

Maximizing Your Creativity by Defining Left and Right Brain Functions

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Creativity and your left and right brain functions

Let us talk about how to be more productive by not only using your right brain and left brain functions correctly, but also using them in the right sequence. You might not be aware that how you separate your functions in any creative endeavor can make all the difference in how easy and enjoyable the creative experience is. The more enjoyable and relaxing the experience is, the more your mind will gravitate toward being inspired, thus more creative output as well as a more authentic personal expression.

Let us take a look at some words to best describe the left and right side of the brain:

Left brain:

- Logical
- Detail-oriented
- Fact-oriented
- Interprets words and language
- Mathematical and scientific
- Order and pattern perception
- Strategic
- Practical

The left brain functions are often more associated with right-handed people. The left brain is great with details, organizing and quality control. You would want to use the left brain when planning out ideas, figuring out which tools are going to be best for the job, and guesstimating how much time something might take. In musical terms, these are some things you may want to put your left brain to work doing:

Creating templates that will best work for the type of music you create. This would include fx you would most likely use and sounds you may need access to. Having this done keep you from having to slow down or stop altogether when you are in a creative groove.

- Making sure all of your studio wiring and routing is complete. This will give you easy access to your hardware and software.
- Getting all of your samples and loops at easy access
- Checking all of your recording levels
- Creating a creative mood with proper lighting and aroma. Also making sure you do not have any distracting noises that can interfere with your concentration or recording process.

Right Brain:

- Feeling-oriented
- "Big-picture" oriented
- Interprets sounds, symbols and images
- Philosophical and spiritual
- "Out-of-the-box" thinking

- Inspiration-oriented
- Imaginative
- Risk taking
- Deals with the realm of possibility

The right brain is instrumental to the creative process, and if it is allowed to create uninterrupted and without left-brained second guessing, you can expect a fantastic creative experience. The right brain needs to flow freely with ideas without judgement. Creating for 10 minutes and then analyzing for the next 20 minutes is like driving in stop and go traffic. It is counterproductive and frustrating.

The right brain is best at these functions:

- Messing with loops, samples and sounds uninterrupted
- Getting "lost" in the music
- Experimenting
- Mixing and panning
- Real time or "in the moment" creativity

Given how each side of the brain functions so differently it is very important to put each side to work in the proper order so that one side does not interfere with the other.

Let us take a look at one way to approach creating music while keeping the information above in mind.

Start with the right brain:

This is where you dream up an idea. You do not have to have a song idea in mind at all. The point of this process is to prime your mind for creativity by giving it a clear direction.

Spend a few minutes imagining your desired audience listening to and enjoying your new song. Imagine, or even physically create the way your CD cover might look. Perhaps you can imagine your song getting raving reviews in magazines.

The point is to get yourself in the mental state of mind that you are not only capable but also quite talented and creative at what you do. You do not want to get into the creative process thinking "Well crap, I hope I can at least finish something". It is much better to get yourself to the phase of "This song is gonna knock 'em dead".

If you think of all the people who seem to crank out hit after hit (not that I am saying a hit song should be your aim) it is got to strike you that these guys are able to keep that creative excitement because they have experienced the positive results of their work in the past. You are going to have to create this in your head. This may sound like a silly step, but give it a shot, you might be surprised.

Once you have done this and gotten yourself to an excited state, just let it go for the day.

Get yourself organized:

This is the part that your left brain loves, so let it play. In this step you will get organized by creating song templates. In these templates you will want to create plenty of audio and midi tracks loaded with instruments and sounds you are most likely to use.

Check all of your cables from any hardware, sound cards, external hard drives, midi controllers, and monitors. Make sure you have any microphones set up and ready to go when needed and amp settings dialed in etc.

Make sure your recording levels are good and that your recording environment is set up for inspiration and creative flow. This might involve special lighting, candles, incense or inspiring pictures. Make sure you have access to any sample CDs, loops or other resources as well.

Make sure your workspace is clean. A mess rarely inspires.

The whole point of this is so once you start creating, you will have no obstacles slowing you down or stopping your process.

Have you ever been so involved in reading a book that you no longer realize you are reading words, that you are instead seeing imagery? Have you ever been interrupted and find it hard to get back to the "zone" you were just in? This is what we want to do our best to avoid when you are in that musical zone. It can be tough to get yourself there to begin with and even tougher once you have a roadblock or technical issue slowing you down.

Time to Create:

This is where all this work is going to really pay off by letting your right brain do what it was meant to do. Just play and experiment. Throw things around, mess with sounds, have fun with samples, loops and rhythms. Do not worry about trying to be a genius, just realize that the genius will come out when you just let yourself have some fun without any second guessing.

It is best to just record everything you do because often it is the mistakes that end up being your best most unique sounds and give your music some real personality. Do not even worry too much about creating a song, simply enjoy making sounds and taking note of what strikes your interest. Continue to do this for as long as you enjoy it. By the end of this, you should have a few inspiring parts to work with.

Copy, Paste, Delete:

You have let your creative mind play and have come up with a few ideas that you like. This is about the time you are going to want to let your left brain make some judgment calls.

The important thing is that you do not get too attached to any of your noodling around. Just accept that some things are gonna stay and some things need to go. Do not take too much time with this, the less second guessing the better. Your mind processes things much faster than you are consciously aware, so just go with your gut feeling. Listen to something and decided quickly, stay or go.

You will quickly find your most inspiring work and get rid of anything that would end up cluttering your music. Just roll with it and enjoy the process. Do not let yourself get caught up on one or 2 sounds or loops. You need to manage your ideas first, then you get to create again once you have you best pieces.

Arrange:

Arranging your ideas and adding parts as necessary is going to be a balance between left and right brain functions. Do not get yourself too lost in your head, but also do not do too

much second guessing (as you can see, I think second guessing is usually a bad thing and counter intuitive).

If you are finding yourself stuck, feel free to listen to another song and borrow some of the arrangement ideas. You are not attempting to make everything perfect, but more trying to create the big picture.

At the end of this process, you should know how long your song is going to be and have your overall arrangement in order. You should also see where the gaps are in your song that will need to be filled.

Fill the gaps:

Here you will add the parts that are missing to your arrangement by getting right brain creative but left brain practical. You will want to get your reverb and delays dialed in as well as compression and creative effects.

You will also want to get your parts EQ'd and strip away unwanted frequencies in each sound to remove mud and keep everything clean. You want to get yourself prepared and organized for the mixing phase.

Mixing:

Mixing should be a very right brained function and should be perhaps one of the most enjoyable parts of the creative process.

You will want to relax yourself into the vibe of the song and get the levels and panning placed. Do not be tempted to simply pan things where you usually do (although there are some rules you may want to keep in mind). It is better to play with a few channels that work well together and set your levels and panning until you feel some kind of shift in yourself.

You should start to feel like you are getting a bit lost in the music. This is a very good sign. Although sometimes its great to start with your drums and bass and work up from that format, you may want to also try mixing from the most inspiring sound down. You may find some interesting result.

Start with what you consider to be your most magical part and try adding another sound to it. If you lose that feeling, turn it down and try another sound. This will make sure you are mixing from your songs strengths.

You may notice that this approach sounds quite different from a normal mixing approach. Find out which is more inspiring to you and go with it.