



An Educational Guide

About The Film

In *RiP: A remix manifesto*, web activist and filmmaker Brett Gaylor explores issues of copyright in the information age, mashing up the media landscape of the 20th century and shattering the wall between users and producers.

The film's central protagonist is Girl Talk, a mash-up musician topping the charts with his sample-based songs. But is Girl Talk a paragon of people power or the Pied Piper of piracy? Creative Commons founder, Lawrence Lessig, Brazil's Minister of Culture, Gilberto Gil, and pop culture critic Cory Doctorow also come along for the ride.

This is a participatory media experiment from day one, in which Brett shares his raw footage at opensourcecinema.org for anyone to remix. This movie-as-mash-up method allows these remixes to become an integral part of the film. With *RiP: A remix manifesto*, Gaylor and Girl Talk sound an urgent alarm and draw the lines of battle.

Which side of the ideas war are you on?

About The Guide

While the film is best viewed in its entirety, the chapters have been summarized, and relevant discussion questions are provided for each. Many questions specifically relate to **music** or **media** studies but some are more **general** in nature. General questions may still be relevant to the arts, but cross over to social studies, law and current events. Selected resources are included at the end of the guide to help students with further research, and as references for material covered in the documentary. This guide was written and compiled by Adam Hodgins, a teacher of Music and Technology at Selwyn House School in Montreal, Quebec.

A Student's Perspective

Lawrence Lessig has been quoted as saying, "57 percent of teenagers have created and shared content on the Internet. That's not peer-to-peer file sharing – that's about 99 percent."

With today's technology there's no doubt that many of your students are invested in the issues of copyright. Most download music either legally or illegally and many have created their own videos or slideshows using music from their favourite artists. Some may have even created their own mash-up or remix and posted it online. Take a poll with your own class and see if the numbers match up to Lessig's. How many download music via peer-to-peer software as opposed to legal services such as iTunes and bleep.com?

Chapter Summaries and Discussions

Chapter 1 – Meet Girl Talk

In chapter one, we meet the artist Girl Talk and are introduced to his style of music known as “mash ups.” The debate over creativity and the ownership of musical ideas is introduced.

Music: Do you think that if you manipulate an existing song enough you can eventually claim it as your own creation? Where do you draw the line between copying and creating?

Media: The filmmaker states, “Using these songs in my movie is against the rules too.” Why might that be true?

Chapter 2 – Copyright vs. Copyleft

In chapter two, we are introduced to the idea of “remix” culture. We learn about the “copyright” (intellectual property and corporations) and the “copyleft” (the public domain), the two sides of the ensuing debate. Lawrence Lessig's four-point manifesto is revealed to help us in the battle for science, industry, medicine and culture.

Music: Do you think sampling can be considered an instrument akin to guitars, drums etc?

Media: Brett states, “... a media-literate culture emerged, able to download the world's culture and transform it into something different.” What do you think it means to be “media literate”?

General: What do you think is more important, the creative process, or the final product?

Chapter 3 – Culture Always Builds on the Past

In chapter three we meet the U.S. Registrar of Copyrights as she is shown the process of creating a “mash up.” Brett then introduces point one of the manifesto, showing us how music has evolved from the cotton fields to the dance floor.

Music: Do you believe there are forms of music that are not built on past works?

General: Do you think you can argue your creativity when it's based on other people's work?

General: Do you believe that creativity is limited if you don't have access to tools, technology or libraries of content (i.e. musical samples or video clips)? Would your creativity be redirected into another medium, or might it cease to exist without this access?

Chapter 4 – Asking Permission

In chapter four Brett introduces the concept of music publishing and the complexities that go into legally clearing a sample.

Music: The film claims that the current system of creating sample-based music is cumbersome and financially out of reach for the majority of musicians. What kind of system could you create that would be fair to the artist(s) being sampled and the artist doing the sampling?

General: Do you agree that a healthy public domain is essential to creativity?

Chapter 5 – The Past Tries to Control the Future

In chapter five we are taken through the reasons why copyright laws were invented. We see how, as technology advances, laws – with the original intent to balance innovation with payment for authors – change. Brett argues that this intent no longer applies as he introduces point two of the manifesto.

Music: Do you believe the music industry should have accepted Napster's offer to license their music? What do you think of the current model of digital distribution (iTunes etc.)?

