

What does “sampling” add to music?

TAASEEN MOHAMMED ISLAM

Have you ever heard a new song that feels eerily familiar even though you have never heard it before? Chances are that the song has “sampled” another piece of music.

So, what exactly is sampling? It is when a portion of pre-existing beat or melody is altered and reused in another recording. Sampling is a tool used widely in the industry and is arguably one of the foundational or primary components of modern music.

In popular music, sampling has manifested itself in iconic, creative, and bizarre ways. Iconic hip-hop songs such as “Stan” by Eminem and “Gold Digger” by Kanye West featuring Jamie Foxx have used samples of other popular songs.

Pop songs such as “Toxic” by Britney Spears and “Hung Up” by Madonna used sampling as well, with the former using the iconic melody from “Tere Mere Beech Mein” by Lata Mangeshkar and S. P. Balasubrahmanyam. Examples of sampling being used uniquely include “Me, Myself, and I” by G-Eazy featuring Bebe Rexha, which used a Britney Spears deep cut song for its eerie background vocals. A bizarre example would be “Bury A Friend” by Billie Eilish, which sampled the sound of a dentist’s drill.

While sampling may be a cornerstone

of popular music, its usage in the recent past has come under scrutiny. Many argue that music that employs sampling is derivative instead of creatively adding anything new to the product.

The most notable example of this dilemma can be in Jack Harlow’s smash hit “First Class,” which heavily samples “Glamorous” a 2007 classic by Fergie. Harlow is an undeniably talented rapper, and his song is one of the biggest earworms of the summer. However, you could argue that the track lacks its own identity and solely relies on mid-2000s nostalgia for its appeal.

Another example of a song relying on another track for its identity is “As It Was” by Harry Styles. The massively successful song perhaps borrowed a bit too much from “Take On Me” by a-ha, an unforgettable track from the 80s that still effortlessly creeps into people’s playlists. Even though Styles is a big deal on his own, an argument exists that he is not doing anything creative or new by sampling. Instead, he may be riding the coattails of the existing retro hype with his new music.

Music is a form of art, and art is subjective. While many argue that sampling is a violation of ethics and creativity, there is a counter that sampling gives old music a new life. Artists often use sampling in a way that enhances their original output,



rather than following an uninspired way of recycling older music under the guise of nostalgia.

Popular artists such as Dua Lipa, The Weeknd, and Olivia Rodrigo have shown us that it is possible to pay homage to the past and evolve sonically without directly sampling big hits from previous decades.

Therefore, it can be said that while sampling is an undeniable part of modern music, it should be used in moderation and, more importantly, in good taste.

Turns out Taaseen Mohammed Islam can write semi-decently at the expense of being able to do basic math. Send him pointers at taaseen.2001@gmail.com

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ROAD SAFETY IN BANGLADESH

Demanded yet Undelivered

NAHALY NAFISA KHAN & AZMIN AZRAN

Between July 28 and August 4, 2018, there was something different about Dhaka. Major roads were seen with reserved lanes, for emergency vehicles and for rickshaws, while motor vehicles were reduced to a crawl. Motorists were required to produce licence and registration to those who governed the streets.

Uniformed, disciplined, and determined – the individuals who were overseeing the road safety in Dhaka were not policemen. They were neither soldiers nor volunteers. The roads during that week belonged to students, schoolchildren who had lost two of their own to the lawless streets, young individuals who demanded change and wanted it then and there.

On this week, four years ago, school and college students across the country protested to ensure road safety for all. Suffice to say, the roads are still unsafe. During this year’s Eid-ul-Azha holidays, more deaths resulting from road accidents have been recorded than ever before.

In broad terms, the Road Safety Movement of 2018 failed, but what significance does it hold to those whose willpower turned these protests into a national phenomenon? How do they remember it? Four years on, what do they think they were able to achieve, if anything?

Samiha Medha was a student of class 10 in Viqarunnisa Noon School in 2018. She remembers coming home and finding out from the news that Dia Khanom Mim and Abdul Karim Rajib, students of Shaheed Ramiz Uddin School and College, were run down by a bus of Jabal-e-Noor Paribahan.

