10 PROVEN DJ TECHNIQUES
FOR MIXING BETWEEN BPMS & GENRES

ESCAPE THE TEMPO TRAP AND PLAY BETTER DJ SETS THAT TRULY ROCK YOUR DANCEFLOORS

I'm sure you've been on one of those dancefloors where the DJ has taken it up a notch, into "anything goes" territory. The kind of wild nights where genres go out of the window and big party tunes of all types is what it's all about. These kind of "freestyle" DJ sets are more and more what DJing is becoming, and certainly are what is required by a lot of promoters and managers when booking DJs to cater for today's diverse crowds.

Yet beyond that, such sets are increasingly what today's DJs want to be able to play, too. Unless your music collection is strictly single genre, then you're going to need to learn how to spin multi-genre DJ sets - the type that can effortlessly switch from R&B, to house, to hip hop, to EDM, and so on. Otherwise, at best you'll be missing out on playing at least some of your best tunes at your gigs, and in the worse case, there will be big chunks of music that you love and that you'd like to play in your DJ sets that you simply never play. What a waste!

But modern mixing that successfully jumps between genres and BPM is not easy. It certainly isn't a case of just throwing any kind of planning,

programming and transitioning out of the window, to just play big obvious tune after big obvious tune fade-to-fade. This would turn you into a human jukebox - just add a microphone - and you'd be moving perilously close to the worst type of mobile DJ, the type that hasn't moved on since the 1970s.

Done right, though, this kind of "freeform" DJing is definitely worth persevering with, because it can make your DJing more interesting for your audience and more fun for you. Maybe you want to make mixtapes that stand out more and thus get you more bookings. Perhaps you are a mobile DJ who's never tried any kind of club-style mixing but wants to tighten up your techniques to pull ahead of the competition. You might be a "strictly beatmixing" DJ who for whatever reason (boredom, lack of gigs...) wants to start playing sets with a bit more variety.

If you're nodding your head at any of the above, this guide is for you.

WHAT'S IN THE GUIDE

My "10 Proven DJ Techniques For Mixing Between BPMs & Genres" are exactly what you'll find in Part 2 of this guide, when we look at using special versions of songs, effects, turntablist techniques, beatmixing tricks and more to play true multi-BPM and multi-genre sets.

Jump there first, though, and you'll fail.

Why? Because DJs who can do this stuff have basically done all the hard work way before they're throwing amazingly varied tracks into their latest DJ set. That's why Part 1 of this guide exists. It goes over the principles that you have to understand and implement in your DJing to be a successful multi-genre DJ, way before you turn up at your gig. It's the stuff you never get to see, reverse engineered for you so you can do it for yourself. Get that right, and the mixing comes easy.

THE BIGGEST REASON TO DO THIS...

If you're still not convinced you need to do this stuff in your DJing, maybe a story will help you to make that mental leap.

Steve Canueto, one of our tutors here at Digital DJ Tips, was teaching a new DJ the basics recently, someone who had seen him DJ many times.

"The thing is," this guy protested to Steve, "that you know how to mix anything into anything. To me, that's what good DJs do. How are you going to teach me that? Surely it's something you just know, or you don't?"

To answer Steve's friend: Sure, experience helps - but this stuff is teachable.

We've taught thousands of people to DJ, so we should know. And there is, actually, one really big overriding technique for shortcutting the necessary experience (don't worry, we'll get to that soon enough). But underlying Steve's friend's protest - the thing his friend was really trying to say - is this truth, the truth that is at the heart of what DJing is about:

> *"Great DJing is about exactly the right tune, for exactly the people in front of you, right now..."*

Once you reckon you've got that tune figured out, wouldn't it be nice to know that whatever it is, you have the mixing skills to play it next? Yes? Then you're ready. Let's get started with Part 1...

PART 1: PRINCIPLES

In this section, you'll get a firm grounding in how to not only start thinking like a multi-genre DJ, but what you have to do to prepare to play sets this way.

From meticulously organising your DJ collection, and doing so in ways you may not have thought of, to the whole concept of packing DJ sets, to clever new ways of finding the good tunes you're currently missing out on, this section will get you closer to the point where you've got a sufficiently varied selection of music in your repertoire to make it worth your while playing sets like this.

We'll also debunk the myth of beatmixing as the only way "serious" DJs mix, giving you an alternative (actually, it was there all along).

Ready? Let's dive in...
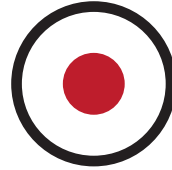
RECORD YOUR SETS, REPROGRAMME YOUR MIND

We need to do some subtle reprogramming of your mind before we can get started here, especially if you're coming from a beatmatching background, where every mix has to be smooth, every transition be hard to notice - where the holy grail is to sound like you're playing one big, long record.

That won't cut it in multi-genre mixing.

If the above is you, you are absolutely going to have to get out of that way of thinking. And trust me, if it is you, that thinking goes *deep.*

Here's the problem: There is one person who will always viciously pull apart every DJ mix you ever do, even your most exquisitely beatmixed, smoothly programmed efforts.

You.

Have you ever made a mixtape and started again and again because you thought the mixes sounded awful, only to hear your own tape months down the line and realise it actually sounded OK? Ever wondered why that was the case? The reason is that a DJ's audience (and that was what you had become when you heard that mix again months later, long after you'd forgotten all the intricacies of mixing it - your own "audience") is *always far less critical of any set than the DJ who mixed it.*

The truth is this: *There is not a single transition you've ever performed that you can't spot when you hear it again.* The problem is that us DJs tend to cut ourselves zero slack over these things - yet when we hear another DJ playing a great set, yet containing performing mixes that are at times perfectly easy to notice, we think it's fine.