General: Copyright laws were originally intended to encourage people to create. Do you think that intention has changed in recent years?

General: Lars Ulrich states, “If artists aren't profiting, you're profiting illegally.” What do you think of this statement?

Chapter 6 – Preachers, Lawyers and Criminals

In chapter six we meet Stanford professor and copyright activist, Lawrence Lessig. We take a look at some of the people labeled criminals and ask if it benefits society. Brett also introduces the idea of “fair use.”

Music: If you share music illegally, do your parents know? What do you think their view on this is? Would their opinions differ if you purchased a CD or DVD and “remixed” it?

General: When you write an essay or paper you may quote other authors and cite those references. Do you believe we should be allowed to do the same with music and video?

General: Lawrence Lessig states that copyright extremism “does harm” to developing nations. What do you think he means by this? What do these laws and policies affect beyond music and media?

Chapter 7 – Open Source Cinema

In chapter seven Brett continues his argument that “fair use” is vital in telling the story of copyright. Brett enlists people to remix his film via the website opensourcecinema.org. Lessig reminds us of the power and reach that technology has given to our voice.

Media: Do you believe the film would succeed in using “fair use” as a defense if it was sued for using images or music illegally?

Music: In the ‘70s the sampler was introduced, and it cost up to \$500,000. In the mid-‘80s it became affordable, and by the 21st century, any computer could become a sampler with the right software. How do you think this accessibility has changed music?

General: Has the affordability of technology and access to the Internet helped you make change or voice an opinion on an important issue?

Chapter 8 – The King of Remix

In chapter eight we meet “the king of remix,” Walt Disney. Lessig shows us how Walt Disney took works from the public domain and updated them, “building on the past.” Fast-forward, and the Disney Corporation wants to “control the future,” suing everyone and successfully extending copyright by another 20 years.

Media: Why do you think Dan O’Neill’s Mickey Mouse parody, the *Air Pirates* wasn’t considered “fair use” by the courts? Can you recall any recent TV series or movies that parody copyrighted songs, images or characters?

In your opinion, what could be the justification for the “Copyright Term Extension Act of 1998” (a.k.a. The Mickey Mouse Protection Act)?

Chapter 9 – Culture Jam!

In Chapter nine we are shown a more personal side of Greg Gillis (aka Girl Talk). Brett introduces us to his early remix heroes “Negativland” who coined the term “Culture Jamming.” We are then shown that 90 percent of media is owned by 6 corporations that are represented by two lobby groups (the RIAA and MPAA).

Media: Culture Jamming is using the modern media against itself to critique the power it has over our lives. Mark Hosler (of Negativland) states, “Why do I need to ask you (modern media) to take a little bit of it and make something out of it and make fun of you, critique you?” Can you answer his question?

General: The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), represent 90 percent of media holdings in the United States. What effect do you think this majority of power has on culture in North America or the World?

Chapter 10 – Our Culture Is Becoming Less Free

In Chapter ten Brett brings the issues back to Canada. The U.S. brands Canada as a “pirate nation” and lobbies it to adopt more strict copyright law. We are shown the manifesto’s third point in action as lawsuits become rampant and legally owned media come with digital locks.

Music: In 2009 Apple decided to stop placing DRM (digital rights management) on every song they sold in the iTunes store. This now allows customers to copy, burn and share the mp3s they purchase. Why do you think digital locks were included in the first place and why were they eventually abolished?

Music: Brett asks a group of teenagers being lectured by the RIAA, “How many of you, when you’re downloading music off the Internet think that you’re stealing it?” How would you answer that question and why?

General: Do you think the penalties for copyright infringement make sense? Do you think these penalties were originally meant for your average citizen, sharing a few songs?

Music: Cory Doctorow states, “Before the radio and the record came along, the only way that people made money from making music was by standing in a hall and being charismatic.” Do you think the business model for professional musicians has changed in the last few decades?

Chapter 11 – Back in the People’s Hands

In Chapter eleven we see examples of corporate power being returned to the people. Radiohead introduces a new way of releasing music to their fans. Greg Gillis makes us realize that with modern technology and the Internet, it’s easy for us to create music and distribute it worldwide. Gillis speaks about his day job as a bio-medical engineer and how copyright law inhibits the progress of medicine.

