

remix, reuse, recycle

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Remix. Cut-up. Mash, sample and collate. At Creative Commons, we want to encourage creativity. We want people to build off the work others have made before; build off their cultural heritage, and create something new. We want these resources to be available to people without the requirement to pay copyright licensing fees, and we want it done without lawyers.

When someone releases their work under a CC licence, they're letting everyone know how they're allowed to play with it. If you want to use material that people have created before, CC is a great place to look. You don't have to ask permission, because it's already been granted. With CC works, you can find some of the raw materials for your expression without fearing the legal repercussions.

We're not trying to sell you anything, and we're not trying to tell you how to create your works – we just want to help provide some of the raw materials you can use. Whether you're looking for music for a soundtrack, or photos for a collage, or video clips for a political satire, or any other media, here's some great places to start:

- ccMixter (<http://ccmixter.org/>) provides music remixes under CC licences
- Magnatune (<http://magnatune.com/>) is a new music label which uses CC Non-Commercial Share-Alike licences
- Opsound (<http://www.opsound.org/>) has a large pool of CC audio
- Check out SoundTransit (<http://soundtransit.nl/>), where you can book a virtual audio tour through various locations of your choice – a great place to look for field recordings
- Flickr has a huge collection of CC licensed photos submitted by users from around the world (<http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/>)
- The Open Photo Project (<http://openphoto.net/>) has thousands of excellent quality photos
- The Prelinger Archive (<http://www.archive.org/details/prelinger>) hosts nearly two thousand public domain films

A whole lot of other material is all over the place. The CC search bars in Mozilla Firefox and at search.creativecommons.org are a great place to look.

Each piece you download will have a link to the creativecommons.org website, and a page telling you exactly what you're allowed to do with it. One of the things you always have to do is give credit to the original author – a link to the original work with the author's name is fine. Remember that if you plan to sell your work, you'll need extra permissions to use non-commercial material or you can stick to material that allows commercial re-use. If you use Share-Alike material, remember you'll have to release your work under the same terms. What you are allowed to do is cut-up, mix, and mash. The only CC works you're not allowed to remix are the small percentage released under no-derivatives licences. We have already seen thousands of people benefiting from the ability to play with materials others have created before. We want to encourage you to do the same.

So what's our motive? Why are we doing this? Because so many people are telling us we're not allowed to play with our culture. Remember Apple's slogan when they launched their iMac range? "Rip, mix, burn. After all, it's your music" – they don't use that slogan anymore. It's a relic of a time when creative reuse of music seemed to be something to encourage. Apple is now in the business of selling cute personal music players (aka iPods) and individually packaged online music downloads. It's not a suprising change.

The music industry has spent an enormous amount of money in the last five years, trying to convince the world that sharing, remixing, and even sampling are illegal. The peer-to-peer file-sharing networks have fallen, one by one; Napster, Aimster, followed recently by Kazaa, and

the fates of Grokster and Streamcast are still before the courts.

In the States, a recent court case said "get a license or do not sample". The sampling in question? Two seconds, three notes, sampled, pitch lowered, and looped for 16 beats. The court said "we do not see this as stifling creativity in any significant way." Stopping people from remixing doesn't stifle creativity? Sounds strange to us.

Last year, five Australian DJs, a small record label, and its director, were ordered to pay a total of \$50 000 in damages and \$90 000 in court costs for infringement of copyright. The five DJs had produced six CDs which showcased their work, and given and sold them away at their performances. The message is clear – you must pay for any mixing and sampling. It didn't matter to the judge that he knew that the record companies hardly ever allow people to remix, even if they *can* pay.

But it's not just music that we can't play with. Last year, Jonathan Caouette's autobiographical film *Tarnation* wowed audiences at NY MIX, Sundance, and Cannes. Caouette's film cost US\$218 to make; he mixed together video recordings he'd been making since he was 11. But his use of music, music videos and other clips that represented significant periods of his life, ended up costing around US\$400 000 in copyright clearances. That's a hefty sum for an unknown filmmaker.

Another example is 'machinima', a form of animation created by controlling computer game characters and adding dialogue and soundtracks. This technology gives excellent animation tools to all artists, providing a new platform for expression at a low cost. The animations being produced are as varied as the people behind them, encompassing ongoing comedy shows, drama films, music and dance videos, and much more. But is it legal? The answer is a resounding "maybe". It seems the owners of copyright in the games being used are watching to see what is happening with this new genre. Many of these animations act to increase the popularity of the games used, and few are commercial enterprises. If either of these things change, though, we can expect interesting times ahead.

We're constantly seeing examples of artists taking their cultural icons and playing with them, mixing them into something new. Consider the literary genre 'fanfic' which is exactly what it sounds like: fan fiction. It takes existing characters but places them in new storylines. And don't forget collage art, where an artist appropriates existing images for new purposes. But we're also constantly reminded that the media that forms our cultural heritage isn't 'ours' – we don't have the legal right to play with it.

This is what we at Creative Commons want to change. We want to create a wealth of media that people *are* allowed to play with. So we want to provide resources that people are allowed to play with. We want people to express themselves without worrying about being sued for copyright infringement. We want people to be allowed to access the resources they need to be creative. There are millions of objects that have now been released under CC licences worldwide, and the pool is growing every day. You have the opportunity now to reuse these materials in your own work.

But we also need your help. We need the help of artists now, to help artists of the future. We want to encourage you to use Creative Commons licences to declare what you're prepared to allow future artists to do with your work. Creative Commons licences are simple, easy to use, easy to understand, and free. They're also flexible, so there's a licence for your needs. If you support the ability of creators to remix and sample, to build off the past and to reuse our cultural heritage, you need to be part of the solution. Find a licence that fits you, and join us in imagining a world where we can be creative without lawyers.