And the reason that this is a problem particularly in multi-genre DJing is that as soon as you start mixing in the ways this guide talks about, where every transition is *meant* to be noticed, you'll basically be telling yourself that *every single transition you do is terrible* - at least at first.

But you'll be confusing *terrible* with *noticeable.*

Here's the thing: Yes, a lot of multi-genre mixing is noticeable... and that's just fine! Reality check - the audience doesn't care. They want good tune after good tune, tightly programmed, that they can dance to. Or to put it another way: A good DJ can convince most of the people, most of the time - and this is your aim. Nothing more. Just because a transition is noticeable, doesn't mean it wasn't done *well.*

But that's still not going to be enough to convince you, I know that. So here's what you're going to do from now on (spoiler: what follows is the biggest piece of advice in this whole guide). First thing: Whenever you power up your decks to practise mixing, *hit record,* and leave that sucker recording till the last note of your practice session sounds out and all is quiet again. Got it?

The second thing is: Don't stop and go back to the beginning because you think your mixing is sounding terrible. This is practising we're doing here, not making an important new mixtape (and even if you were making a mixtape and you messed up, there are easy ways of fixing all that stuff without starting again - we cover it in our Pro Mixtape Formula Course.) You're going to get into the zone, try things that you think will work but don't, be forced to rush mixes that actually turn out OK - and all the rest. The important thing is that you carry on regardless. Prolific beats perfect. And even more important, you don't actually *know* - I mean, you *really don't have a clue* - whether any of the stuff you're doing as you practise is any good. Not yet, anyway.

So the third thing you're going to do is: *Listen back to your practice session recording at least 24 hours later.* Throw it on your iPad and play it in your car, or on your Sonos or AirPlay speakers. Listen to it at the gym, or when you're out running. Bluetooth it when you're cooking, or play in your headphones when someone else in the house is watching something rubbish on TV. Just get it on in your real life, away from your decks.

What will happen is that you'll magically start hearing your mixing as *everyone else in the world hears it.* And you know what? You'll start *knowing for sure* what works and what doesn't. You'll get ideas all of your own about how you can make subtle changes to whatever you were doing to make it better. You'll learn whether things that didn't sound good were like that because of the tunes you chose or the mixing technique you used, so you'll know what to do differently next time. You'll learn how the *order* you play your songs in affects whether or not the mixes work just as much as the mixes themselves do.

This is what I meant earlier by a "shortcut to experience". Because in DJing, all experience really is is understanding how the dancefloor is receiving what you're doing. And recording your mixes is the second best way to learn that, quickly. It'll be your biggest single weapon in becoming an accomplished, confident multi genre DJ, who plays in front of audiences week after week, delivering great multi-genre sets. (By the way, that's the first way - playing regularly in front of real people...)

LABEL YOUR MUSIC PROPERLY

One of the great things about digital music is that you can organise it in so many different ways. We're going to need to do some pretty efficient, deft tune searches when DJing multi-genre, so this is a godsend. We'll talk a lot more about this, but first, we need to make sure we've got the basics sorted, and that means a well-labelled music collection. Label your collection properly, and you can spot tunes that may well go together in all kinds of ways.

Here are the labels I recommend you have for each and every tune in your collection (I am assuming you already use title, artist, remix name). Where you organise your music is up to you - some use iTunes, some do it right in their DJ software. Each has pros and cons. But the important thing to know is that organisation isn't optional. "Multi-genre" doesn't mean "throw it all together and hope".

1. **Genre -** Here's the thing about genre. If you use genre for big, broad categories, then actually, everything within one "genre" can be quite varied. A multi-genre, multi-BPM DJ doesn't need seven types of

house music (tech house, minimal house, blah blah blah) - call it all house! Same with disco, funk, indie, breakbeat, hip hop, trance etc. Divide the tunes in your collection up into the broadest, biggest chunks you can, and forget sub-genres and genre categories you only have two or three tunes in. A good rule of thumb is six to ten "genres", and none where you don't have at least a couple of hours of music. (This last number will grow over time.)

2. **BPM -** This tag is obvious and your DJ software works it out anyway, but multi-genre DJs often like to use iTunes to sort their music (it's got some powerful smart playlists, for example), so here is a tip if you can't get your BPMs back into iTunes from your DJ software: In iTunes, highlight your whole music collection, selecting "Get info" from the menu or by hitting CMD/CTRL-I, and change an arbitrary tag, such as "composer" (it's on the "Sorting" tab) - this will force a tag refresh, and every tune's BPM will magically be brought in from your DJ software. Now you can slice and dice by BPM right there...

3. **Key -** All major DJ software now does key detection, so make sure you analyse your files in your DJ software and tick any checkbox to add this value. Being able to mix in the same or a related key is a dirty secret of multi-genre mixing, letting you get away with all sorts, so read up on how it works. (Hint: You don't need any musical knowledge to get started, you just need to remember a simple "system" - it'll all be in your DJ software manual. When you're ready to "go pro", we have a whole course on it - How To Master Keymixing.)

4. **Energy Level -** If you haven't thought about this yet, you must do it right now. Give all your tracks an energy rating of one to five. You can hijack iTunes' star ratings if you like, use your DJ software's own if it has them, or just give each track a number, typed into the "Comments" field of each file (maybe use a number and a character for easy searching, such as "@1", "@2", "@3", "@4", "@5"), where rating 1 is warm-up and rating 5 is the most energetic, banging, floorfilling tracks you have.

