhaps even more surprising than ACRoZ's initial comment is that another member of the community quickly replied in agreement, writing, "I had some beef with a few people promoting my mashups as their own, but I have always had no argument when they say 'how can you claim what isnt yours to start with'" (dylvasey 2009). Such arguments demonstrate that for some community members there is no presumption that because they create a mashup they deserve credit for it, or that the creative act of making a mashup is not the same as the creative act of making "original" music. More importantly, these arguments demonstrate that for some community members the notion of authorship is not as valorized as it is by so many outside of the community.

In Chapter 1 I quoted from DJ Earworm's how-to book about mashups, in which he argues that "every piece of music is composed of ideas from previous pieces of music. Mashups are just a bit more direct and honest about it (2007: xvii). This sentiment was also expressed to me by DJ Matt Hite, who explained why he felt justified in disobeying copyright:

> The simple fact is, everything is derivative I think. The very mechanics of learning about music, is that you have to study other people's music to really learn about music. You obviously are going to be influenced by it, you are going to incorporate things that sound interesting to you that you have heard before, or maybe miraculously God will speak to you and your fingers will start moving, but everything else is, in my opinion, derivative. Fashion, art, everything.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 13, 2009, quoted with permission)

As discussed in the previous chapter, The Mysterious D also expressed the opinion that all musical creativity is derivative and owes a debt to previous music and musicians.

These mashup artists are using a different strategy of self-justification than artists, authors, and musicians who seek to align their work with the idea of unique authorship. Instead they advance the idea that all creativity is derivative and that in this regard, mashup-making is firmly in the tradition of musical authorship from time immemorial. One interesting example of this belief manifesting in a mashup is Mr. Fab's "Come as the Eighties" which combines Nirvana with a lesser-known band called Killing Joke. A+D told me the history of this mashup and the apocryphal story that it is based upon,

> **Liam:** I can't remember who did it but somebody took Nirvana, I think it was "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and they mashed it with a band, I think called Killing Joke…
>
> **Adrian:** It was RIAA [Mr. Fab].
>
> **Mysterious D:** It wasn't "Teen Spirit," though, it was "Come As You Are." You know, Liam that they actually took that to court. Killing Joke

> took it to court against Nirvana to say that he stole their rhythm but I don't think, did they win?
>
> **Adrian:** Here's the story, Nirvana becomes popular, [Killing Joke] claimed that "Come As You Are" was a total rip-off of Killing Joke's song "The Eighties." Killing Joke's lawyer tried to sue Nirvana. Nirvana's lawyers were like, "Nirvana has never heard of Killing Joke it's just a coincidence." Then Killing Joke's lawyers produced a letter that Kurt Cobain wrote to Killing Joke…
>
> **Mysterious D:** A fan letter.
> (Phone interview, November 30, 2008, quoted with permission)

Not all mashup community members share this view. There are those in the community who do invoke concepts of authorship in defense of their work. As a response to the comments by ACRoZ and dylvasey, DJ Adrian wrote,

> Here's your argument: No, you didn't pay for the copyright clearances to use the material to create a brand-new work. However, you still did CREATE it, copyright clearances or not. And someone taking credit for something they did NOT create, is -- quite simply -- WRONG. It's still stealing. And here's another difference: When we create a mashup -- say like "Dancing Lollipop Queen," which DJ Crazy Chris nicked -- we give credit to Lil Wayne and ABBA. It's not like we're taking credit away from the original artists. So there's your argument. (2009)

Adrian emphasizes his belief that there is a difference between making a mashup and claiming someone else's mashup as your own, and that making a mashup production is an act of creation that is worthy of credit. Adrian also emphasizes that mashup producers deserve credit for creating a mashup despite the copyright status of the work. Quite the opposite of ACRoZ's assertion that, "If you want genuine recognition or copyright rights then make something original. At least then you can claim it is yours legally" (2009), DJ Adrian argues that copyright is not the determinant of authorship.

Party Ben also believes that mashups are not intellectual theft. He made this point to me in the context of a discussion about mashups being lumped in with filesharing by the recording industry. Party Ben explained:

> To them [the recording industry] if we put up a website called American Edit and have artwork that looks like the Green Day album and songs that have samples of the Green Day album in it, they don't know the difference. These record company suits are fifty year-old dipshits who're doing coke all night; they don't know the difference between fair-use art collage and someone "giving away money that's mine." They can't tell the difference.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 10, 2009, quoted with permission)

As Party Ben puts it, mashups are fundamentally "different" than simply taking music from others and distributing it, because mashups involve creativity and transformation of samples.

Because the industry routinely claims that mashups are a violation of copyright law and constitute the theft of intellectual property, mashup artists find themselves in the position of justifying their work and do so in a variety of ways. The first strategy is represented by ACRoZ's comments, implying that he agrees with the industry's contention that mashups are in violation of copyright and steal the artistic creations of others. ACRoZ argues that his work being stolen does not bother him because he accepts the idea that he is just as culpable of stealing the work of others. ACRoZ's strategy of self-justification would appear to be the belief that s/he needs no justification. The second strategy is represented by DJ Matt Hite's comments. Hite agrees with ACRoZ regarding the derivative nature of mashups, but he argues that all creativity is the result of stealing/incorporating the ideas and work of others. Therefore, as DJ Earworm argued, mashups are no different than other music and art. Some mashup artists take this argument further, as represented by the comments of Party Ben and DJ Adrian; they

argue that mashups are creative, their makers are deserving of credit, and that they are protected by the "fair use" argument.

