



FIRST[®]
MUSICDJ'S



Introduction

A **FIRST**[®] music DJ is a part of the team/crew firstly, and must understand that the event and the games are The Show. The DJ's performance, however, can make or break the event. Hitting the cues, playing the right tunes, and being consistent, brings out a sense of professionalism that will endure the performance to everyone involved.

This is a **sporting event**, not a radio-station, or someone's iPod, or even a club. The focus is much different. The music must be upbeat and positive, may contain interactive elements, and during matches can create tension and suspense. But the bottom line is that at the end of the day "everybody has a good time", including the DJ. This playbook is written with the intent of taking some of the guesswork out of "what to play and when". It is written with much love for this genre that I call Sportsmusic...

The Goal

To create a playlist of music that will not only be inspiring, motivating, and uplifting but one that will also create a positive atmosphere that promotes gracious professionalism. We accomplish this by creating files that are edited to give a "tighter" flow to the games. We establish a pattern that is easy to follow with limited chance for downtime or "dead-air".

The Game and the Pattern

Every year the organizers create a different "game" for the robots. But the pattern and process is the same for the DJ: Team Intro's, *FILL (If necessary), GameON, Wait for Score, InBetween, repeat. Please note that this year the game match time is Two Minutes 30 seconds [2:30]. You may need to adjust your GameON music to reflect the change.

TEAM INTROS - The "M.C." introduces each team in a 3-team alliance, which plays another 3-team alliance. Musically, I like to use good instrumentals especially upbeat karaoke versions of popular songs. Run the song underneath the M.C.'s introductions. When they are about to begin the countdown to the match, take the music out of the mix. That way all the teams can hear without any distraction.

FILL (if necessary) - Like anything else, sometimes the Robots are not ready after the Team Intro's, therefore it would be wise to have something on stand-by. These periods don't last very long, so short stings work best. "We will Rock You" drum beats, Hand clapping foot stomping Arena-Type staples are perfect for this. Use songs from either your Inbetweeners or crowd rallies.

GAME ON- The robots get in place for part 1 of the match: *The Autonomous Period*, where the robots must compete without any human intervention. It starts with a Countdown from the MC and a CHARGE HORN sound effect and this autonomous period **lasts 15 seconds**. A BOXING RING BELL sound effect dings to start part 2 of the match: *The Challenge*. This is when all the players get behind their remote controls and try to "score". **This lasts 2 minutes and 15 seconds** and ends with a BUZZER sound effect. The DJ does not have to worry about the game sound effects, as they are usually handled by a sideline referee/judge.

The Playoff rounds are a best-of-3, and sometimes there are timeouts...which have traditionally been 6 minutes. The Championship round will also have a 6-minute turnaround between matches. This is the time to really get the crowd pumped up. Last year some events started to show videos at this time... just be prepared to fill any gaps that may occur during the showing of videos...

Be prepared to repeat "the pattern" approximately 100 times during an event.

During the actual matches, I like using songs with an upbeat tempo, usually a BPM (beats per minute) within the 120 -140 range, and as many instrumentals as possible as the MC will be covering the "play-by-play". Usually Techno, Industrial, House music works well, however as the games get "more important" I tend to sway towards epic Hollywood movie scores, as they have a zeal for building tension and suspense. Especially from "Spy" movies.

I have yet to come across a musical genre that does not work at a *FIRST* event. Everything from Classic Rock, Techno, and Pop all the way to Bluegrass, Swing, and Classical work well. The demographic is not just High School Students; there are many other age groups that enjoy the music too.

Most Hip-Hop/Rap tunes have suspect lyrics, be careful when playing this musical genre, as there are terms that are used that may seem appropriate at the time, but may have a very nasty meaning to it. **To play it safe, if a song is a "Radio-Edit" or "CLEAN version", don't even listen to it, just don't play it.**

For instance from the Top 100 Billboard Pop music and Spotify for 2018, I found that from 400 songs during the year, 300 songs had questionable language or content, were just a bit too slow, and just didn't seem to fit....a little over 75% would not be *FIRST* friendly. That's a lot of mining to get to the gems.

Songs that have profanity, even if it has been "beeped-out", are not to be used at all. Even if they're the most popular song out there...it's still a don't play. Songs that deal with Bullying, Taunting, Violence, Sex and or Drug Use, are also a no-no.

Requests

Everybody wants to hear their favorite music, regardless of where they are it seems. Because we play so many different types of music, and so many different songs, guests think that it's an all-request radio station. They fail to realize that we are trying to create an atmosphere, which is okay, because they're just having a great time and feel that they want to contribute too.

The problem that arises is that many DJ Booth locations are not in a fan-friendly accessible area, and safety issues become a major concern. Therefore, for the present time, **WE WILL NOT BE TAKING ANY REQUESTS** from the floor.

Playlists

Songs that are to be used should be sorted into their prospective playlists, ranging from Walk In music all the way through to the Awards. There are quite a few songs on these lists to choose from. They have been compiled and added to for years.

