



## 2015 FIRST MUSIC STRATEGY GUIDE

### 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

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 will accomplish this by creating files that are edited to give a "tighter" flow to the games. Create 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 is the same as last, 2:30. However **the autonomous period has been changed from 10 seconds to 15 seconds**. 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. 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. ***This lasts 15 seconds***. There goes another "Charge Horn" which begins part 2 of the match: ***The Teleop Period***. This is when all the players get behind their remote controls and try to "score". ***This lasts 2 minutes and 15 seconds***.

The Playoff rounds are a best-of-3, and sometimes there are sweeps and other times it goes to sudden-death. The Championship round usually has a 6-minute turnaround between matches.

*In 2013, the average amount of matches played during a regional tournament was 82, with the High being 99 Matches and the Low being 58 Matches. With that in mind, be prepared to repeat "the pattern" up to 100 times during an event.*

### **Music Genre**

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 in the Top 100 Billboard Pop music for 2014, I found that 50% of the songs would not be FIRST friendly.

***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".

## 2015 THEME - RECYCLE RUSH

The 2015 game is called "Recycle Rush", a recycling-themed game. Robots score points by stacking totes on scoring platforms, capping those stacks with recycling containers, and properly disposing of pool noodles, representing litter. Alliances also earn points for disposing of their litter in their Landfill Zone near the center of the field, or placing litter in or on scored recycling containers. Alliances that leave litter unprocessed on their side of the field at the end of the match, not in scoring position, will add points to the score of the other Alliance. Alliances also have an opportunity to earn **Coopertition** points by coordinating with the other Alliance in the match. Coopertition points are awarded if, at some point in the match, there are at least four yellow totes on the step simultaneously. Coopertition points are doubled if the Alliances arrange at least four of those yellow totes in a single stack on the step.

## SPECIAL FIRST SONGS

Last season FIRST had the pleasure of playing a song from Will.I.Am that was remixed with FIRST in mind. The song Hall of Fame, was even performed LIVE at the 2014 Championships in St.Louis. This season there is another FIRST specific music track called **"INSPIRE THE WORLD" by the DEMERS BROTHERS**. You can download it from the website [firstmusicdjs.com] that should be played immediately following the Award Ceremonies, however it's such a good tune, that it would be fine to play it following the National Anthems as the first match is about to get set-up. I have also created/remixed a game-specific "Game On" track called "Recycled Rush with more Cowbell"... I've also added this track to the website for you to use during the first match of the day, and for the first match in the playoffs.

## WALK IN MUSIC

Doors open early morning, 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. This is also a good time to play a lot of current

pop tunes The mix should be approximately 75 minutes long, though chances are that you will only go for about 45 minutes, 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. Again current pop tunes that don't have the tempo we need during game time, would work well here.

### **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. I like to build the tension during the autonomus period and "dropping the beat" right at the 15-second mark, and then driving it home during for the next 2:15.

### **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. Sometimes it's almost immediate, but just in case it takes a bit longer it's good to have a song playing until it's revealed. In the past I had a DRUMROLL Sound effect, however this season I'm eliminating it as it was adding undue pressure on the scorekeepers

## **INBETWEENERS**

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 coaster the first thrill is up high, and then 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, YMCA or the Macarena at the ready. In the past songs like the Harlem Shake and Gangnam Style were the go to numbers, this year my feeling is "Uptown Funk" from Mark Ronson has potential to get the kids up and dancing.

## **PLAYLISTS**

The music list provided is very large to accommodate some DJ flexibility. They are constantly being added to after each season. **You don't need EVERY song** on the list, but you should have most of them to get you through the weekend.

There is also a **DO NOT PLAY** playlist that I've generated from songs that are on the Billboard Pop Charts. Due to the language, and or content, they should not be played at all. If there are any songs that you know of that also have inappropriate content/language please feel free to NOT PLAY them either.

I haven't included any "typical" organ/drum arena crowd prompts in these playlists, however you should have in your library a selection of favourite organ diddies and drum/clap-alongs. Though not imperative, it does add a nice "Sports" atmosphere to the games.

Included is also a Blank Gameday Music Template (in excel and pdf format), and one that I will be using (as an example).

If you have any suggestions, or requests please feel free to send them to [music@firstmusicdjs.com](mailto:music@firstmusicdjs.com) and I will listen to them and include them in future playlists, even music that would be "Regional Specific".

### **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!

Yours in Music,

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