Another way that members of the mashup community justify their work and negotiate the idea of authorship is by treating the artists that they sample with varying degrees of respect and always crediting them in the names and/or descriptions of mashups. In a GYBO thread from June 2009 about the legal state of mashupsthe following exchange took place between community members:

> **Hahnstudios:** Have had a hot discussion with some musicians in a german forum these days: A lot of these guys want their music only to be heard and nothing else! They feel disturbed in their honor if anyone mixes their work without permission!! Absolutely crazy for me! But for luck not all the musicians think that way!!
>
> **eve massacre:** why is that crazy? i think that's totally understandable if you spend hours and hours and maybe lots of money for studio time to get your music sound and arranged in a way that's perfect for you. some artists care more about that kind of 'getting a song right', some less but it's every artists right to feel that way about the music they have created.
>
> **timbearland:** It's crazy in the way that actually you could never control how your music is used, interpreted and adapted, even before the internet. It's pissing in the wind. All that you can try and control are commercial uses; even then it's hard to police. I can understand the upset, I mean sometimes some mashes are really crass, taking a deep meaningful tune and making a happy house version or something. But really as soon as you release anything you've lost control, it's become it's own entity.
>
> **eve massacre:** Yes, that's true. I don't say artists *should* have control but I wouldn't call someone crazy who feels that kind of "protective" about something they created. And especially with mash ups there's quite a few who just carelessly piss on the originals they use. Of course there's good ones too but the bad ones are there and why shouldn't an artist whose work is used be annoyed by them when even my ears are when listening to some of them.[54]

Members of the community differ in the amount of deference that they show the artists whose work they sample. In a thread discussing the definition of a mashup

[54]<http://archive.gybo5.com/index.php?option=com_kunena&Itemid=3&func=view&catid=17&id=60044>

Tizwarz commented, “There are no borders, Use what you want, How you want, just rip off artist’s and bootleg the shit out of ‘Em. Feck record companies” (2009). Contrary to Tizwarz’s attitude, there are other members of the community who do care about how the sampled artists feel about their work being used in a mashup. In an interview Party Ben explained to me:

> The thing that made it tolerable, or at least has helped reassure me that I don’t feel like I am doing something terrible, is that to a person, every artist whose music I have altered in some way who I have the pleasure of actually talking to, has all told me, now granted maybe they were lying because I was working for a radio station and they felt like they had to be nice, but they have all told me that they are fascinated, even if they don’t love the mashup that I made, they are fascinated by how it happens. They are fascinated to see their song in a different context, they are fascinated that someone might be that interested in their music to work on it and to do something interesting like that, and they are appreciative of the fact that maybe somebody new might hear their work, universally…. Moreover, I also consider myself a kind of corny [artist], but somewhat of an artist, and the idea that I would do something to hurt artists, that I am out there selling records from the back of a car or something, bootleg stuff, I can’t imagine ever doing anything like that. That’s how I feel about how it all comes down morally I guess.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 10, 2009, quoted with permission)

dj BC also expressed his concern for the original artist’s will when he told me the story of a mashup album that he created called *Wu Orleans*, combining jazz music from New Orleans with rap music by The Wu-Tang Clan:

> **dj BC:** It was the jazz artists in New Orleans that had a problem with it. This guy that I knew down there who played at my wedding, he’s a clarinet player and he’s an older dude, he’s in his 70s and he is one of these generational jazz musicians where he studied in the ‘60s under a dude who studied in the ‘30s under a dude who was, and they all come back to Louis Armstrong and various guys, he had a real problem with my approach to it because he thought it was disrespectful to the music and partly it was just the content. It wasn’t so much the sampling as it was that he thought it had a bad influence. He talked to the other musicians and he was really bummed out by it and he was telling me that the Jazz Musician’s Guild newsletter said something about it. I was like “you know what I am just going to take this down now.” It had its run. Traffic had

> really slowed down. It got some attention. I was like, "if [he] doesn't like this up I'll take it down." So I wasn't legally asked to take it down but it was a personal decision based on conversations with like two or three of the bands. Now Rebirth thought it was cool.
>
> **Liam:** Okay. The Rebirth Brass Band.
>
> **dj BC:** The Rebirth Brass Band. But the other guys just didn't, at least two of them, were just flat against it.
> (Phone interview, October 14, 2008, quoted with permission)

Members of the community acknowledge the reality that mashups rely on the music and musicians that they sample. Mashups literally could not exist without sampled source material. Different artists have adopted different strategies for reconciling their use of the work of others. There are those, like Tizwarz, who argue that one should be free to sample anything one wants, and from whomever one wants. Others, like eve massacre and timbearland, argue that there are some mashups that treat the music that they sample seriously and with respect, but that there are others that "piss on the originals" and the sampled artists are justified in being upset. Finally, Party Ben and dj BC justify their use of the work of others by pointing out that whenever possible they have discussed their mashups with the original artists and either encountered no resistance or demonstrated their respect for the sampled artists' wishes. The different views expressed concerning the role of the mashup producer and the deference to the sampled artist show that community members are still actively negotiating ideas about authorship. As I argued in the previous chapter, definitions and community standards are dynamic and issues like authorship are likely to remain the subject of frequent debate and change.

Originality

Originality and authorship are closely related and easy to conflate. I use originality here to refer to creating a unique mashup (an unprecedented pairing and/or arrangement of samples). I am not using the term in the sense that one might question whether a mashup is an "original" piece of art because it relies on samples. In this section I look at how the community polices originality without recourse to copyright protection.

In the absence of legal means of awarding credit, members of the mashup community work on an honor system. This is perhaps most visible in the generally observed rule that once two songs have been mashed together that pairing is associated with the mashup artist who originally combined them.[55] It is common for a producer to look through GYBO and search the Internet to see if a particular idea has already been mashed-up before posting a mashup online. Faroff explained this to me while describing his mashup of Bob Marley's "No Woman No Cry" and The Beatles' "Let It Be":

> When I was going to make it I was like, "I am sure someone has done this before. There is no way that someone has not thought of this." It is pretty obvious. It was really similar, the chords, and in the same key. It is definitely the same key. So I googled it and I couldn't find anything. I checked GYBO, nothing and I thought, "okay let's go for it."
> (Cambridge, MA, April 8, 2009, quoted with permission)

There is no GYBO rule against it, but it is a surprisingly rare occurrence that multiple mashups combining the same songs are released. In the event that a mashup artist does release a mashup using the same samples as another, they will usually credit the prior mashup artist with the idea. One example of this involved the songs "99 Luftballons" by Nena and "99 Problems" by Jay-Z. In 2004, on the heels of *The Grey Album*, mashup artist Mike G. released a mashup album online called *Jay-Zeezer*

[55] This rule does not apply to the use of different sections from the same songs. For example if there has already been a mashup combining the vocals from Song A with the instrumentals from Song B, it would be acceptable to release a mashup combining the instrumentals from Song A with the vocals from Song B, although the mashup producer would probably still credit the producer of the previous mashup for the idea.

combining Jay-Z with Weezer (among others). Included on the album was the track "99 Luft Problems" combining the English language version of "99 Luftballons" and "99 Problems." Several years later Mad Mix Mustang posted a mashup to his website featuring the same pairing but using the German version of Nena's hit song and calling the mashup "Neun und Neunzig Problems." Mad Mix Mustang was probably not aware of the previous version in advance, because Mike G. never released any other mashups and was not a current member of GYBO or involved in the mashup community. On Mad Mix Mustang's website he now describes his mashup as the "New (German) version of the mashup earlier done by Jay-zeezer"[56] and provides a link to the *Jay-Zeezer* website.