5. **"Mixes well with" -** Multi-genre DJs discover some of their best stuff through trial and error, and often in front of a crowd - and mixes can get forgotten in the heat of the moment. To never forget a good mix, type "MWW" into the "Comments" field of a song you just, well, mixed well with something, followed by the name of the song you mixed it into ("MWW Daft Punk - Get Lucky", for instance). If you're also using your Comments field for energy levels, the comments for our imaginary track may look like this: "@3 MWW Daft Punk - Get Lucky". The beauty is these elements can be searched and filtered in iTunes or your DJ software for instant mix ideas.

6. **"Out of the box" tagging -** How about grouping all your instrumentals together, or all female vocals, or all saxophone tunes, or all tunes where the tempo changes mid-way through, or all tracks that end without drums (great for changing tempo in the mix, as we'll see later...)? It's easy - come up with a system of keywords and add them to your Comments field, or a spare column (many DJs like to use the "Grouping" column in iTunes as it's usually available in DJ software too), or see if you can colour code your tunes (Serato and Rekordbox lets you do this, for instance). Some tunes cross genres but "belong" together - this is your chance to save that info against them, as sets of them start to "clump together" in your collection

Finally, it is important you read the section in your DJ software manual about your library: Not only the stuff about filtering, sorting, searching and using playlists and crates, but also the stuff about backing it up. The thing is, once you start doing lots of work on your tunes, you won't want to lose your DJ software's data about your tunes, in just the same way you won't want to lose the tunes themselves, and this data is often stored in a different place - so get clued up, and get a backup routine sorted...

PACK THE RIGHT CRATE

You know when you see those DJs we spoke of earlier, great tune after great tune flying out of their boxes, seemingly effortlessly finding what to play next, spending little-to-no time browsing on their laptop? Want to know one of the key secrets to how they do it? *They only pack about double the amount of music they are going to play.*

Now, you may be saying: "Hang on a minute, digital lets me carry all my music, why would I only take a small amount of it with me?"

Loads of reasons, actually.

Firstly, you don't *really* not take it all - you just pack a digital crate for tonight, and do it carefully, too. If you think you'll play 20 tunes an hour and your set is two hours, that's going to be 40 tunes times two, or 80 tunes in total. You've still got the rest of your tunes with you, of course, but you try and play exclusively out of that crate. This number constrains you enough while at the same time lets you take your set in any number of directions according to the crowd in front of you.

Especially for multi-genre DJs, this does three profound things for you.

One, it makes you think really, really hard about what those 80 tunes will be. Two, it forces you to look for and try more daring mixes on the night, as you're forcing yourself to do this through giving yourself less choice. And three, it lets you concentrate hard on *how* you're going to mix those tunes together (as you already know the tunes you've chosen are good and constitute a balanced set - you spend ages choosing them, after all - so you're motivated to try and "fit them all in".

So how to pack a set? Well, use your tags, to start with: Pick energy levels that suit the set time. Pack a few proven "MWW" tunes (see previous section). Pick some "plan B" tunes, some floorfillers, some experimental tunes. Pack a good mix of styles and genres. And as you get a few gigs under your belt, look in your "History" section of your DJ software of previous crates (always save your crates...) for ideas.

An irony of crate packing is that while it forces you to an extent to play safe and be conservative (after all you can't just throw everything in and hope, so you're thinking of your dancefloor as you pack each and every one of those tunes), at the same time it frees you up to be more inventive on the night.
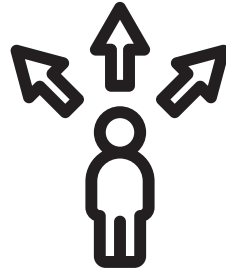
USE RECOMMENDATION ENGINES

Go to any online music store, or dive into any music list in your own collection, and chances are the tunes you'll find in any given place are going to be similar to each other. And while keeping all your mid-tempo house in one place, or all your drum & bass in its own folder, or sorting your collection into genre playlists is all well and fine, what we're looking for as multi-genre DJs is tunes that somehow fit together *despite* not having any of the usual things in common.

So how do we get ideas and find exciting new stuff to mix with? That's where "recommendation engines" can be a huge help. These things can be solid gold in helping you to find tunes to play "next" that you'd never think of otherwise. There are two types, online and offline, and both can be useful to you.

Online recommendation engines pop up all over the place, and you can easily recognise them from things like this:

"People who bought this also bought this"

"Like this? You might like this…"

When you buy music, you should always check these suggestions out, as they can contain stuff that some algorithm or other has linked to the tunes you're buying, but in ways you may not otherwise have thought of. At the time of writing, Beatport (via its Beatport Pro downloadable Mac/PC app) lets you search tracks by things like mood, venue type, set time, and lots of other weird and wonderful things ("deep", "groovy", "bouncy", "dark" etc.) - over a million tracks in total. Also, look for anything "powered by Echonest" - Echonest is behind Spotify recommendations and uses user data to recommend other stuff you may like. Don't forget services that take a track or two that you suggest and build a "radio station" around them, too. Serato's Pyro app has some clever stuff going on, as well. Give them a go, and grab any tracks that take your fancy.

Offline recommendation engines also come in all shapes and sizes, but the difference is that these recommend tracks you own, based upon other music you already own. Not only will these gently prod you to remember tracks you may have forgotten in your collection, but again, they may throw up things that have some kind of esoteric connection to what you're playing that isn't immediately obvious.

