

Cultural Corner-- Music inna Yard by Phil Wurr Jamaican Muscial History

In the mood for that island rhythm? Try [BigUp Radio](#), [Free Reggae and Dance Hall online](#).

Who wouldn't say that Jamaica's contribution to the world is its music? Reggae has spread all over the globe, and its popularity is growing. How did it develop, and what kinds of Jamaican music are there? Prior to Jamaica's independence, American R&B dominated Jamaica during the 1950's. When it transformed into white rock and roll, Duke Reid and Coxsone Dodd's sound-systems reacted and pressed releases by Jamaican musicians who fused R&B with Jazz, Mento (a kind of calypso) and other African elements into 'Shuffle'. This music was an expression of Jamaica's feelings towards independence. Soon, the offbeats (beats 2 and 4) of the music were emphasized by the guitarists, creating the distinctive 'chug' sound so prevalent in much of Jamaica's music. Ska, a fast-paced, upbeat Jamaican music, was born, reflecting the island's optimism created by its independence. In 1962, the newly formed labels Island and Blue Beat put Ska into the international spotlight.

By the mid 60's, Ska slowed down, became more soulful and turned into Rocksteady, born out of 'Rude Bwoy' culture.

In the late 60's, Reggae was born: it was faster than Rocksteady but not as fast as Ska. Its sound was influenced by new recording-technology, pioneering producers and the traditional nyabinghi drumming; it was percussive and bass-heavy.

'Roots' emerged in response to the political quarrels between the two political parties which badly affected the Jamaican working class. With 'conscious' lyrics and a new, deeper rhythmic approach, Roots was birthed by the meeting of the Wailers (including Bob Marley), the rhythm section of Aston & Carlton Barrett and the producer Lee Perry; the band became the most potent force in reggae, influencing all that came after. By the early 70's, Marley had risen to international stardom, especially among young adults.

'Dub' was birthed by the engineer King Tubby at Duke Reid's studio: he made dub plates, vinyl discs with versions of tunes with most of the vocal parts cut out. Originally, dub plates provided the crowds with different versions of songs, but dub became more elaborate through the addition of effects such as delays and echos. Since there were hardly any vocals on these dub plates, DJs (on Jamaica, MCs are called DJs) such as U Roy started to add their own vocals and 'Toasting' was born. Soon thereafter, artists often used the rhythm tracks from other artists to create their own songs.

An English development, Lovers Rock, soon caught on in Jamaica: as its name suggests, it was a smooth and soulful music.

By the 80's, Reggae returned to its roots in the many dancehalls in Jamaica, where recorded music was more prevalent than live music. Vocalists sang over the vinyl plates of the sound systems y the dominating topics discussed in Reggae music (for example politics) gave way to 'slackness', stories about sex and violence.

With the advent of digital production techniques, Ragga, based on the rhythm of Wayne Smith' song 'yUnder mi Sleng Tengy', was born as a hard and fast, often HipHop-like music with electronic rhythm tracks.

Many artists have returned to more conscious, cultural content in their songs: today, tracks against oppression and police brutality, spiritual songs and slackness stand right next to each other in Jamaica's musical landscape. The music is as prevalent as ever: it still uplifts people, teaches them and provides a basis for the rest of Jamaica's culture, to which it is directly connected.

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Board President Zachary Zager helps entertain children during the 2005 Jamaican Jamboree

Upcoming Events

- March** Carnival in Liguanea Park in Kingston
- March 10-18** Allen College Nursing Students visit
- March 18-25** Florida State University Alternative Spring Break
- May** Ripon College Mayme-ster
- June 24** Jamaican Jamboree

Letter to the Editor ~ Travel Visa Discrimination by Nigel Male



Many families are separated when they are not able to obtain travel visas to visit each other.

I make reference to a good friend of mine living in Montego Bay. A single mother working to solely support her child with little or no help. The child's father is a US citizen and has been living back in New York for quite some time now but the child had dual citizenship.

The mother applied for a visa so she could not only bring her child to the US to spend time there with her father but to also consider employment possibilities in the States. The first step was to merely to acquire a visit visa. She didn't want to send her child there on her own and felt concerned that the father would try to take her away based on the fact she lives on a low income in Jamaica and struggles like so many do. She borrowed money to top up her bank account as it was a requirement by the visa office and did everything known to man to be eligible. She was immediately denied a visa.

It is understandable a lot of people from the third world countries are trying to get to the states for a better life but it is getting harder all the time. I feel considering the child has US citizenship they could at least give a little more consideration into this kind of case.

I also went on to visa requirements website for jamaicans to visit the UK and read that they are making it extra hard for Jamaican to go there believing they will add to street crime. Sounds like blatant discrimination to me , these countries love to enjoy the benefits of Caribbean life but continue to treat locals like outcasts. As if it wasn't bad enough they had to endure slavery and mistreatment now they are left behind by their colonizing neighbors to live in poverty while all the europeans enjoy the happy care free lifestyle on the island when it suits them.

But will things change?, i doubt it very much.....

Nigel Male is a photographer, filmmaker and musician that lives in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. You can visit his website at homepage.mac.com/elamlegin/

Supplies needed for the June Jamaican Jamboree: **Sports equipment for prizes:** water bottles, sports team tee shirts (kids and adults) sweatbands, whistles, deflated soccer balls, air pump and needles (for balls) Frisbees, jump ropes, small rubber balls, sports team hats/visors, bandanas, whiffle ball bats, balls playground balls, deflated (kickball type) **Health-oriented educational materials/pamphlets:** dental, sex-ed, HIV/STI mental/emotional health nutrition domestic violence/sexual assault, basic prevention and healthcare geriatric issues. Paper cups and napkins are needed.