

An Almost Lawsuit from a Simple Beat: The Case of Nik Makino

Imagine going on Spotify, trying to look for less popular music to give you a break from the hustle and bustle of the mainstream world. Then, you find a song that sounds oddly familiar because it sounded like the instrumental of one song that already made your ears bleed from being played countless times on the radio. This is exactly what happened when I discovered “Relax” by Roko Tensei, whose beat was copied by Nik Makino in his song “Neneng B”.

Now, who are these two artists anyway? Well, Roko Tensei is a music producer from Europe. Not much is known about him, but he has made numerous tracks that he has posted on YouTube. They give off “happy and soft” vibes and can calm anyone’s nerves from a stressful day. His most viewed song on YouTube, “Relax” particularly has that sense of tranquility. That song particularly got into the spotlight after some controversy almost 5 years ago, when its beat was illegally used by Filipino rapper named Nik Makino.

Nik Makino has made a lot of popular hits in the Philippines, such as “We Made It” and “Neneng B”. We will talk about the issues surrounding the latter song and how the case was solved by the two parties involved.

So what went wrong here? We all know that using another person’s work without their permission is considered copyright infringement. Yes, that includes mere beats in songs. This is meant to protect the original creators of works and give them exclusive rights to control how their work is used. Simply giving them credit is not going to live up to the legal framework of their rights in the music industry. You must obtain a license from them in order to use or reproduce their work.

Unfortunately, Mr. Makino probably was unaware of these processes, and carelessly used the “Relax” beat in Neneng B, and uploaded it to YouTube with over 22 million views, way more than the 1.5 million views of Relax. Of course, with how knowledge spreads faster than light on the Internet these days, the news eventually had to reach Roko Tensei. He posted on Twitter threatening to sue Mr. Makino, and the music video was taken down. Apparently, Roko Tensei emailed Nik countless times, but he still chose to ignore them. Serves him right to face the consequences, I guess?

Good thing Roko Tensei was nice enough to set a further deadline for Nik to settle his payments and find an agreement, which he followed. Eventually, the case was closed, and the “Neneng B” music video was put back on YouTube. This should serve as a lesson to future music creators, because not a lot of artists are willing to settle with a compromise. Better to be safe than sorry, always.

Sources:

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