In the rare instances that the duplication of a mashup occurs it is usually amicable, with the latter producer acknowledging the prior. Taking credit for someone else's work is a far more serious offense. GYBO's rules are clear, "5. People who post other people's tunes and claim to have made them will be banned" (solcofn, 2009). I have not encountered this on GYBO over the course of my research, nor have I heard of it occurring. However, it is not uncommon that people from outside of the community will take credit for the work of community members. Because mashups are not released commercially and the names of the producers are generally not widely known, it is relatively easy to steal someone else's mashup, change the file name and information tags embedded in the file, and take credit for it.

Two GYBO posts from September 2009 demonstrate the frustration that this causes some members of the community. DJ Schmolli started a thread called "Our monthly topic: mashup thief exposed" by writing,

[56] <http://www.madmixmustang.nl/>

> Ok, another one stealing mashups... nothing new, and i don't even get mad about these wankers anymore…
> found 2 of my tunes, also 1 from pheugoo & 1 madmix but i didn't look that close, maybe some other GYBO's tunes are on his page too, I think he even might visit our site from time to time. oh and i think some pics on his site are sweet too (bootie art)
> so of course all the mp3 tags are deleted, new this time is the dj drop [a promotional voiceover] at the beginning of each mash, no need to say the drop goes by the name of dj crazy chris [the name of the accused DJ]... join and wish him the plague! (2009).

One of the replies featured the subject's email address and encouraged spamming him. The email address was removed by the forum's moderator and Eddie Pedalo, the member who posted the address, sarcastically apologized writing, "Sorry… I would have never have posted it if he hadn't published it himself. I don't believe what I did was malicious, I'm sure he appreciated the 200kg of haddock i ordered using his details" (2009). Another commenter wrote, "i dont really think him nickin tracks is the problem, its more that he pretends he made them. we all steal all of our source material, but at least we give credit to the original artists. i mean, if hed give credit, hed just be promoting your stuff for free" (okiokinl, 2009).

Posting to another thread about a different DJ (coincidentally also with "Crazy" in his name) caught taking credit for mashups that he didn't create, dj BC wrote:

> These guys actually make me smile. The great thing about these guys' websites is the super-cocky, heavily Psed [Photoshopped] photos, where they are all looking like "that's right, I'm awesome and super cool," and meanwhile they are a complete and utter fraud. I also love that they have 'crazy' in their names- they are just so insanely talented and cool that they are CRAZY! They are no normal DJ, they are MAD STUPID CRAZY and they blow our minds with their crazy awesomeness!! Maybe I should become DJ CRAZY BC? There are so many DJ BCs out there, maybe it would set me apart. Where are my sunglasses? (2009)

Mashup artists have little recourse when they find that someone else is taking credit for their work. Besides the threat of nasty emails and kilos of haddock, there is nothing to

prevent the misappropriations described above. This powerlessness underscores the need, within the community, to work on an honor system.

"Fu**in' mashup seller!"

The prohibition on mashup sales operates as what dj BC called "honor among thieves." If you have not paid for your samples you should not charge for your mashup. On the subject of selling mashups Party Ben told me,

> Anybody who sells their stuff is outcast because there is this attitude that if you're taking someone else's music, unofficially sampling it, or using it in some way, or remixing it, the least that you can do if you are going to give away an MP3 is not charge somebody for it. Which, again, five years ago, eight years ago, was kind of a radical notion… That has been a longstanding attribute of what it means to work within the mashup community and I've always had a lot of respect for that. I feel like I came at it later, I was not an original member of it, but I like that and I have a lot of respect for the people who came up with that.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 10, 2009, quoted with permission)

I have not come across any examples of this rule being broken by a mashup community member, but there are periodic posts on GYBO that expose and ridicule people who are caught selling mashups. In a March 2009 thread entitled "Fu**in' mashup seller!" DJYaliasJY alerted the community to a website which was offering a compilation of over 600 mashups for sale. After posting the names of the mashups DJYaliasJY wrote, " This is so fucked up… shame on you, man, shame on you…" (2009). The responses to the post generally reflect a negative reaction to this website, but tended to be lighthearted in tone. djmif wrote, "I'm a bit offended he didn't steal any of mine" (2009), and DJ Schmolli added, "do I get a discount? cause I don't need to pay for my tracks right??" (2009). not I weighed in on the subject writing:

> I'm of two minds about this. On the one hand, selling mash-ups is a no-no. It's not what we're about, it could draw more heat from the record biz, and if anyone around here did it they'd likely get called out and publicly whipped with a wet noodle (it's happened before).
> Of course you can get all of these mash-ups for free (at least the ones that are still online), but on the other hand: think of the opportunity cost of tracking down and downloading them all yourself.
> I think this guy, who's apparently not a mash-up-maker but a fan himself, is providing a service to other punters who prefer to shell out 16 clams rather than doing the research themselves. Fair enough - it's their choice. Sure he's making a bit of cash, though prob. not getting rich, and he did actually spend all that time seeking out and compiling this, even if all he did was DL everything from GYBO.
> At least he's not peddling it as his own (which would be ridiculous anyway with so much material), and is giving credit to us and spreading our stuff around. Some of the track titles miss some info, but he posted a list for anyone to google themselves, and since they're mp3s I assume that if you filled out all your tags they'll show up in a player.
> So, yeah. It's naughty, but not worth getting too outraged about IMO. And I'm not just saying that because he included 3-4 of my own boots (2009).

not I's comment, and the generally lighthearted tone of the other replies indicates that selling mashups is less of a problem if it is not done by someone from within the community, and that selling mashups is perhaps less offensive than taking credit for the work of others. As with the misappropriation of mashups, there is little that community members can do to stop the sales of unlicensed mashups.

