

Extended Remix

REIMAGINE YOUR "SONG" BY ADDING JUST THE RIGHT NEW ELEMENT

By Mike Ficher

Remixes, popular in the club and mobile DJ trade, might be thought of as a new way of looking at an old or current thing.

Songs are remixed for a variety of reasons:

- To adapt or revive it for radio or nightclub play
- To alter a song for artistic purposes or to alter a song to suit a specific music genre or radio format
- To use some of the same materials, allowing the song to reach a different audience
- To alter a song for artistic purposes
- To provide additional versions of a song for use as bonus tracks

From the early efforts of remix pioneers Tom Moulton, Larry

have to offer clients?

START WITH THE VOCAL

The return of *Whose Line Is It Anyway* to national television allows me an opportunity to view the show and the performers in a whole new light. During the Drew Carey-hosted, first run episodes from August 5, 1998 to December 15, 2007, I was only a few years into appearing regularly with Triage, a Central Oregon improvisational troupe. While I was actively learning the craft, I still primarily enjoyed the television show more from an entertainment perspective rather than an entertainer's perspective.

But now, with the rebooted Aisha Tyler-hosted version of the show this past summer, and also with more than ten years of active engagement in improvisation under my belt, I watch the talents of Ryan Stiles, Wayne Brady and Colin Mochrie from a



Levan, and Shep Pettibone, to the prolific contemporary reimaginings of a growing cadre of gifted, talented and creative spin doctors, remixes provide dancers with exciting new beats grafted into familiar tracks; remixes give songs potentially extended lifespans and exposure; and remixes offer listeners vivid, rich, illuminating new interpretations of recognizable material.



A business analyst by day, Mike Ficher is an actor, voice artist, MC, sportscaster, public address announcer and former mobile entertainer. He is also the host of the weekly syndicated radio program, *The Ultimate Oldies Show*. Mike synthesizes these varied experiences to illuminate historic connectivity and fresh perspectives on the mobile entertainment profession. More info at mikeficher.com.

Viewing a mobile entertainer's skill set as a song, can jocks find new ways to view and utilize tried-and-true skills? In other words, how do they "remix" what they

completely different, much more informed perspective.

While I still find the show exceptionally entertaining and funny, I understand much more clearly what the improvisers seek to advance with each line, with each physical choice, with each relationship. I can more clearly define the awkward moments, the bits that struggle and, more critically, why. I, also, have a better idea of why certain bits succeed.

One thing I see much more clearly now is the improvisers' ability to add to the information that is already presented in a scene. Instead of regurgitating what has been shared, Brady, Mochrie and Stiles are adept at adding more information, taking scenes to whole new levels and rendering the relationships more tightly connected, outrageously funny, and yet, in a bizarre way, often believable.

TAKE THE RHYTHM IN NEW DIRECTIONS

What a great improviser does is similar to what a great remixer does: They take what is already present and add new elements, new ideas, new twists, new nuances, new sounds, new polish...to create something fresh yet familiar, compelling yet comfortable, illuminating yet inviting.

Why are these concepts so important to a mobile entertainer?

In order to sustain long-term success, mobile jocks must be adept at adding on to a skill base that may already be very solid—music programmer, voice artist, crowd motivator. Mobiles need to find ways to remix their time-tested "song" into a compelling, ever-new entertainment offering.

Long-lasting, successful entertainers are very often adept at remixing themselves. Take, for example, Frank Sinatra.

Sinatra first gained success singing with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra in the late 1930s and early 1940s, becoming the darling of the bobby soxers' set, before signing with Columbia Records in 1943. His popularity with his core audience translated into robust record sales.

By the early 1950s, however, Sinatra's career hit a rough patch. But undeterred, the resourceful son of Italian immigrants "remixed" his extensive entertainment skills onto the big screen, winning the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his

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performance in *From Here to Eternity*. Also taking a new music track, he signed with Capitol Records in 1953 and began working with Nelson Riddle on albums employing

more sophisticated orchestral arrangements and innovative jazz structures, including *Songs for Swingin' Lovers! Come Fly with Me*, and *Only the Lonely*.

Sinatra continued to gain acclaim for his motion picture appearances in such dramatic fare as *The Man with the Golden Arm* and *The Manchurian Candidate*, in addition to musicals such as *High Society*, *Pal Joey*, *Guys and Dolls* and *On the Town*. Sinatra kept adding onto a base with new ideas, new skills and new roles, keeping his core audience engaged while attracting new fans.

What Sinatra, improvisers and remixers have in common is that they don't look at the same thing the same way each day. They probe, ask, observe, and, more critically, add something new to the mix. They do not reinvent the wheel—they reimagine the wheel from its existing spokes.

As a seasoned mobile entertainer, you've built a solid base of soft and hard skills. How can you add on to those talents, those games, those technologies to present new ways to look at old things? **MB**



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