Use Genius in iTunes. Look at tools like BeaTunes, which attempts to analyse your tunes and colour code them by mood. And definitely make full use of any "recommended next tune" features built in to your DJ software. While these often rely on genre and BPM, they also may group stuff together by key, throwing up tunes you may not have thought of. Algoriddim's djay apps as well as Traktor DJ for iOS have good recommendation engines built in, so if your DJ software doesn't have one, why not grab one of these and use it just to suggest next tracks?

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LEARN TO COUNT

Beatmixing and multi-genre, multi-BPM mixing don't really go hand in hand. Beatmixing is great for those single genre, single BPM sets where the music all blends into everything else, but the kind of broad strokes needed for a multi-genre, multi-BPM set call for a different philosophy of mixing. While some of the techniques in Part 2 of this guide do use beatmixing, many don't. But they all have one thing in common: Counting.

As long as you know where you are in the cycle of beats and bars in your mix, you can get away with some truly huge BPM and genre switches while not dropping a beat and while keeping your floor engaged. The trick is to make sure you respect bars and phrases. Think of a bar as four beats (THUD, thud, thud, thud, to use house as an example), and a phrase as four bars, or 16 beats (could be eight bars or even 16 bars, depending on the music).

Whatever else you do in your mixing, as long as you ensure when you switch from one tune to another you respect where you're at in the cycle of beats, bars and phrases, that mix has the potential to sound great.

Many DJs count the phrases from the first beat of the first bar by counting "ONE two three four, TWO two three four, THREE two three four, FOUR two three four" and then returning to the start (or up to EIGHT, two, three, four" etc). Drop a new tune on its ONE beat (or "downbeat") at the exact time when the outgoing tune has cycled back to a "ONE" beat, and you'll generally get away with that mix, even if you stop the outgoing tune dead, right there (which is often the best method when making big changes).

Remember what I said earlier about "fooling most of the people, most of the time"? Counting beats, bars and phrases is the biggest tool you have to do this.

So now you know some of the behind the scenes best practises of multi-genre DJs, let's move on to Part 2 of this guide, where I'll give you lots of ideas you can build on top of this stuff to play truly outstanding multi-BPM and multi-genre sets...

PART 2: MIXES

This section has some time-tested ways to "get from one tune to the next" when the BPMs, genres and common sense may all be telling you "no"! This can be some of the most fun you have as a DJ, and if the multi-genre DJ's mantra is to be "the right tune, for the people in front of me, right now", then you're going to have to get comfortable with mixing this way.

You know the tune you want to play next, you know how to count the beats, bars and phrases so at least the structure will flow... now what icing are you going to put on the cake to ensure the transition you're about to do is as good as it can be?

USE BEATLESS SECTIONS
TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

The problem with beatmixing is, well, the beats. Remove the beats from one or other of the songs, and you remove a large part of the need for those songs to be at the same BPM.

Say you want to DJ from a house tune into a hip hop tune. If you pick a house tune where the beat disappears at the end leaving just pads, strings, or a bit of vocal, then you can start the hip hop tune playing over that beatless section, gracefully fading out the house track for a smooth, tight transition. The important thing to remember is to start that second tune right on a downbeat (or "ONE" beat), and to do so where the downbeat would have been on the outgoing tune, had the beats not disappeared.

A pro trick to would be to count four imaginary beats before dropping the hip hop tunes (I'm using hip hop as an example here, it could be an EDM tune, whatever). So the house tune gets to the "FOUR, two, three, four" or "EIGHT, two, three, four" - however the phrase ends - and instead of dropping the new tune on the "ONE" of the "ONE, two, three, four" where the beat has now gone, count "ONE, two, three, four" in your head and drop it on the imaginary "TWO". This four beat gap technique is used a lot in EDM and sometimes in house, for instance, so is expected by dancefloors.

PRO TIP

The technique can also work when dropping in a track that starts without a beat, but the problem doing this when the BPM also changes between tracks is that it is hard to get the "counting" right; when the first beat arrives on the incoming track, ideally you want it to be on a natural downbeat of the outgoing track, and how will you know that? I've been known to time such transitions with a timer in seconds, but it's hit and miss at best. However, if you practise such a transition at home and can get it right every time, these too can work...

USE TEMPO CHANGE TUNES

Easy one this: Find tunes where the tempo changes, to do the hard work for you. There are all kinds of tunes out there where this happens. Many DJ download pools have tunes specifically designed to help DJs with such tempo changes, that slow down or speed up to let you beatmix something of a different BPM in. If you're not a member of a download pool like Promo Only or zipDJ, consider joining one.

Your work is going to come from the technicalities of mixing with such tunes. Your DJ hardware or software's BPM system is only going to be able to give you a single BPM for such a tune, and it may even give up altogether. So your manual beatmatching ability is going to come into play.

However, there are ways around this even if you prefer to use the sync button to beatmix. By using the "tap" function on your software (that lets you "tap" along to the beat to tell it the tune's BPM), you can label a tune with the BPM that matters to you for mixing, and you can even do this on the fly. Once you know the hip hop tune with the EDM speed up towards the end starts at 89 BPM but ends at 130 BPM, you can set the BPM of the other deck accordingly, and then you'll find beatmixing much easier.

There are also tunes where the BPM just slows down and keeps slowing, for instance, and these types of tune may also feature an additional genre-switch friendly device too (ie the beat slows down and then disappears entirely - see "Use beatless sections to your advantage" above). You've got to learn to be an opportunist with these things and jump on whatever is handed to you and run with it.

Finally, you can do it yourself! As long as you slow a tune down confidently it doesn't matter if you do it noticeably. This way, you could feasibly slow house down to hip hop, for example, by simply moving the pitch fader. Again, manual beatmixing will help if you then want to drop in your hip hop tune and have them playing together, but there's nothing wrong with slowing a tune down and then dropping another tune in on a "ONE" beat and at the same time removing the old tune entirely (in other words, simply cutting from one to the other) - this alerts your audience that the tempo is changing, but saves you having to do any beatmixing at all.