There are a lot of songs to choose from so the DJ can put their "spin" on the event too. Keep in mind always, that we are an **all-ages family sporting event**, and some very popular songs may not be appropriate to be played at a *FIRST* event, such as LMFAO's "Party Rock Anthem" or even John Travolta's & Olivia Newton Johns "Grease Lightning mega dance mix".

2019 THEME - Destination: Deep Space

The 2019 game is called "Destination: Deep Space", a team emphasis game, that has some *FIRST* firsts, for instance during the autonomous period, there is a screen that blocks the view of the field that simulates a Sandstorm, which ironically is the title to a song synonymous with *FIRST* events ...to get a better idea it's recommended that you visit the *FIRST* website and watch the animation video...this season I've geared many of the music elements to the theme of SPACE, but without over-doing it...hopefully.

WALK IN MUSIC

Doors open early morning, usually an hour prior to opening ceremonies, the music feel should have an easy tempo and groove to uplifting as it gets closer to the opening ceremonies. Most teams, mentors, staff, etc. have probably had long night's prior, therefore blasting high-octane music at this point may not be highly advised. But playing very slow music isn't the right choice here either. The mix should be approximately 75 minutes long, though chances are that you will only go for about 45 minutes, and then the AV team will probably play a video that will take you to the opening ceremonies.

LUNCH MUSIC

Similar to walk in music, it's a part of the day that would be considered "downtime". The morning of competitions have concluded, and everyone is in need of a break. Not only do the robots need to recharge their batteries but also us humans. The feel again is slightly subdued and very easy going. Usually the breaks last for approximately an hour, but it's good to have a little extra put aside. This is also where I input a lot of new music, that is usually charted on the Billboard/Spotify top lists...as many songs may not suit being played during or in between matches, but will lend itself to having our playlists seem current.

OPENING CEREMONIES

This is when the fun begins. And this is when the music begins to “rev up” a notch. Intro music for the MC, and even some instrumental background music while the judges are being introduced works well here. Also, they usually run a video explaining the game, and some motivational messages from the organizers. The National Anthems are sung at this time, it is imperative to also have the your back-up Anthems on stand-by just in case there are any technical/artist difficulties.

TEAM INTRODUCTIONS

Usually during the first go through of the Qualifying matches, I like to use an instrumental piece of music while the MC is introducing each team. All types of instrumentals work well here, even upbeat jazz. However it does have to be upbeat and motivational as each team is getting into the starting gate. Please don't play any songs that would be one team-specific here or during the matches. You can acknowledge some teams theme songs during "In-Betweeners" but not before their matches.

GAME ON - Qualifying.

During these matches, the MC is usually doing a play-by-play commentary over the sound system; therefore using songs with lyrics tend to get in a battle with the announcer. My experience has been to use instrumental music usually with a techno beat, and as it gets closer to the finals the music also gets more dramatic and suspenseful. This season it would be good to start the first match with the song "Sandstorm" by Darude...a FIRST favourite.

GAME ON - Finals

These songs should now be more dramatic and intense as it builds up to the finals. The best type of music to use here would be industrial sounding movie soundtracks; these should finish with a big build up and a hard out.

AFTER MATCHES

After the match ends, there is an anticipatory period as everyone awaits the results. The wait time for the scores had been drastically reduced. Last season it was almost immediate. Keep in mind that this season it may take a bit longer for the scores and the field re-sets.

These are songs that are used to keep everyone's toes tapping but are not necessarily "interactive Crowd Prompt" songs. However they have a place here as to change the pace a bit. They are mostly used in the mornings as the afternoons are geared towards getting everybody up.

FIRST FAVES or CROWD RALLIES

These are usually the real upbeat, get the crowd into it songs. Including *FIRST* favorites like YMCA, Cotton-Eye Joe, Cha-Cha-Slide etc. Strategically however, we don't want to have everyone burnt out by lunchtime. It's great to get them up after the first couple of matches of the day, as their excitement level would have carried over from the opening ceremonies.

And as the day goes on it's nice to take them on a ride too. Similar to a roller- it goes through a series of ups and downs. The goal is to keep everyone excited for the whole ride, but especially near the end of the day when it all counts.

AWARDS CEREMONIES

After the games have concluded for each day, there is an Awards Ceremony to recognize those teams that have been chosen to receive them. The MC usually describes the award, and then the merits of the team and then the team(s) name. Everyone cheers at the announcement, and begins to clap as the teams make their way down to the floor area. The music played here is usually the upbeat, energetic variety. Think goal-scoring songs from your favorite sports team.

Special Moments/Mentor Dances

During *FIRST* events they usually have a mentors moment, where they all come out and do a dance of some sort. It's good to have a few of these on standby. Chances are that they are already in the crowd rally section, but just in case, it's good to be on alert here, and keep the Chicken Dance or the Macarena at the ready.

Conclusion

Pace yourself, it is a LONG day, and you will have to be on your toes the whole time. It's a non-stop show as far as the music is concerned. If you do it well, everyone will be singing the praises, if you don't, they'll talk about how lousy it was. Hopefully I've programmed the music so there they will be singing YOUR praises. It's a win-win for everybody! And Everything is Awesome!!

Yours in Music,

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