

The Sampleface Manifesto

The Sampleface Manifesto is a declaration of principles and ideas to promote and encourage the art of sampling.

The concept of the manifesto arrived as a reaction to the negative press sampling has received in recent years. Our intention is to share thoughts and considerations for the future of sampling.

We have set up a tag for you to keep track with all the latest manifesto-related content. To add your name as a signatory to the manifesto, email us at info@sampleface.co.uk.

Before we go into detail about our views, it is important to define exactly what we mean by "sampling". The term, specifically in music, can mean two things:

The reduction of a pure continuous sound wave into values based on points in time/space.

For more information, a basic overview can be found [here](#).

The extraction of elements from audio recordings to reuse and manipulate in other recordings.

Sampleface practises and promotes the latter and that will form the basis of this manifesto. We strongly believe sampling can enhance the future of music on all levels. Here are some reasons why.

Landmark sample-based albums such as the Beastie Boys' *Paul's Boutique*, DJ Shadow's *Entroducing*, The Avalanches' *Since I Left You* and Danger Mouse's

The Grey Album showcased the potential of sampling as an artform. In the time between Paul's Boutique and The Grey Album and beyond, sampling laws have changed dramatically. Large use of samples within mainstream releases are rare due to the high costs of clearing the samples and gaining permission from the artists, their labels and/or the master copy holders. Legislation is still unclear and many lawsuits go the way of the rights holders because of this despite varying opinions on fair use.

This lack of understanding and clarity is the foundation of this manifesto. As practitioners and admirers of sampling, we have a duty to continue the discipline but also communicate with everyone involved where necessary.

Of course, we have only touched on four seminal sample-based albums purely due to their exposure, extensive use of samples and the positive reaction they received from the media. Sampleface celebrated its fourth birthday last month and as we come close to 300,000 views, we have searched high and low for unique and entertaining sample-based material. The majority of those may not have garnered the necessary permissions but it appears the rights holders have not reached out to the producers either. But that may not be the best way forward.

We are neither lawmakers nor tell tales. We are here, with this manifesto, to express views and encourage conversation on the discipline. Sampling is not going away and does not intend to control or restrict. That is why it is important to embrace the form and make it work for all sides.



To do this, the following ideas need to be considered:

Clearer laws

The concept of "fair use" is the hot topic when it comes to copyright law and subsequent lawsuits. Rights holders and producers need more detailed legislation in place to facilitate the art of sampling. This helps to protect the intellectual property of the original artists and gives the opportunity for producers to enter conversations and negotiations with these artists over how they can use their material.

Better practices

Money is the primary exchange value for use but this needn't be the sole form of currency. Some artists offer to re-record music to bypass the direct use of samples or exchange intellectual ideas in the form of collaboration or remixes. This can help to heighten the popularity of both parties and lead to larger exposure and sales.

Better recognition

The separation of DJ/producer and emcee from the early days of hip hop has been a contentious subject amongst its cultural veterans. In recent times, the vocalist receives significant levels of fame over the producer and is often perceived as playing both roles. There are notable exceptions but many of them produce albums under their own name thus bypassing this confusion. Mostly likely sampling producers prefer to be behind the spotlight due to "unlawful" sample use but for those in the mainstream, this should be taken care of and therefore it provides a perfect opportunity to promote the discipline.

Education

A grassroots approach would be highly beneficial for sampling. Teaching the practical and technical elements of sampling would lay down the groundwork for future endeavours and further education. From a personal perspective, I learnt a great deal from my university degree in Music Technology, where there was a module in sampling (as well as the signal processing concept discussed in the definition above). Better understanding will lead to more creative and sensible sampling, from a legal perspective.

Participation

There is a stigma around sampling that needs to be demystified. Sampling is neither cheating nor uncreative. Fundamentally, the notes used in music around the world "sample" from the frequencies found in nature. Of course this is a crude example and nobody has the rights to these natural frequencies but it shows how sampling takes place without much thought. Sampling can be a gateway to unique creativity and new perspectives. If more artists participate and experience the form, there will be more vibrance and new inspirations for our peers. Do we really need to hear the same four bar chords on every song?

With intelligent music choices, deeper communications channels and connectivity between artists, we can help improve the music we hear and revitalise the community. Sampling is not the enemy but a tool of creation and must be understood for what it is and what it can. Only then can we move forward as members of the music world.

The Sampleface Manifesto is endorsed by the following signatories:

Luke Alex Davis (founder, Sampleface)

Ashton James Brown (writer, Sampleface)

Matt Diamond (founder, Diamond Media 360)

Keidra Chaney (editor in chief, The Learned Fangirl)

Evan Souza (artist/label owner, U Don't Deserve This Beautiful Art)

Andrew Martin (freelance writer, Bandcamp, Vinyl Me Please, Noisey)

Liam Poole (artist, Deadpoole)

Reading material

Recognizing the Grey: Toward a New View of the Law Governing Digital Music Sampling Informed by the First Amendment