It is important to distinguish the rule against selling mashups from the idea of "selling out" that is commonly encountered in underground music scenes when an artist gains mainstream success. To the contrary, the community reaction is overwhelmingly positive when a mashup producer is able to make a commercial release, host a radio show, put on a club night, or is featured in the popular press. Community members have shown great enthusiasm for projects like *DJ Hero* (the largest "sell out" of mashups in recent years), and, with rare exceptions, producers are congratulated and encouraged

when they receive mainstream attention.[57] There also seems to be a common understanding that when mashups are commercially released, such as those in *DJ Hero*, they will not be available for free. In the hundreds of replies to the *DJ Hero* thread on GYBO there was no call for the mashup producers involved to release the mashups for free, suggesting an understanding and acceptance that they would be sold.

Despite the complex and contested relationship between the mashup community and the recording industry over copyright, the community generally accepts that mashups that are released commercially have to be licensed and cleared and will generally not be available as free downloads. This is not to say that community members will actually *buy* those mashups. There have already been posts on GYBO alluding to ways to illegally download *DJ Hero* and there will almost certainly be an effort to rip the *DJ Hero* game so that mashup producers can access the sound files used to create the in-game mashups (the same has happened with *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band*). Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that, in a community with such a troubled history with copyright law, mashups that are deemed "official" by clearing copyright and given a commercial release are sold without backlash, while mashups containing unlicensed samples that are sold (like Girl Talk's)[58] are the subject of negative reaction.

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[57] A notable exception occurred when the various Bootie mashup nights began receiving media attention and success (as discussed in Chapter 4). Certain members of the community accused A+D of "selling out" the genre. These complaints were largely motivated by a rift between the U.K. mashup community and the community in the United States rather than a concern that A+D were attempting to create a commercially successful mashup club. Mashups emerged out of the U.K. in the early 2000s and at times some U.K. mashup artists have attempted to claim authority based on that fact. Bootie, being a product of the United States, was seen as less legitimate by some in Europe and the U.K. These sentiments have largely faded away. Bootie now operates throughout Europe and has even hosted a night in London. There is still the occasional gripe that Bootie is trying to take over the scene by constantly opening new club nights in new cities, but any real strife seems to have ended.

[58] Girl Talk, perhaps the single most commercially successful mashup artist to this date, is a polarizing figure in the community in part because he chooses to sell his mashups commercially and does not clear the

Illegality

Whether or not they agree with it, members of the mashup community acknowledge the practical reality that record companies treat mashups as a violation of copyright law. This section looks at community members' diverse responses to the recording industry's claims of illegality, ranging from satirizing the rhetoric of "piracy" to valorizing the receipt of a cease-and-desist orders.

Cease-and-desist orders are routinely discussed within the mashup community. When mashup artists receive cease-and-desist orders they often bring them to the attention of others on their personal websites and via GYBO. Community members do not view receiving a C&D negatively. To the contrary, a C&D can be a source of pride that carries with it prestige and credibility. In a GYBO thread from January 2009, mARKYbOY posted about receiving a cease-and-desist order for the first time. At the end of his post he asked if anyone else had dealt with the issue. In the first response pilchard wrote, "Congratulations! We had one, took everything down to please the host, waited a week then sneaked them back, nothing happened, dont expect nothing will happen to you though, I reckon at worse, your hosts will remove your files" (pilchard 2009). The very next response from djmif also began with a celebratory tone, "woa congrats dude. I'm still waiting on my first C&D" (djmif 2009).

Both posts congratulate mARKYbOY for what many outside the mashup community would view as a nuisance or even something of a legal concern. Furthermore,

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samples he uses. However, Girl Talk has consciously distanced himself from the mashup community and few inside the community consider him a member.

djmif seems to have been eagerly awaiting his own order. The prestige attached to a cease-and-desist order is not necessarily tied to disobeying the order. mARKYbOY and pilchard both removed the files, although pilchard eventually put them back on his site. The importance of the cease-and-desist order is less the "rebel" status that it might bestow and more the satisfaction that your mashup has achieved some level of recognition.

The celebration of cease-and-desist orders is one example of the ways that community members respond to their marginalization by the recording industry and accusations of law breaking. Another common form of response undermines the authority of governments and trade associations by satirizing their language and imagery. Mr. Fab, for example, also goes by the pseudonym RIAA, claiming it stands for Really Interesting Audio Adventures (rather than Recording Industry Association of America). The Bootie franchise recently used the tagline "Taking copyright infringement and turning it into dance floor gold!" to advertise a club night in New York[59].

Copyright infringers are commonly accused of committing "piracy." In keeping with mashup methodologies, the mashup community has combined contemporary intellectual "piracy" with the seafaring piracy of yore. DJ Adrian and The Mysterious D's logo is a skull and crossbones wearing large DJ-style headphones, and they use other variants of the Jolly Roger as part of the décor at Bootie events. The strategic and comedic appropriation of piratical terms and themes, now a widespread phenomenon thanks to sites like the controversial bit-torrent tracker The Pirate Bay and the associated Pirate political parties in several European countries, dates back at least as far as the

[59] <http://upcoming.yahoo.com/event/5133182/NY/New-York-City/BOOTIE-NYC-mashup-party-FREE-at-Happy-Ending/Happy-Ending> Accessed March 27, 2010.

founding of Bootie in 2003.

The language and imagery of copyright generally receives lighthearted treatment. However, there are those in the community who see mashups as an active form of protest against copyright law. In September 2008 the mashup artist not I posted a response to a thread about mashups and society. He wrote, "i don't think i'm alone in having always considered bootlegs/mash-ups as acts of subversion (whether conscious or not): subversion of copyright laws obviously, but also of the mainstream music industry" (not I 2008). Later in the same thread Wax Audio wrote:

> I agree with not-I about the subversive angle of mashing. Whether the masher knows it or not s/he is making a political statement by virtue of the fact that what they do is illegal and in defiance of laws designed to prevent the genre they contribute to from flourishing. Yet gybo shows that be that as it may - we are still a fairly diverse lot when it comes to expressing our personal politics (or lack thereof) (Wax Audio 2008).

