

An Overview of Jamaica's Musical Landscape

Peter Ashbourne's Philip Sherlock Lecture 2019

INTRODUCTION

I have been conducting interviews with music luminaries for many years as a prelude to this presentation. These persons have all influenced and informed the opinions I will express. Among those I have interviewed are: Sylvan Morris, Tyrone Downie, Marjorie Whyllie, Lloyd Knibb and Cleve Brownie.

The form of this essay consists of reviews of Art Music, Music in Religion, Music in Education and Popular Music, but before that I'll begin with a look at the general status of music in Jamaica today.

There are some audio examples at various places to reinforce a point I'm making. Occasionally in this presentation, it may sound as if I am repeating myself, but, at least in most cases, there is a reason for the repetition.

Many of my observations will be international in nature but are also perfectly relevant to Jamaica. Remember Jamaica has a musical presence in Western Popular Music and Culture that is larger than expected of such a small country, so it is not unnatural for some of the trends seen in the developed world to be mirrored here. One or two trends have even been pioneered by Jamaica.

ABOUT MUSIC

Music is very important to human beings. Any place on this planet where humans are found, there is music and in fact there is music even where humans do not tread. Although scientists are still trying to explain why humans need music, they agree at least that we humans value music because it entertains us and it also has the ability to affect our emotions and moods, sometimes radically.

PUBLIC ATTITUDE TO MUSIC

Jamaica is no different where music is concerned, and as a matter of fact, music seems to be an essential part of our daily life. We may not be quite as enthusiastic as some communities in various African nations who seem to burst into song at the slightest provocation, but we are still reasonably close.

Think of the latest scandal, crisis or social event and the corresponding Dance-Hall account of it arriving promptly on the radio station or at the dance.

[Example: Vybz Cartel – "Emergency"]

With this in mind, it is a pity that we Jamaicans don't pay more attention to the effects of music and use these effects to our advantage. It seems to me that Jamaicans treat music as they treat a sunset: it's very pretty, but that's all there is to it. As one young Jamaican said when encouraged to admire the scenery of a majestic mountain landscape, "What scenery? All I see is trees."

The basic parameters of music are pitch, duration (rhythm) and dynamics (volume). Other musical parameters that affect us include tempo, volume, genre, instrumentation and whether the music is vocal or instrumental. These qualities affect our behavior, so music is used to good effect in religion, politics, advertising, and (for want of a better word) artistically as an aesthetic gesture. And besides, what's more important than politics, religion, and advertising?

Despite it all, this little country has a rich heritage of music, especially in the area of Popular Music.

MUSIC EXPLOITATION

On the other hand, to my way of thinking, many Jamaicans have a simplistic and sometimes peculiar attitude to music.

Wayne Marshall has a contemporary hit called "Glory To God". The melody of "Glory To God" comes from the song "Je n'Aurai Pas le Temps", written by Fugain, Delanoe and Fishman, released in 1967. An English language version was recorded in 1968 by John Rowles under the title "If I Only Had Time". This single was a major hit all over Europe, Australia and New Zealand, Rhodesia and Jamaica. In 2018 the melody emerges in Jamaica with "Glory To God" lyrics. The recording has been a success, but all the talk I hear treats this song as an original and not as another song that has re-written lyrics.

The Little Theatre Movement (LTM) produces musicals and pantomimes in Jamaica annually since 1941. I have had a long running battle with the LTM over the treatment of the composer. The LTM has a habit of putting the book and script writer's name up with the title of the show, and the name of the person who has composed the music somewhere in the minor credits. So, you have Gloria Lannaman's "Brashanna Oh!" and Barbara Gloudon's "Johnny Reggae". The composer's name is found below the property mistress' name. I explained at great length that musicals are collaborative endeavours. You don't speak about Oscar Hammerstein's "Sound Of Music", it is always Rogers and Hammerstein, or "Jesus Christ Superstar" by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice. To cut a long story short, Rex Nettleford eventually intervened and I was promised, by contract, that I, the composer, was to always have equal billing with the scriptwriter (book and story). And would you know, they still haven't done it.

For people who think about those things, it seems the words are more important and the music is just 'there'. The rest simply don't think about it at all. It's not on their radar. The singer, song, accompaniment, production are just one 'blob of sound'. Of course, this is not just a Jamaican phenomenon.

Irving Burgie, the child of a Barbadian mother and father from Virginia, came to the Caribbean in the 1940s and 50s and, it seems, took some traditional melodies he encountered in various islands, mostly Jamaica, put new words to them and thereby began a fabulously successful period, through the mouthpiece of Harry Belafonte. Some of the most notable works from this opus include "The Banana Boat Song" (Day-Oh), a wholly traditional Jamaican, except "six han' seven han'..." was replaced by "six foot seven foot...", "Yellow Bird" (a paraphrase of "Chocounne" the Haitian folk song), "Jamaica Farewell" using the complete melody of "Ironbar", a Slim and Sam song from the early 1900s.