This always works best when there's little or no musical information going on (eg there's just a beat left) - or if there is musical stuff going on, you should definitely engage keylock to keep the pitch the same. Also, make sure you set your DJ gear's pitch percentage to high enough for the transition you want to make - no point trying to mix from speedy drum & bass to laid-back house with just a six percent pitch variation on your pitch fader...
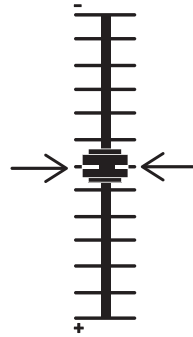
THE 50/50 PITCH TECHNIQUE

This uses a bit of what we just discussed, that is to say actually slowing a tune down yourself quite a lot, but always involves beatmixing. Indeed, you could just think of it as "extreme beatmixing". Say you have a tune at 120 BPM and a tune at 100 BPM. For this technique, you slow the 120 BPM tune down to 110, and speed the other tune up to 110 too, then just beatmix them as normal.

Yeah, the standard advice is not to change pitch that much, but BPM and genre-shifting DJs don't follow the "rules" - they do drastic stuff and see what works. (Remember I told you to record everything? This is another example of why.) However, while there may not be hard and fast rules, there are a few guideline for this technique:

1. *The less musical information, the better* - As with all beatmixing, be sympathetic to what's going on in each of the songs. But especially when you're doing big, noticeable BPM changes, doing so over a relatively short space of time with just some beats running or maybe a single bassline or something else equally simple will usually work best. A word of warning: Doing this during vocal or highly melodic sections runs the risk of sounding terrible, especially if you have forgotten to engage keylock!

2. *Make your least drastic change with the better known of the tracks* - ...so you may slow down a really well known song from 120 to 114, and speed up the lesser known of the two to 114 for the purpose of a tight, quick beatmix.

3. *Get back to the original speed as fast as possible in the new track -* No point leaving a hip hop tune racing away at 105BPM, or a house tune plodding along at 110 BPM - slow the hip hop tune back

to within a few percentage points of its usual speed as fast as you can and vice versa for the house tune (to give two examples)

Remember, this doesn't have to be about people not noticing what you're doing, like standard beatmixing is - it's about smooth, playful, clean transitions between two tracks that absolutely ought to be played *right now*, whatever the genre. That said, when you get used to this, you may just find yourself performing bolder beatmixes in your more "single sound" sets too, and in that case, of course spread out the time you take to do your speed changes so they're less noticeable. Experiment with when you do the changes (ie a big change on the downbeat, lots of little changes in BPM at random times), to see what gets noticed and what doesn't.

digital dj tips
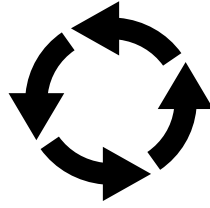
USE SIMPLE (BUT EFFECTIVE) TURNTABLIST TECHNIQUES

Watch any half-decent old school turntable DJ and you'll realise they're not scared to make it blatantly obvious that they're controlling the decks, by performing a number of simple but effective transition techniques. Whether you're also using turntables, or you're on a modern DJ controller, you can do this stuff, too. Here are a few ideas:

1. **Spin back** - Grab and "spin back" the outgoing track just before the end of a musical phrase, and drop the incoming track in on a downbeat where the downbeat of the track you just stopped would have been. If you're using a DJ system with jogwheels, just make sure you're in "scratch" mode not "nudge" mode. Practise getting a healthy amount of spinback on the jogwheel so it stops just before the "ONE" beat/downbeat would have sounded, and also practise starting the new tune on that "ONE" beat cleanly, while using the crossfader (or play/pause button) to turn off the outgoing tune. You can do big BPM changes like this. Some DJ controller FX units also have an effect that can do this, with alterable speeds for how quickly (and for how long) the track "spins back"... so you can do it at the touch of a button.

2. **Turn off -** This is the equivalent of a Technics turntable DJ turning off the power to the turntable, so the audio is still heard, but the track slowly slows down. If you're using turntables, CDJs (they usually have an adjustable version of this), or DVS, it's easy, but again, some DJ software has the effect too. Again, practise so the track slows down almost to stopped just in time for dropping the next one on a "ONE" beat, or close to where it might have been (it's not so critical with this technique, which even more than the one above, signifies a really big change in the music - best to stick to doing this only, say, once in a set).

3. ***Speed up -*** This is definitely trickier than the other two, but can sound great when done properly. Basically, you make the track play faster than usual, by putting your finger on the jogwheel or platter and speeding it up, more and more. It's even more noticeable than the others, so do it sparingly and do practise - especially if you're using real vinyl, when centrifugal force can throw the needle right off the record!

All of these techniques, being so blatantly obvious, work best when there's a big contrast between the tunes - for instance switching from a full-on tune to a stripped back beat, or from something that's building the tension into something that releases it (usually a huge part of a well-known song).

DO SOME SCRATCHING

A natural follow-on from the entry-level turntable techniques we just covered (and the beatless one also), adding some scratching in your DJ sets to transition between tracks is not only impressive but also powerful when it comes to changing genre and/or BPM. Don't panic though, you don't need to be a DMC world champion to pull this off, you just need to be able to do the "baby scratch" rhythmically and consistently, which you could learn to do in a matter of hours. In fact, if you want to grab some free scratch sounds and training PDF on how to do this, just head here.

