

Navigating Covers and Derivative Works in the Music Industry: A Free Webinar Discussion With Top Industry Experts

A new Digital Music News panel with Easy Song explores how to navigate derivative works, including cover songs, remixes, samples, and other complexities.

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EINPresswire.com/ -- A new Digital Music News panel with [Easy Song](#) highlights one of the music industry's pressing topics—how to navigate the complexities of derivative works. From cover songs, remixes, samples, and other derivatives, the path forward isn't always straight and narrow. The webinar features three industry experts, moderated by Digital Music News Publisher Paul Resnikoff.



[The Cost of Creativity: Cover, Derivative, or Stolen Work?](#) Webinar Participants

Aaron Green — Vice President / Director of Sales at Easy Song

Krystle Delgado (Miss Krystle) — Top Music Attorney at [Delgado Entertainment Law](#)

Paul Resnikoff — Moderator, Founder & Publisher at Digital Music News

Tyler Blatchley — Co-Founder at Black 17 Media, a division of Sony Music Entertainment

Kicking things off, the panel clarifies the distinctions between derivative types. The quick primer: cover songs re-imagine structure, words, and genre, while maintaining the essence of the song. Meanwhile, sampling lifts portions directly from a pre-existing recording, while interpolation uses elements like rhythm or lyrics without copying the master itself. A famous example cited is Beyoncé's interpolation of "Milkshake" by Kelis.

Interestingly, Beyoncé interpolated elements of Kelis's 2003 hit "Milkshake" in her 2022 track "Energy" from her Renaissance album. That usage sparked public backlash from Kelis, who alleged the usage amounted to 'theft' due to the lack of prior notification. Kelis was not credited as a songwriter on "Milkshake" and lacked publishing rights which were held by producers Pharrell William and Chad Hugo.

While no formal lawsuit was filed between the two singers, Beyoncé resolved it by swiftly removing the “Milkshake” interpolation from the track on streaming platforms within days of the criticism. The incident highlights the ongoing tensions in music copyright, even though Beyoncé cleared the rights through the publishers.

This conversation examines how creative innovation frequently collides with copyright law—and highlights how artists can keep themselves compliant with those laws. Aaron Green frequently negotiates on behalf of independent artists who want to expand existing compositions. In his line of work, that means these situations often result in ‘non-standard mechanical licenses’ that require submitting both the new audio and a written proposal to the original publisher. In many cases, these deals lead to ‘50/50 splits’ between rights holders if the usage is approved.

In speaking about this case, all panelists agreed that pre-release clearance remains best practice, as post-release settlements can be far more expensive and legally uncertain. Miss Krystle criticized what she calls the “clean up the mess later” mentality, especially since Spotify has acquired the Who Sampled platform. She says that acquisition has left some producers ‘freaking out’ that their ‘crimes’ are being exposed at the DSP-level now.

Tyler Blatchley and Aaron Green also dissected incidents of “innocent infringement,” in which creators unwittingly use uncleared audio from royalty-free libraries or sample packs. “Major labels sometimes come after the little guys,” Miss Krystle adds, noting that statutory damages can hit \$150,000 per instance.

The economics of clearance remain challenging for DIY musicians. The panel highlights how many only pursue rights clearance once a song “blows up,” especially when upfront licensing fees may exceed the track’s projected earnings. Green emphasizes transparency above all, arguing that publishers are “often more receptive to a fair offer when approached directly.”

Tyler Blatchley also explains how Black 17 Media now relies on micro-influencers on TikTok to convert viral trends into streaming activity for his roster. He notes that ‘placements are king’ for both original and derivative works. The panel also tackled how artificial intelligence is muddying the lines between samples and covers. AI-generated tracks such as Haven’s “I Run” have drawn attention for closely mimicking the sound and style of well-known artists like Jorja Smith.

Miss Krystle closes out the panel with a reminder that proactive clearance always pays off. She cites Taylor Swift’s decision to offer royalties to Right Said Fred for “Look What You Made Me Do” before any dispute arose—a move that likely prevented a lawsuit from dragging out in court for years.

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