

FIRST® ROBOTICS COMPETITION MUSIC STRATEGY GUIDE

Introduction

Our goal is to provide a consistent musical atmosphere for all *FIRST* events. Please review the Strategy guides prior to your event. These guides will help make your event sound “professional”.

Taking into account that music is a very subjective area, and everyone’s tastes are different, we try to stay in the genre of “sports music”, which encompasses every genre of music. Sports music has different atmospheric vibes, from walk-in music, to game-on music, to award music, and everything in between.

Our aim is to enhance the event by cheerleading, not only reacting. The guides will help identify areas that need audio attention, and hopefully the choices in the playlists will accurately reflect those needs.

The Objective

To create playlists of music that will not only be inspiring, motivating, and uplifting but one that will also create a positive atmosphere that promotes *Gracious Professionalism®* and *Coopertition®*.

We accomplish this by identifying as many different situations as possible and finding audio elements for them.

You are welcome to edit some of the music files [adding in/out points] to give a “tighter” flow to the sound, especially for music used during the actual match play. “GameON” music tracks should all be exactly Two Minutes 30 seconds [2:30] in length.

The Game and the Pattern

Although the game changes every year, the pattern and process is the same for the DJ:

“Team Intro’s”, “StartUps”, “GameON”, “In-Betweeners”, repeat.

At the end of the day, organizers usually go into Award mode, during which time the DJ plays an “Awards Song” after a team has been announced and fades the music off when the last person “high-fives” the last judge in line.

2024 PLAYLISTS

Our demographic is very wide encompassing not only Students but mentors, parents, siblings, and other interested spectators. Not everyone will be happy with every song that is played, but hopefully everyone will have a good time by the end of the event.

The Do Not Play list is still available and as the name suggests, these songs should not be played at any event. Many popular songs are NOT appropriate to play at a *FIRST* event because of language, content, drinking, breakups, and/or ballads. As a reminder, Cotton Eye Joe and Jump on It should not be played. PLEASE CHECK THE DO NOT PLAY list for the entire list. It is in the accompanying excel file.

To play it safe, if a song has a "Radio-Edit" or "CLEAN version", don't even listen to it, just Don't Play It.

Please Don't Play songs that use profanity in their lyrics, even if they're the most popular current songs.

Do Not Play songs with content about Sex, Drugs, Bullying, Taunting, or Violence.

These guidelines and suggested playlists are meant to keep our events consistent with each other, however it does not preclude any event from playing music that is regional to that area. Keeping 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.

WALK IN MUSIC

Doors open early morning, usually an hour before opening ceremonies, and many of the participants are eager to get to their pits, while the supporting staff get into position & the public find their way into their seats.

The morning music mix feel should feature the theme of the season, as much as possible, and have an easy tempo and uplifting groove gradually increasing the tempo as we get 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 advisable. But playing very slow music isn't the right choice here either. Try to create a balance that eases everyone into a positive tone for the day.

OPENING CEREMONIES

This is when the fun begins. Intro music for the Emcee, and even some instrumental background music while the judges/referees/safety inspector are being introduced works well here. Having short "walk-up" and "walk-off" songs [aka stings] can be used when guests are introduced either for a speech or acknowledgement.

The DJ should be able to go with the flow, as they will be reacting rather than leading, but depends on the Emcee and the Ceremony being on schedule.

During the Opening Ceremonies, sometimes the National Anthems are performed by an individual or group. If they want to use the music track in the anthem video it is imperative to

rehearse with the performer/s prior to doors opening. If there is no performer, play the anthem video with audio.

TEAM INTROS

The Emcee and Game Announcer introduce each team in a 3-team alliance, which plays another 3-team alliance. Musically, it's best to use good instrumentals, especially upbeat karaoke versions of popular songs. Run the song underneath the introductions. When the Emcee is about to begin the countdown to start the match, fade the music out of the mix. That way all the teams can hear without any distraction.

Please don't play any songs that would be one team-specific here or during the matches. You can acknowledge some teams theme songs [if you know them] during "In-Betweeners" but not before their matches.