Let's say you want to play a track at 90 BPM and the current song is at 120 BPM. A killer way to use scratching is to get your incoming track cued up to the drop, and start to baby scratch back and forth the first beat that you're going to drop, over the current playing track. So you'll be scratching in rhythm at 120 BPM - all good. Keep the scratch going with the fader "live" on the new track so the audience can hear (and see) you scratching, then either stop or fade out the current playing track. So now it's just you, keeping the rhythm with a scratch! (Scary I know but the reward is worth it.)

Now, start to slow down the rhythm of the scratch, always counting the bars and phrases as if the previous track was still playing; you're aiming to have the scratch tempo down to somewhere near 90 BPM after around four bars (any longer than this it could get boring). Then on the ONE beat, let go (drop it) and watch your crowd go wild! This works especially well if the tune you're bringing in is a well-known "killer" track... Your audience are not thinking about BPM here, they're just safe in the knowledge that the DJ is in control and rocking the dancefloor.

You can apply this to changing up in tempo as well as down and it's great to change genres, too. I heard this used to great effect at a club in Ibiza when the DJ scratched in and dropped "Singing In The Rain" out of a techno track just at the point when the jets came on for a full-on "water party" - I'll never forget it!

These are just tip of the iceberg ideas of how to use scratching in DJing; we cover loads of techniques in our comprehensive scratch training course Scratching For Controller DJs.

USE YOUR EFFECTS

This one falls squarely into the camp of "noticeable, but cool..." - if done sparingly. The effects you're looking to experiment with here are the delay and echo effects, because they do two things that work in your favour as a multi-format DJ:

1. **They stop the current song being interesting -** If you throw a delay effect onto a song and then stop it playing, all the audience is going to hear is a small part of that song, echoed/delayed over and over again, slowly disappearing into the distance. Once they've heard it echo twice, their brains know the score and stop finding any real interest in the track, meaning what you start playing now is going to take their attention immediately away from the outgoing track - yet you've done something cool and avoided silence.

2. **They have a rhythm of their own, which you can use to your advantage -** On most modern effects functions, you can set the effect to repeat every half beat, two beats, bar, whatever. But you can also slow this down or speed it up manually. One advanced and very (ahem) effective way of switching genres is to put a long, single beat delay on the last bit of a song, stop it playing (so all the audience is hearing is the delay), then slow it down or speed it up to a new "BPM" (as set by how often the effect is "looping" or repeating). You then manually beatmix another tune over the tail of the delay.

Actually, with the second of the points above, it isn't hugely important to do the beatmixing bit (just as well, as it's not hugely easy, either!); if you speed the delay up it suggests a higher tempo is coming (then you drop into a higher tempo tune and remove the delay sharpish), and the same works when slowing a tune down. The point is, you're *suggesting* a change in tempo. The audience will fill in the gaps and come along with you on it.

PRO TIP

Look for a "post fader FX" setting on your effects; this allows the echo or delay to carry on playing even when the outgoing tune has been removed entirely from the mix.
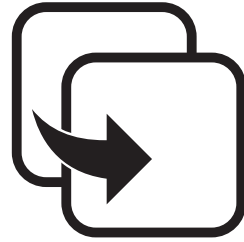
USE TWO VERSIONS OF THE SAME SONG

This is a great tool if you have a hip hop or R&B song that also has a load of house mixes, too (let's face it, that's lots of them). It means it's easy to change your tempo in either direction between those genres. But it works for any genres where you have the same track remixed into different styles.

Basically, you use your choice of pretty much all of the other techniques outlined here to perform a mix, but do that mix between two versions of the same song. It works because the audience likes the song, half of them won't even notice (trust me), and even if they did notice, they may say things like: "I liked the version of that song that was at two tempos, where can I get that from?"

Also, if you get all the versions of a track available (DJ download pools are great for this, as they tend to have more choice), you may get some versions that lend themselves really well to this, because they're designed for DJs to play with anyway, and also because your audience may not be familiar enough with those particular versions to necessarily notice immediately when you start chopping and changing between them. Plus, you might get an acapella too. (Acapellas are great for mixing between genres, by the way, as they remove the beat, but keep the audience's interest high… our Acapella Mixing Masterclass can make you a ninja with these.)