In a more recent thread that began with a discussion of a winter storm that blanketed Europe and ended up as a discussion about civil disobedience, Wax Audio again made the case that mashups are a direct form of protest against copyright law writing:

> Not all civil disobedience is violence though, much of it is peaceful. For example, painting No War on the Opera House was a peaceful act of protest yet it was illegal. Mashups also are an act of civil disobedience. It's illegal, yet we refuse to obey those laws. We feel we know better than the law and act accordingly. Activists acting against the law are often the leaders of change in societies, including democratic ones. That's my view (2009).

Autonomous Communist Republic of Zen countered:

> It's interesting that you point out that mashups or unauthorised remixes are a form of civil disobedience. You can be right in that sense. I personally don't see mashups as a form of civil disobedience as it is not a physical act of disobedience conducted in the general public. Mashups are not tactile and don't cause physical harm or what I consider to be reasonable distress but yes it could be considered to be civil disobedience but at the same time I'm not protesting, I am making mashups as a hobby

> and I don't intend to change laws or the status quo. Should mashups be illegal, I don't know but I take responsibility for any repercussions. I continue to create mashups because the record labels no longer pursue copyright infringement claims towards people who make small scale unauthorised copies but I wouldn't if the case was otherwise. (2009)

This exchange demonstrates that while some mashup artists express a strong conviction that mashups are a form of subversion, others feel differently, and even those who espouse a "civil disobedience" credo are careful to acknowledge this diversity of views. dj BC is another mashup artist who, despite having been the recipient of cease-and-desist orders, is less concerned with actively subverting copyright, and more concerned with making music that he enjoys:

> **Liam:** I know that some people think of mashups as an act of activism against copyright law. Do you see what you are doing as any sort of a challenge or a protest to copyright law?
>
> **BC:** Not at all. I don't see what I do as a protest or a challenge to copyright law. In fact I have little disclaimers on my website, as many mashup artists do, saying let me know if you have a problem with this being up and I will remove it from my website. I think that people just want to make music. They like doing it.
> (Phone interview, October 14, 2008, quoted with permission)

One final way that mashup community members respond to their art's questionable legal status is by pointing out that mashups can actually help the industry and artists that they sample in two ways. First, mashups can bring exposure to the music that they sample, and second mashups can bestow "credibility" to the music sampled by presenting it in an "underground" context. Party Ben addressed both of these points in an interview:

> Time and time again I have had the experience that people hearing one of my mashups are more likely to buy the [sampled] album after they hear it. Maybe they had never heard of the artist before, which happened a lot with the Tegan and Sara mashup. People had never heard of Tegan and Sara, they heard that Mylo mix and they were like, "oh my god, I love

> Tegan and Sara." With Green Day, maybe they look at it in a different way. Maybe someone who's not so much a fan of pop punk might be like, "oh maybe I'll buy that album, it's kind of interesting." I don't think there is any way that someone is going to go, "ha, ha, ha, I have *American Edit*, now I don't need to spend any money on the original even though I was going to." When has that ever happened?
> (San Francisco, CA, June 10, 2009, quoted with permission)

Mashup artists have a wide range of musical tastes and sample from a large variety of genres and eras. As a result, listening to mashups will expose almost any listener to new music. My own experience reinforces Party Ben's assertion. I have become a fan of numerous artists whom I was either not aware of, or had not listened to, before hearing their work in a mashup.

Party Ben also makes an interesting point about the credibility of music discovered through an "underground" outlet rather than commercial radio or mainstream press. Mashups can apparently lend hipness to music that would otherwise be considered too poppy or mainstream by some listeners. When I discussed the rising popularity of Girl Talk with DJ Adrian and The Mysterious D, Adrian joked that Girl Talk's genius was in creating a space in which hipsters could dance to pop and hip-hop and still feel cool. As David Mongillo put it, "Girl Talk has a big following… in the indie music scene, where a sort of musical elitism exists among some fans, who pride themselves on finding and championing the most obscure music possible… Many Girl Talk fans, for example, would not be caught dead listening to Rick Astley, Hall & Oates or Huey Lewis and the News. But all these artists are featured on Girl Talk's latest album" (2009: 27).

When mashup artists argue that their work exposes new audiences to sampled artists and provides a cover of credibility for listening to mainstream popular music, they are making a case that mashups can help the recording industry. These arguments

represent a strategy of self-justification in the face of challenges to the legal and ethical status of mashups.

Conclusion: Recent Developments

Although cease-and-desist orders are still being issued there is a general feeling amongst the community that the pace has slowed considerably. Recent commercial releases such as DJ Earworm's mashups for Maroon 5, Annie Lennox, and Sean Kingston, as well as the release of *DJ Hero*, indicate a possible change of strategy on the part of the recording industry. DJ Earworm believes that this shift is in part due to industry personnel's realization that mashups do not pose a threat:

> **Earworm:** They mistakenly perceived it as a threat and then somebody, at some point, looked at it again and said, "wait a second. How many sales are we losing and how many sales are we gaining?" And then they realized, "wait a second we should be paying them instead of stopping them." At some point they realized that this "underground piracy" was much to their benefit.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

Although the industry's attitudes towards mashups may be changing, the copyright problems raised by sampling from numerous sources creates a nightmare for licensing and a substantial hurdle for the commercial release of mashups. DJ Earworm's commercially released mashups, for example, have all been constructed with multiple samples from a single artist or group, which makes the licensing challenge much less daunting. His other attempts at working with the industry have shown promise but have been inhibited by licensing concerns:

> **Liam:** And now, in your experience, they are trying to figure out a way, behind the scenes, to make this work so that it can be released?

Earworm: Yeah. I don't know that they are working hard at it, but I'm trying to make it happen.

Liam: How?

Earworm: Well I pitch it to the record execs when I see them. I say, "hey this is really cool, what we are doing here, but you know what would be *really* cool is if you looked into your back catalog and you found a publisher who was wiling to license a big swath of it, give me that set of titles that you have cleared and let me go crazy."

Liam: How has the reaction been to that?

Earworm: Well the last guy that I talked to took it seriously and we'll see what happens… I'm not saying that it's about to happen, but I see that it could. I realize that it's not the record companies that are the problem though, it's the publishing because the record company can say "yeah go ahead" but then they have to get whoever owns the publishing.

Liam: What seems to be the reluctance from the publishing companies?