START UPS

Like anything else, sometimes the robots are not ready after the Team Intros; therefore it would be wise to have something on stand-by. These delays don't usually last very long, unless something out of the ordinary happens, which you would then play something from the "Delay" playlist.

"Start Me Up" and "Pump Up" songs fit perfectly here as well as some short stadium stings. The "We will Rock You" drum beating, hand-clapping foot-stomping Arena-type staples are perfect for this.

DELAYS

When something doesn't go to plan, and you have played a "Start Up" song, but there is a problem on the field, such as a connectivity issue with the robots, or a Field repair, then having a "delay" or "connecting" type song at the ready will have a greater impact and show that you are "in the game" and are aware of the situation. If you sense it will be going a little longer, shift over to the Crowd Rally playlist to get some audience interactivity going. There are many options to choose from...however if everything is going to plan, then chances are you won't be playing many songs from this list.

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 Emcee and a CHARGE HORN sound effect. The Auto period *lasts 15 seconds*. A BOXING BELL ring sound effect dings to start part 2 of the match: **The Teleoperated Period**. This is when the drivers operate their remote controls and try to score more points. Teleop *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 handled automatically.

During the actual matches, using instrumental songs with an upbeat tempo is preferred, usually a BPM (beats per minute) within the 120 -140 range. Be careful not to step on the

Game Announcer's "play- by-play" call of the match. Usually EDM [electronic dance music] such as Techno, Industrial, Dubstep and House music works well, however as the games get "more important" sway towards epic Hollywood movie scores, as they have a zeal for building tension and suspense.

The Playoffs are a Double Elimination tournament (lose twice and you are out). There will be breaks between Rounds of matches and *FIRST* has prepared content for these breaks, but some events may require less or more music, so be prepared to fill any gaps that may occur during the showing of videos or award presentations. This is the time to really get the crowd pumped up: AFTER MATCHES - prior to score reveal.

After the match ends, there is an anticipatory period as everyone awaits the results. The wait time for the scores is normally quite short, but regardless of the wait time and possible referee deliberations, keep the music going until the score is revealed.

AFTER MATCHES - INBETWEENERS

These songs are used to keep everyone's toes tapping but are not necessarily "interactive Crowd Prompt" songs. Once the score is given, there may be some time to play an upbeat song while waiting for the Emcee to introduce the next match and team alliances.

AFTER MATCHES - CROWD RALLIES

These are usually the interactive crowd prompt songs, everything from Dances, Foot-Stomps, Hand Claps to shouting "Heys" and singing along to Sweet Caroline. From a strategic point of view, you don't want to have everyone burnt out by lunchtime.

And as the day goes on it's nice to take them on a ride too. Similar to a roller coaster, which goes through a series of ups & downs with a few curves thrown in. The challenge is to keep everyone excited for the whole ride, but especially near the end of the day when it all counts.

Be prepared to repeat "the pattern" over and over during an event weekend.

SPECIAL MOMENTS

At some *FIRST* events, there may be a time when a group (e.g. Judges or Volunteers.) come out and do a dance of some sort. Chances are these songs are already in the Crowd Rally playlist, but just in case, it's good to be on alert here, and keep the Chicken Dance or the Macarena at the ready.

LUNCH MUSIC

Similar to Walk In music, it's a part of the day that would be considered "downtime". The morning of competitions has concluded, and everyone is in need of a break. Not only do 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. An option is to incorporate some songs about food and leaning towards more current music while trying to stay within this season's overall theme.

AWARDS CEREMONIES

Awards will be presented between Rounds and at the end of the Playoff Matches. The Emcee reads the award script, and then the merits of the team and then the team(s) name. Everyone cheers at the announcement and begins to applaud as the teams make their way down to the playing field to receive their award.

The music played here is usually of the upbeat, energetic variety. Think celebratory songs from your favorite sports team. There is a document which contains links to the Award stings.

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, some guests think that it's an all-request radio station.

Some fail to realize that we are trying to create an atmosphere. Their intentions are great; they are probably having a good time and also want to contribute. If someone approaches, be as diplomatic as possible, most of the times they ask for something that is already on the playlist.

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, the policy is that **WE WILL NOT BE TAKING ANY REQUESTS** from the floor.

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. Good luck!