85bpm ⟳ **170bpm**
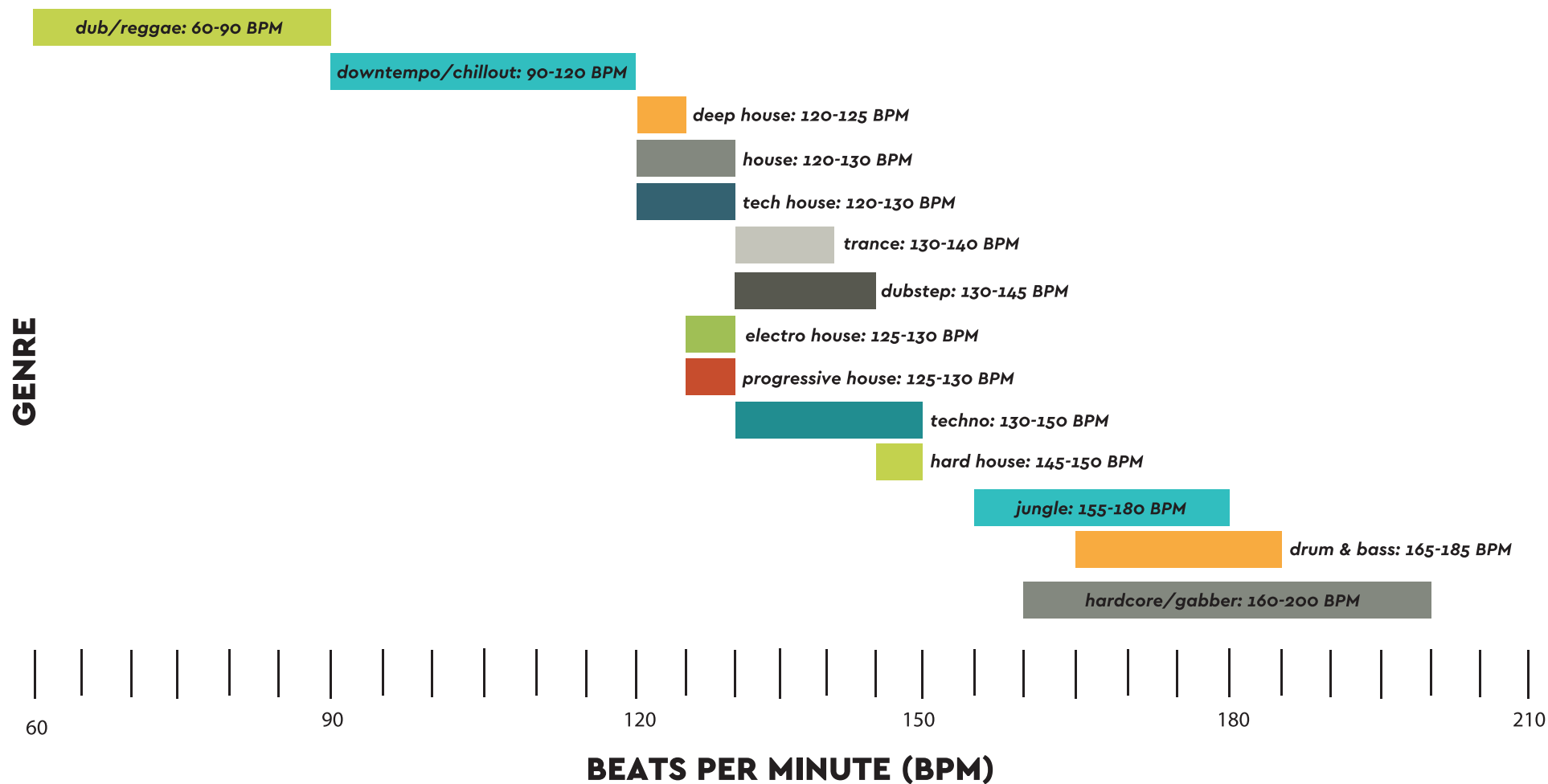
BEATMIX BY HALVING OR DOUBLING THE CURRENT BPM

This is a sneaky trick that if you haven't thought of it or done it until now, you'll be wondering why! It is really simple: Simply perform a beatmix, but into something that is double or half the existing BPM. So for instance, if you were playing a 60 BPM dub or reggae tune, you could drop into 120 BPM house tune (I have heard Sasha & Digweed do this on many occasions). Or you could segue from drum & bass down into a slow R&B track. Because mathematically the beats line up (two for every one, or vice versa), beatmixing this kind of stuff is easy.
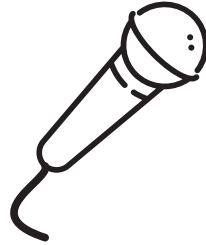
One thing to watch out for is the "sync" button, as that might actually play one of your tunes twice as fast as it should be, or twice as slow! An easy way to temporarily fix this is to simply double the BPM in your software

(or halve it, of course) for that track, and usually there's a function that does just that for you, as this is one of the most common errors auto BPM algorithms make when analysing your music in the first place.

To experiment with this one, just sort your music by BPM, and look at the two extremes for some likely candidates to mix into each other. You may spot some tunes that you'd forgotten about too, not least because there's every chance your software has accidentally tucked a drum & bass track you love at 85 BPM, or a chilled beach tune up at 190 BPM, by mistake...

SOME COMMON GENRES AND BPMS

GENRE

dub/reggae: 60-90 BPM

downtempo/chillout: 90-120 BPM

deep house: 120-125 BPM

house: 120-130 BPM

tech house: 120-130 BPM

trance: 130-140 BPM

dubstep: 130-145 BPM

electro house: 125-130 BPM

progressive house: 125-130 BPM

techno: 130-150 BPM

hard house: 145-150 BPM

jungle: 155-180 BPM

drum & bass: 165-185 BPM

hardcore/gabber: 160-200 BPM

| 60 | 90 | 120 | 150 | 180 | 210 |

BEATS PER MINUTE (BPM)

USE THE MICROPHONE/AN MC

For our penultimate technique, we come full circle. In the olden days, when record decks were driven by rubber bands and DJ gear came covered in carpet, DJs used to talk between their tunes. Some still do. Yeah, the image is of cheesy middle aged guys getting more and more drunk and mumbling inaudible nonsense between overplayed hits, but one thing these jocks have no issue with is jumping around genres and BPMs.

Yet there's absolutely nothing wrong with us modern DJs jumping on the microphone. Just like all of these techniques, it's when you do it and how often that matters. The DJ who forgets that he or she is primarily an entertainer is on dodgy ground, and if DJing is about transfer of enthusiasm and energy from DJ box to dancefloor, the mic is a very effective way of doing that.