Earworm: I don't know because I haven't talked to them, maybe it's all this idea with all these derivative works, and how to divvy it up, and it's partial ownership. If you write a song and then somebody changes the words to it and puts it out, you are entitled to, possibly, a huge portion of that songwriting. The problem is that if you take two songs, there is going to be two parties each which might want more than fifty percent of it. I don't know. I would love to talk to one of these big publishing companies and find out what's the problem if any. They realize that they need to ease licensing. People in both the record companies and the publishing companies realize that, not just mashups, but reconstructed [media], this is culture now.
(San Francisco, CA, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

Despite the current hurdles, Earworm predicts that cultural changes will eventually force a change in the practices of the record companies:

Earworm: People want their hands on these things and they want to manipulate it themselves. In a way we are going back to the way it used to be. Before recorded music dominated, people made music themselves in salons. They would get the sheet music and they would be very involved in it. Then music became very passive in the twentieth century, and now it's getting to the point where people are actually being musical with their music again and it's great. The everyman is becoming a musician again which it used to be. It used to be that most people had some musical skills

> because that's the only way that you could enjoy music, because someone in your family was playing it. Hopefully they will allow us to manipulate it and I'm sure that they can come up with some systems where they are compensated and we are paying.
>
> …
>
> Eventually, all music will be released deconstructed and everyone will be reconstructing it. The future iPods will have this built in. It won't even be called mashups because it will just fade into the noise, fade into the background. I think it is going to really expand. People put out albums a few years ago and then they said, "we are just going to put out singles." Now they are actually starting to sell stems… When is the first time that someone is going to have a hit from a component? "Oh yeah this a capella is really hot. Check it out mixed with this, it's really popular mixed with this." But there was never an official version of it.
> (San Francisco, CA, June 11, 2009, quoted with permission)

Contemporary mashups emerged onto the music scene at a time of difficulty for the recording industry. Facing the challenges of online filesharing, record companies had little tolerance for a type of music that used unlicensed copyright protected samples and was distributed via the Internet. Although the initial industry reaction against mashups has eased slightly and a handful of mashups have been released commercially, the cost and complication involved in legally releasing mashups has prevented the industry from treating them as a viable source of profit. As a result mashups and the mashup community continue to exist outside of the commercial music industry. The work of mashup artists is subject to periodic and unpredictable cease-and-desist orders and has little chance of being commercially released.

The community has responded by becoming self-sufficient. Systems for production, distribution, performance, and promotion of mashups have been created and maintained by community members themselves. Mashups are not protected by copyright and so the community has their own set of rules governing who receives credit for

creating a mashup and forbidding the sale of music built from uncleared samples. Community members' responses to the enforcement of copyright range from explicit expressions of political protest to satirical appropriation of industry terms, piracy-themed humor, and indifference. It is understood within the community that mashups are highly unlikely to become a source of revenue for their producers. With this understanding, most mashup artists are happy to continue making and sharing mashups and being a part of the mashup community whether or not their work is accepted by the recording industry.

Chapter 7

"The NirGaga Saga": Conclusions

In September 2009 dj lobsterdust posted two mashups to his website and GYBO that both sampled from Nirvana's 1991 grunge classic "Smells Like Teen Spirit." The first took Nirvana's instrumentals and combined them with the vocals from Wild Cherry's 1976 "Play That Funky Music," creating "Smells Like Funky Music." The second mashup combined the vocals from Nirvana with the instrumentals from Lady Gaga's late-2008 hit "Poker Face" and was called "NirGaga."

lobsterdust is a respected mashup artist who has been an active member of GYBO for several years and frequently performs DJ sets at Bootie New York and other mashup events. Because of his reputation as a top-quality mashup producer, when lobsterdust posts a new mashup on GYBO it generally receives quick feedback. The reactions to his two "Smells Like Teen Spirit" mashups were generally positive, although the GYBO replies tended to favor "Smells Like Funky Music." DJ Schmolli wrote, "hmmm the gaga one is not your best but then again the wild cherry one is excellent!!" (2009), rillen rudi added, "I am in love with the 'wild cherry tune'. I don't like the GAGA mash, cause I don't like it mashed or as a real track [the original version]" (2009). Some, like Paul V., enjoyed both: "Can you just kill me now, your mashups are so effing awesome? Seriously….Seriously" (2009). fearless wrote, "Well, I was dancing and singing and movin' to the groovin'… Two different takes that both came out great. Brilliant work!" (2009).

lobsterdust's Nirvana mashups continued to attract comments for about two

weeks. The comments began to taper off as new mashups replaced "NirGaga" on the front pages of the GYBO forum. However, while "NirGaga" was quietly fading away on GYBO, it was becoming wildly successful at A+D's various Bootie club nights. In November 2009 A+D put "NirGaga" on their monthly Top 10 list, writing,

> None of us were really sure about this one at first. Sure, we have a bunch of mashups that use the classic "Smells Like" instrumental. But this was the first one to use the ACAPELLA, and pairing Kurt's anguished vocals with Lady Gaga's pristine pop might have seemed like sacrilege. Yet every time we've played this at Bootie, everyone screams along like mad ... proving once again that despite its grunge pedigree, "Smells Like Teen Spirit" just might be the perfect pop song.[60]

"NirGaga" proved so popular at Bootie nights that A+D included the mashup on their best of 2009 compilation.

Thanks in part to the publicity from Bootie, "NirGaga" was mentioned by several mainstream media outlets, including *The Wall Street Journal* and MTV. *The Wall Street Journal*'s "Speakeasy" blog is devoted to "media, entertainment, celebrity and the arts" and generally features stories about pop culture. Mashups are not often featured on "Speakeasy," but on December 30, 2009, the following write-up was posted:

> Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" + Lady Gaga's "Poker Face." It just sounds like a pop mash-up destined to go disastrously wrong. But surprisingly, DJ Lobsterdust's "NirGaga," which has been floating around since last month but went viral this afternoon (amongst the 14 people actually at work and online today), is a pretty catchy mix of the two distinctive tunes. Just goes to show: No matter how much slicing and dicing you do, it's hard to ruin a good song.[61]

The "Speakeasy" post attracted fewer than a dozen comments, and they were mixed. Aubrey wrote, "Kurt Cobain would be spinning in his grave," and anonymously pissed

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[60] < http://www.bootiemashup.com/blog/2009_11_01_archive.html> Accessed March 12, 2010.

