



How to avoid plagiarism in music

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Modern music has the tendency to sound like it's been influenced by older styles of music. It is improbable that you will come up with something unique.

However, to downright plagiarise music is a crime.

For the sake of integrity and self-respect it is important to be wary of a couple of things when making your own music (if you do) which may help you in avoiding unwarranted theft of another artist's property.

DON'T FOCUS ON LOOPS

Almost always, musicians listen to a part in a song and they carry influences from that song subconsciously when they write their own material. This is a very common phenomenon and it is prevalent with big names as well. That's where the pop singer's chord progression or what is formally known as the I-V-VI-IV chord progression came into fruition.

The way to avoid this is to unlearn what you think you may know about songwriting. The moment a sweet melody or loop hits you, don't focus on making music that sounds like the artist you want to emulate because, more often than not, you will have structured something very similar to your original inspiration. Take a loop like the chords to the famous *Where is My Mind* by The Pixies but turn it on its head, reverse the progression, take out the root chord if you must, but whatever you do, do not use the same chords as they did because then you would have also plagiarised Alex Turner's *Piledriver Waltz*. The trick is to be consciously clever.

GET A GOOD BASS PLAYER

Hard to come by I know, but a bass player is the key to adding rhythmic and stylistic

uniqueness to any song you write. Even if you write the most overdone pop song ever, if you have a bass player with backgrounds in punk, jazz and funk, half the work is done right there. There's a very clever bass line going on in the second verse of Nemesis's track *Ghuri* and while the song came under fire for being too similar to Kings of Leon's music, the second verse to me personally, is quintessentially Nemesis. The point is to add more diversity within your band. The thing about having a bass player with a distinctive style unlike yours is that they can add a rhythmic layer that is seemingly unique.

SAMPLING

As counterintuitive this may feel, sampling is a good way to bypass a lot of loopholes when it comes to making your own music. Blatantly copying and pasting loops from famous songs is not the way to go. Instead, using unconventional



samples, spreading them out, and layering them are neat little tricks that anyone can use. Reversing a sample, cutting, and splicing them at the right times, properly coordinating the times onto which they would fit perfectly can give you a better understanding of how you should progress with your own music.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

This one is obvious but listening to a lot of music helps immensely in looking out for your own music. It is impossible to listen to every record ever made but when it comes to making your own music, you will always draw from your inspirations and influences. Picking up a lot of songs is important as well. That way you will know theoretically the most unique chord structures and which structure wouldn't clash with a song you have already picked up.

DON'T BE OBVIOUS

Pablo Picasso famously said, "Good artists copy; great artists steal." This article could not go without it being said. But there is a catch to what Picasso said. Don't go blatantly ripping off people left and right. Subtlety is what separates great artists from good ones but in no way am I condoning stealing other people's work. If you like something, alter it and see what works and what doesn't and by the time people listen to your music, you will know the favourite part from your favourite band you snuck into the song.

Asif Ayon's favourite colour is a particular shade of ash but he tells everyone that his favourite colour is blue. The alliteration in his name bothers him a lot too. To inquire more about what else keeps him up at night, hit him up at asifayon@live.com