“Rage – that was the first reaction,” recalled Medha. “On that first day, there were calls for protests on social media. Some of my schoolmates took initiative, created an event page on Facebook, organised protests, and decided to demonstrate in Shantinagar.”

This spontaneity, fuelled by intense fury at the horrors that befell Diya and Rajib, spread the protests citywide.

“We were sitting for exams when the news broke, and we saw juniors from our college going out onto the streets,” said Shamsul Abedin Anik, a class 12 student at Dhaka City College at that time. “Eventually, my classmates and I got out on the streets as well. All the colleges in our area – Dhaka City College, Dhaka College, and Ideal College – protested together, which was quite unprecedented.”

This flame, kindled in Dhaka, soon spread all over the country.

“I felt a change was the need of the

hour. So, when students started to protest in Khulna, I joined them,” shared Khan-dakar Humyra Oyshi, who, in 2018, was a student of Govt. Majeed Memorial City College, Khulna.

While anger and frustration played major roles, road safety is an issue that’s pertinent to the lives of all, and many took to the roads with self-preservation in their minds.

“I used to commute by bus from my home in Banasree to my college in Mohammadpur. I knew the roads were a constant death trap for many of us, so I had to take to the streets for my own sake,” said Apon Biswas, who studied at Dhaka Residential Model College.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



forth by students.

“We wanted the existing traffic rules and regulations to be enforced, basic things like pedestrians using pavements and foot overbridges. We wanted traffic police to be vigilant of drivers who are underage or without licences,” said Ashiqur Rahman Rizvee, a student of Notre Dame College during the protests.

“The severity of punishments for hit-and-run cases needed to be increased, that was one of our most pressing demands,” remembered Medha.

“A reason behind so many unlicensed drivers on the roads is how complicated the process is,” added Anik. “Streamlining the licence issuing process was also an urgent demand.”

The Road Safety Movement of 2018

affected citizens from all walks of life. The fact that the protesters were students meant there were safety concerns coming from teachers and parents, as well as pressure to end the protests and get back to the classrooms.

“Things were particularly difficult for us due to the pressure that came from the school authorities. I was even threatened with a transfer certificate. However, we had the support of some teachers. We ensured that everyone would be in school uniforms to stop the movement from being misdirected or misrepresented,” said Apon.

Furthermore, there were others who offered solidarity.

“It was a bit of a mixed response from

owners accountable. It replaced a road accident victim’s right to sue motor vehicle owners for compensation with the right to apply for “financial aid” from a fund that will be formed by grants and contributions from the government and motor vehicle owners, as well as fines obtained under the Act.

Moreover, parts of the Act remain practically ineffective following negotiations between transport associations and the government since November 2019. The government last year moved to amend the act in the face of strikes from transport workers and owners demanding, among other things, that all offences under the Act be made bailable, and the minimum educational qualification requirement for obtaining a driving licence be reduced.

So, was the Road Safety Act 2018 a fair reflection of the protesters’ demands? “Not entirely, no. It was nowhere near perfect, but I do think it was a step towards the right direction,” opined Medha.

“No, it wasn’t,” answered Anik. “It was a partial reflection at best, but it was a very small part. One of the things that did change was the use of helmets among motorcycle riders. This wasn’t something everyone did before August 2018.”

The fight, however, continues. The torch is carried forward by the very people who took to the streets four years ago.

“When we retreated from the streets after violence was brought upon us, we felt hopeless. However, we did not give up.

Together, we formed Nirapad Sarak Andolon (NISA) and have been carrying out awareness campaigns, along with research on road safety and better working conditions for transport workers,” said Shahid-ul Islam Apon, central joint-convener of NISA, who was also on the frontline of the 2018 movement.

Apon Biswas echoed the same when he said, “The movement changed the core of an entire generation. It made us believe in our strengths and gave us a voice against injustice. Above all, it instigated the zeal to protest. That’s what we take away from this movement.”

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