[61] < http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2009/12/30/nirvana-lady-gaga-nirgaga-love-it-or-hate-it/> Accessed March 12, 2010.

added, “its gone too far. you cant just take every good song and blend it together, it completely destroys morality of the original song.” Nicci disagreed with the negative comments: “Kurt Cobain would laugh at this not spin in his grave, it’s catchy. Poopiestick wrote, “Personally this Nirvana song is SO overplayed and commercial they may as well use it to advertise clothing for the GAP. But in the day it was brilliant. Good to see someone re-envision it. I think it’s interesting.”

MTV’s “Buzzworthy” blog, which focuses on “pop music, pop stars, and pop culture from inside the MTV headquarters in Times Square”[62] also posted about “NirGaga.” MTV’s description was a simple list of sources and a link and attracted only a few comments. The first, from Uriel, wasted no time getting to the point, “This is why Kurt shot himself.” Although neither of these posts generated many comments, they did link to the YouTube video for “NirGaga” (simply a picture of lobsterdust’s “cover art” and the audio from the mashup). The traffic directed to YouTube from these and other sites drove up the popularity of the “NirGaga” video, which has been viewed more than 172,000 times as of this writing and has attracted more than 600 comments.

As a result of attention from mainstream press outlets, the reception of “NirGaga” extended well beyond the mashup community. While even the most critical GYBO responses were respectful, the comments on the YouTube video[63] range from positive and congratulatory to angry and threatening. As Simon Iddol predicted on GYBO, “some die hard grungeheads will find and crucify you cos of that Nirgaga” (2009). Thankfully, as of this writing, lobsterdust has not been crucified, but many Nirvana fans were upset

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[62] <http://buzzworthy.mtv.com/2010/01/04/songs-you-need-to-know-lady-gaga-vs-nirvana-and-journey/> Accessed March 12, 2010.

[63] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hcAS2NKW9M> Accessed March 12, 2010.

by the combination of Cobain with Lady Gaga. YouTube user 1991Tijmen1991 wrote, "I'm a nirvana fan, and if I ever get my hands on the bastard who did this, I am going to roast him over a small fire, and feed him to the ducks in the park pond, I swear." climbapapermountain echoed MTV and *Wall Street Journal* comments by invoking Cobain's death: "I'm not a Nirvana fanboy, but this is the kind of shit that killed him [Cobain]," and BBI wrote, "sigh…for once it's a good thing Kurt isn't alive to experience this…bunch of bullshit." Numerous different YouTube users left comments on the theme of Kurt Cobain "spinning in his grave," causing others to point out that Cobain was cremated.[64]

In addition to attracting the attention of 172,000 YouTube users, "NirGaga" attracted the attention of EMI records. In early January 2010 EMI issued a takedown notice to YouTube and sent cease-and-desist orders to lobsterdust, A+D and others who were hosting, or linking to, the mashup (as discussed in Chapter 6). YouTube removed the audio from the "NirGaga" video. After the cease-and-desist orders were issued, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a digital civil liberties advocacy organization, took notice of the story. In a post to the EFF website[65] Fred von Lohman, an attorney specializing in intellectual property, commented that he hoped EMI's actions were just a "misguided one-off" and not "the beginning of a general crackdown on mashups." I would argue that this action is not a "one-off" or the start of a "crackdown," but rather the most recent in a years-long series of inconsistent and unpredictable C&D orders from record companies to

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[64] The repurposing of Cobain's music and/or image have been met with controversy before. In 2009 Kurt Cobain was featured as an avatar in Activision's *Guitar Hero 5*. Players could play as the Cobain avatar to any song in the game. The ability to make the Cobain avatar perform "pop" songs angered many fans as well as Cobain's former band mates. < http://www.rollingstone.com/rockdaily/index.php/2009/09/10/grohl-novoselic-didnt-approve-cobains-guitar-hero-avatar/> Accessed March 27, 2010.

[65] <http://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2010/01/emi-attacks-nirgaga-mashup> Accessed March 4, 2010.

mashup artists (discussed in Chapter 6). The Electronic Frontier Foundation's interest generated even more publicity, and while the initial "NirGaga" video on YouTube was muted, several other users have uploaded the track with fan-created videos or still images. As of this writing these newly uploaded videos have generated more than 60,000 additional views.

In the wake of the mashup's popularity and the C&D orders, dj lobsterdust started a thread on GYBO called "The Nirgaga Saga, anatomy of a mashup (now with bonus C&D from EMI)."[66] DJ Morgoth responded, "Hehe...I must say...when i listened it first time...mhm...I preferred by this time your other version with wild cherry...yeah but some parties later with some drinks, I also enjoyed NirGaGa, although I must admit I never spinned the track myself so far...hehe...will change this soon, as it now has some evil-legal-problem feeling on it! HEHE!" (2010). Wax Audio noted, "It amazes me that in 2010, EMI still get their knickers in a twist over a mashup. How out of touch with reality they are. Well done on the exposure of the tune mate, it's only gonna get more now" (2010), and A+D concurred, "Well, the next chapter of this saga is that now 'NirGaga' becomes 'notorious' and probably even MORE popular due its being banned! Thanks, EMI!" (2010). fearless added, "if the record label is coming after you, you must be doing something right" (2010).

The "NirGaga" story demonstrates that, although mashups may be gaining some footing in the recording industry, record companies are still working to exile unauthorized mashups from the mainstream through the issuance of cease-and-desist orders and other means. As Wax Audio noted above, it is somewhat amazing that, nearly

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[66] <http://www.gybo5.com/forum/topic/nirgaga-saga-anatomy-mashup-now-bonus-cd-emi> Accessed March 4, 2010.

a decade after Freelance Hellraiser's "A Stroke of Genius" brought contemporary mashups to widespread attention, record companies like EMI are still trying to prohibit them rather than designing ways to profit from them. Well over 200,000 people have viewed/heard "NirGaga" on YouTube and many more downloaded the mashup from lobsterdust's and Bootie's websites. After EMI had YouTube remove the audio from the initial "NirGaga" video, YouTube user greenwanders commented, "What really cracks me up about these record companies is that they just don't realize the value of the kind of free advertising they're getting from vids like this. They're already an endangered species and they're not helping themselves with actions like this. Think of how many people would've bought a Nirvana or Lady Gaga track because of this vid. Evolve or die." Although greenwander's claim that the major record companies are "endangered" might be a bit premature, the point that the recording industry is ignoring/marginalizing a potential source for free publicity and profit is certainly accurate.