Music: What do you think of Radiohead’s business model for releasing records?

Music: How do you think the Internet, with the advent of Myspace and music blogs, has changed your chances of being a successful musician?

Music: Gillis states, “Right now it’s great, put out an album, people like it, get to tour. I just wish I could continue that without having to worry about laws.” What do you think these worries or fears may do to his future creativity? How might they shape his future releases?

General: Speaking about copyright’s impact on medicine, Gillis states, “...maybe your idea is slightly different, but they might hold a patent on a core part of your idea, so you know a lot of times it’s out of the question. It holds back knowledge exchange. Very clearly, so many things are just not developed because people are holding a patent on to it. The cure for cancer could be a step away, but it’s off limits. They may sit on that idea forever and do nothing with it.” Do you feel any differently about copyright law when it applies to things like medicine versus art?

Chapter 12 – Which Road to the Future?

In chapter 12 we are told of America’s attempt to move from an economy of things to an economy of ideas. Brett presents his case for why this model is a threat to all culture, beyond movies and music. Brazil is presented as a forward-thinking nation, making it government policy to share ideas in all forms of culture and medicine. Which is the model of the future?

General: In America’s beginnings the copyrights of foreign authors were ignored. Charles Dickens was pirated to subsidize the printing of Mark Twain, a local author. How do you feel about that situation? Do you believe one country has the right to impose their (copyright) laws on another?

General: “Brazil defied U.S. IP laws by breaking multiple international patents on HIV medication, producing their own copies of the drug for a fraction of the price.” They did this to make the drug affordable to those who would die without it. Is this fair to the corporation that researched and developed that drug?

Media: Gilberto Gil states, “Nobody creates in a vacuum. Everything comes from something else”. How many people had to pick up a camera so that you could do what you’re doing today?” Do you agree with this statement?

General: DJ Marlboro says, "Originality? It's when two things haven't been mixed. That's the future of music and the human race." What is your definition of originality?

Chapter 13 - The Revolution Will Be Digitized

In chapter 13 many of the major players in the documentary give us their final statement. Brett puts out a call for everyone to get involved any way they can.

Media: Lessig states, "If this (remix) is a crime then we have a whole generation of criminals." What do you think of this statement?

At the website www.opensourcecinema.org Brett Gaylor has created a forum where you can post your own remixes, and download and dissect the movie you've just seen. Go to the website and...

- Upload a video of you and your class singing "Happy Birthday."
- If you or someone you know has been involved in a lawsuit with the RIAA or MPAA, record your story and upload it.
- Record a video of your reaction to the film and upload it.
- Brainstorm your own ideas and share your creativity with the open source community!

Resources and References

The Film's websites:

www.nfb.ca/rip

www.opensourcecinema.org

www.ripmix.com

www.kinosmith.com

Books

Lawrence Lessig, *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*, The Penguin Press, 2008

Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity*, The Penguin Press, 2004

Legal Music Downloading Sites:

www.amazon.com

www.apple.com/itunes

www.beatport.com

www.bleep.com

www.boomkat.com

www.djdownload.com

www.zunior.com

Music Production Software:

www.ableton.com (Ableton Live)

www.apple.com/logicstudio (Apple's Logic Studio)

www.steinberg.net (Steinberg's Cubase)

Video Production Software:

www.adobe.com/products/premiere (Adobe Premiere)

www.apple.com/finalcutstudio/finalcutpro (Apple's Final Cut Pro)

Organisations

www.creativecommons.org (Creative Commons)

www.riaa.com (The Recording Industry Association of America)

www.mpaa.org (The Motion Picture Association of America)

www.socan.ca (The Society of Composers Authors and Music Publishers of Canada)

www.ascap.com (The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers)

www.bmi.com (Broadcast Music Inc., an American Publishing Society)

Other Websites

Good Copy Bad Copy is a Danish documentary, which is a great companion to *RiP*. Discover another perspective on the issues at hand.

www.goodcopybadcopy.net

A website and forum to discuss Jammie Thomas' legal battles with the RIAA.

www.freejammie.com

www.faircopyrightforcanada.ca (Fair Copyright for Canada)

www.digital-copyright.ca (Digital Copyright Canada)