Of course, from a multi-genre point of view, you can get away with all sorts once you flick the microphone on. To start with, you can stop the outgoing song while you speak (so no BPM or genre issues from a mixing point of view). But you can also frame what you're about to do. Some examples:

- **End of the night -** You've played your last tune of a cracking house night, but you have time for one more. Lights come up. Everyone's looking expectantly at you. You flick the mic on and shout: "Who's up for one more?" Everyone cheers. You drop a huge, huge tune in a totally different genre. Everyone goes ballistic. Job done.

- **Introducing a change of style -** "Are you having fun yet? What we're going to do right here is go back, wayyyy back…" you say, before dropping in to 20 minutes of classic hip hop. Everyone goes ballistic. Job done.

- **Introducing the biggest (and preferably most surprising) tune of the night -** "I wouldn't play this for any crowd. But you're not any crowd. You're special. This night is special. And this tune is just

for you...", you say in your most heartfelt voice, before smashing into some long-lost but well-loved classic. (I heard Paul Oakenfold, reasonably recently actually, use just this technique before playing Darude's "Sandstorm". It's a track that's been the victim of its own success, of course, but the fact he'd played underground trance for the hour beforehand and had real passion in his voice in this case flipped it into one of the night's highlights...)

I am sure you can think of other examples (drum & bass culture has at times been fond of its MCs and "can I get a rewind" mixing techniques, for example), but the point is: don't be scared of the mic... smart DJs work out how to use it to help with big shifts in style, genre and BPM.

digital dj tips
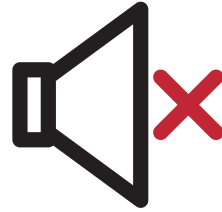
ENJOY THE SILENCE

Our final trick is the boldest of all, but a good DJ knows well its power. I've actually already given you one example of its use. (Were you reading closely? It is the "end of night" microphone example, where the music stops, and you leave it hanging for a while before doing anything else.) But silence itself is a great mixing technique. DJ Harvey, who knows a thing or two about these things, said:

> Silence can be a very loud thing, and you can make an impression. If you're scrambling for the next record, that might not be such a good look. If you have the situation under control, you can make a lot of impression with a silent moment.

Do you have a song that ends with just a vocal at full volume yet all the rest fades out? Why not play it to the end, let the vocal finish, and wait a few seconds before slamming in something totally different? Especially if the lyric is poignant (and you put a bit of echo on the last words - see "Use your effects"), it could be a highlight of your whole set.

Maybe you can concoct a bit of theatre with your lighting guy... stop the music dead in an entirely inappropriate place while he kills all the lights, so it looks like a power cut. Leave it silent for a bit, then play a song that starts with crackling or someone chatting on about something that just happened. ("Is everything cool, all right, what happened?" ... "Do not attempt to leave the dancefloor. The DJ booth is constructing a troubleshoot test of the entire system" - I am sure you can think of tracks like these.) Done well, tricks like these once in a while can inject a lot of fun into your set, and of course allow you to change the mood entirely. Harvey hits the nail on the head in what he says: *If you have the situation under control.* The question you should be asking yourself is: Where would a silent few seconds be fun or appropriate in tonight's set? Then be bold enough to do it...

SUMMARY

Of course, I can only scratch the surface of these techniques in a guide like this, and there's so much more to share, but I hope you're at least starting to see a whole new way of DJing after reading this guide. As we now know, it's a way of DJing that puts *the right track for the people in front of you right now* at the top of your list of priorities when playing a DJ set - and *how the hell you're going to mix those tunes together* back where it belongs: A good few places down in your list.

Don't try wacky mixes for the sake of it just because you get a bit too enthusiastic (this can often happen to DJs who get hooked on keymixing, for example), which would be going too far the other way from bland, boring beatmixing all night. Instead, try and respect the flow. One thing the best beatmixing DJs do well is manage the overall energy level of a set, so it rises, peaks, drops, and at the same time overall heads in a certain direction, depending on the night, the crowd, the time and so on. This is absolutely something you should keep in mind too; the "micro" level of how you do each mix shouldn't dominate the "macro" level of the direction you're taking the night in, not ever.

So hopefully you're enthusiastic now, but I still sense resistance. Resistance in DJing mainly comes from a fear of emptying your dancefloors, or doing something really stupid behind the decks. I have some advice on both.

Firstly, it's OK to "rotate" your audience. Multi-genre and multi-BPM mixing does not require you to keep everyone on the dancefloor all the time! Actually, it demands the opposite. It frees you up to chop and change your audience as well as your music. I used to go to a night (a very successful night as it happens, at a sadly now closed club called the Leadmill in Sheffield, England) where they played strictly 20 minutes of indie followed by 20 minutes of dance/hip hop - all night. It divided the crowd right down the middle, but it worked. And while I don't advise doing that necessarily, the point is that if people learn that what they like is just around the corner, they'll be cool with it.

The second point is that some of the mixes I'm encouraging you to try out above are, well, pretty daunting, especially in a live situation. It's absolutely fine to perform them over and over again at home with the "record" button on, and when you get a good take, to extract that from the recording and play it as a mini mix as part of your DJ set. In other words, to pre-prepare part of your mix. It is absolutely not fine to pre-record your whole set, of course. But a particularly tricky transition, acapella, or effect mix? There's nothing wrong with this at all. If it improves your DJ sets, everyone wins - and you'll get good enough to do it live in good time, anyway.

Go out there, do some multi-genre and BPM mixing, and have fun!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Morse is a DJ who's played at some of the world's best clubs and for some of clubbing's biggest brands, including at Privilege in Ibiza, on Ministry of Sound Radio, and at U2's Kitchen nightclub. He now runs Digital DJ Tips, the biggest online DJ training school in the world, having sold DJ courses to over 12,000 DJs in 50 countries.

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