The "NirGaga" saga also demonstrates the different reception of a particular mashup within the community and by those outside the community. The negative reaction from some Nirvana fans highlights a key aesthetic difference. In Chapter 2 I discussed the "aesthetic of combination" that guides mashup producers. The belief that any two songs can and should be combined is clearly not shared by the Nirvana fans who took offense at Cobain being mashed up with a "pop" musician. It is interesting to note that there were no comments from Lady Gaga fans lamenting her association with Cobain. The lack of upset from Lady Gaga fans reinforces the differential ideologies of authenticity between pop and rock (Auslander 1999, Frith 1996). Simon Iddol's prediction that "NirGaga" would offend Nirvana fans, and A+D's remark that "NirGaga"

almost felt like sacrilege, demonstrate that members of the mashup community are aware of these differential attitudes towards "authenticity" although mashup community members tend to treat these ideas with irreverence.

After the initial reaction on GYBO, "Smells Like Funky Music" became a side note. All of the attention from the press, on YouTube, and from EMI, focused on "NirGaga." In part, this is because "Smells Like Funky Music" wasn't included on the Bootie best of album or posted to Bootie's website. However, I believe that there is another equally important reason for the different reception of the two mashups: time. In Chapter 3 I quoted Squid, a radio host at a commercial alternative format station in Portland, OR, who said that he wouldn't play anything out of format during his mashup show unless it was old. He explained that he would never play a mashup featuring Britney Spears, but a mashup featuring a Motown artist from the 1960s would be acceptable. It would seem that as a pop song ages it becomes disentangled from the particularities of its day, and perhaps the "inauthenticity" of its initial reception. "Play That Funky Music" made it to number one on the Billboard charts in 1976,[67] "Poker Face" made it to number one in 2009,[68] but it seems that after 30 years Wild Cherry is no longer associated with the negative connotations of "Top 40" and "mainstream pop" that "grungeheads" find so odious when combined with Nirvana.

The GYBO response to "NirGaga" demonstrates that, as I argued in Chapter 2, GYBO is used to spread and negotiate communal mashup aesthetics. In order to match the keys between "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and "Poker Face," lobsterdust raised the pitch of Kurt Cobain's voice. While subtle adjustments to pitch are fine, some of the

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[67] < http://www.billboard.com/#/artist/wild-cherry/bio/6015> Accessed March 12, 2010.

[68] < http://www.billboard.com/#/artist/lady-gaga/chart-history/1003999> Accessed March 12, 2010.

respondents felt that lobsterdust had strayed too many tones away from the original. ToToM wrote, “It’s a bit deranging to hear Nirvana that much pitched (in fact, we’re hearing Kurt singing too high for his vocal register), even if you probably used the plugin you talked about in another thread and the voice is preserved. Not your best like Schmolli said. The second one sounds pretty good and fits really well in terms of song structure” (2009). RebornIdentity added, “The Wild Cherry one is a great little rocker. Nirgaga is a funny one though - it fits very well and the production is superb. The pitching works OK on the vocal but sucks all the impact out of the guitar samples to my ears, which is a shame” (2009). Hahnstudios also noted the pitching, but was not put-off by it: “Wow, the wild cherry one rocks great and the Lady Gaga is a great dance smasher (even the voices are pitched a lot, but that don’t mind for me)” (2009).

Despite the problems that some members had with the raised pitch, Voicedude wrote, “The Lady Gaga / Nirvana mash is a hoot! Should turn a lot of heads on the dancefloor!” (2009). As Voicedude predicted “NirGaga” became a dance floor hit at Bootie nights. This demonstrates the differing aesthetics between the mashup community members on GYBO who were analyzing “NirGaga” based on song structure and production technique and the audience at a dance club who are more concerned with a song’s danceability and recognizability (as in the ability to sing along and know the sources used).

The spread of “NirGaga” is an example of several of the different means of distribution and reception that I discussed in Chapter 3. “NirGaga” went viral, being featured on countless personal websites and blogs, featured by news organizations, and played in dance clubs around the world. Its path from production, to distribution, to

reception follows the same models that I have described in earlier chapters. Periodically a mashup like "NirGaga" will attract mainstream attention and demonstrate that, contrary to claims by members of the music media that they are passé, mashups continue to affect mainstream popular music and modes of production and consumption.

In this dissertation I have presented a close analysis of the production, distribution, and reception of mashups, as well as the particularities of the community's form and functions. I have also attempted to present the diverse perspectives of this vibrant and important community of producers and fans. As Joseph Schloss wrote, it is "individuals who usually have the most incisive stories to tell" (2004: 195) and I hope that I have helped to tell some of those stories.

Mashups have been unfairly portrayed in the popular media (and some of the scholarly literature) as simplistic, sophomoric, superficial, and limited. By demonstrating the key aesthetic principles that guide mashup production and reception, and the varied approaches and intentions of mashup producers, I hope I have dispelled these misperceptions. Mashups are created for a variety of reasons and they appeal to a diverse audience. The crowds at Bootie nights are remarkably "mashed-up"; they embody the collapsing boundaries between the audiences for particular genres of music. In addition to being a sonic manifestation of these blurring boundaries, mashups have been a catalyst of this change. Moreover, the mashup production community is a prime example of the emergent web-based dispersed community formations that are so important to understand as computer-mediated communication becomes an integral part of everyday life. Technological advances in computer hardware and media editing software have allowed

for the creation of the contemporary mashup, and advances in Internet and communication technology have created a new space in which the community has grown.

I have also examined the ways that mashups relate to ideologies of agency, the democratization of technology, intellectual property, and the legal realities of copyright. Using the work of others as source material has put the mashup community at odds with widely held interpretations of copyright law. Although most mashups have been prevented from commercial release, mashups are popular music and, as the "NirGaga" example demonstrates, a part of popular culture. Mashups are both mainstream and underground simultaneously. Marginal legality has forced the mashup community to be self-reliant in the production, promotion, and distribution of its music, and mashup community members have developed their own set of rules about originality and authorship. These rules reflect views about "authenticity" and unique artistic creation that are often at odds with those of the recording industry and larger society. The mashup community and genre are important to understand in their own right, but also because mashup artists are at the forefront of a larger movement in which consumers become producers who reshape and remix the culture around them.

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