Creative Process / Short-form Video / 20-25 min

The Reference Breakdown

The idea

Play a snippet of your original work, then reveal the 2-3 completely unrelated or unexpected reference tracks, movies, or images that inspired it.

Objective

Contextualize your art by showing your creative DNA.

Why this works

It gamifies the listening experience. When people understand how you think, they feel like insiders. It gives new listeners a point of reference.

Hook bank

Direct / Three songs that directly inspired my new single.
Curiosity / You'll never guess what 90s movie soundtrack inspired this beat.
Personality / I was listening to way too much Tame Impala when I made this, and it shows.
Sarcastic / My lawyer advised me not to say who I ripped off for this snare tone.

How to execute

1. Plan the opener

Try this opener as a starting point: “Three songs that directly inspired my new single”. Choose the first image or moment that makes its promise clear.

2. Make the first pass

Split-screen TikTok. Top half: "Here's what inspired my new track." Play a Kanye drum break, an 80s horror synth, and then your track combining those elements.

3. Shape the sequence

Use this order for your first cut: Hook -> Ref 1 -> Ref 2 -> Reveal Final Song. Watch the first cut muted to check that captions and visuals carry the hook, then play it with sound to check levels.

4. Check and publish

Use this call to action as your starting point: "Who do you think my biggest musical influence is? Guess below." Preview the finished post and verify that any link, tag, or instruction works.

Suggested sequence

Hook -> Ref 1 -> Ref 2 -> Reveal Final Song.

Call to action

"Who do you think my biggest musical influence is? Guess below."

What to avoid

Name the specific rhythm, texture, or visual you borrowed inspiration from. Do not play long reference clips without explaining how your own work differs.

Make it yours

1. Focus on visual references: the Pinterest board that inspired the mood.
2. Focus on a hyper-specific element (e.g., car alarm hi-hat).
3. Ask the audience to guess the reference before revealing it.

Try this next

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Before you post

Read the caption out loud. Check that the first frame and the opener make the same promise. Verify captions, credits, and any link or tag. Save a copy of the final asset and caption so you can reuse what works.