[Example: Harry Belafonte – "Jamaica Farewell"]

In the case of Mr. Burgie's appropriations, the response of Jamaica has been some protest from a few Jamaicans such as Rex Nettleford and Edward Seaga, but by and large there is no response. Let me point out that as far as the copyright law is concerned, there is nothing illegal about writing different words to an existing song as long as the copyright holder gives permission, and these melodies are traditional melodies so there is sort of no specific copyright holder, so someone can legally rewrite the lyrics. There are numerous Dancehall songs that use traditional melodies with new lyrics (presumably without permission from the copyright holders). My issue is with Mr. Burgie and his descendants, who claim traditional melodies as Irving Burgie's compositions.

As mentioned before, many Jamaicans do not regard music without lyrics as music at all. This is ironic considering the history of Western Music, or Classical Music if you like, is dominated by instrumental compositions.

[Example: Beethoven – "Symphony no. 5, first movement"]

In Western Popular Music, the popularity of instrumental music continued until the mid '70s. Jamaica's Ska is overwhelmingly an instrumental genre. There were numerous instrumental hits in the Rock Steady and Reggae eras, such as Java, or MPLA.

[Example: Augustus Pablo – "Java"]

In the USA, since 1985 there has only been one instrumental number on the Billboard Hot 100 charts – Harlem Shake in 2013, and that was only because it was a YouTube dance sensation. In contrast, between 1959 and 1979 there were 22 instrumental number ones. The status of musicians in Popular Music has changed from the days of Duke Ellington, where the band was the feature. Where before the bandleader was the highlight, and the singer was just another

band member, currently the singer is the star with musicians as mere support technicians.

It seems to me that everything to do with music in Jamaica that has a volume control knob is at least one notch too loud. Aside from the obvious risk of hearing damage, listening to music at elevated levels all the time contributes to a lack of sensitivity to anything more subtle than a blast from the air horn of a trailer truck.

To go from the sublime to the ridiculous, if you go to a supermarket to buy groceries, why should you have to raise your voice asking an attendant for service because the background music is too loud? When background music is played at a function, why do we have to shout at each other to converse?

Foreground, middle ground and background are important considerations in both visual arts and music. At a concert, the audience is concentrating on the music, so the music is in the foreground. In a film (movie), where it serves to amplify the mood of the visual information, the music could be in the middle ground – present but subservient to the video. In a supermarket or a restaurant, the music is intended to promote a relaxed atmosphere in which to shop or dine, so the music is firmly in the background. American research into the effects of music on shoppers in supermarkets revealed that shoppers tended to buy more items if the music was of the soothing type and was played at a low volume. They also tended to shop faster and do more impulse buying if the music was faster paced, and when the music was slower, they shopped at a slower pace and did more comparison shopping. It is assumed that the same principles should apply in Jamaica, allowing of course for some cultural differences.

The typical Jamaican version of these scenarios is a uniform blasting of audience, viewers and patrons alike.

Now turn the argument around and consider music's effect on most humans. We humans like and need music because it affects our moods. If music can have such a profound effect on our moods, why don't we pay attention and perhaps use this intrinsic property? For example, why can't we make the connection between the frequently terrifyingly aggressive driving of the coaster bus drivers of Jamaica and the incredibly loud and aggressive music that accompanies so many of these journeys? People complain about the music on the buses because it is too loud or because they don't like the lyrics, but not because they believe that the effect of the music is making the driver more irresponsible, reckless and aggressive.

MUSIC AS A CAREER

When it comes to discussing music as a career, you always get the old refrain, "Okay, but what's your real job?" Is this cynicism justified? Let's examine making a career in music.

A musician contemplating a career in music used to have the following options: performing, recording, or teaching. Being a solo performer requires talent, skill of some sort, a whole lot of hard work, and perhaps most importantly, luck. For a few, mass popularity promised substantial reward and remuneration through the channels of recording and performing. This is the area where the terms "star" and "super star" are frequently heard. Only a tiny percentage are successful, so many people opt for performing in a group instead – orchestras, bands, singing groups and choirs. The trouble with groups is that in most cases, the realities of the real world mean that the financial aspect is adequate at best and frequently pathetic, even nonexistent, especially in the case of a big group. If someone wants to make a career as an artist, and he has the whole 'package' (i.e. talent, looks, good recording material, stage presence, a good act etc.), he or she still needs a whole lot of luck.

Performing as a recording artist is also a possibility, although the radical changes in the recording industry have reduced the potential earnings to be derived from this activity. The recording studio requires a different type of skill. For Jazz and Classical Music, the performers have to be much more precise, therefore more conservative in their execution, as there is no visual input to distract the listener and current recording technology is very good.

At present, however, all of the above is seriously in doubt. The problem is not that music is being consumed less – populations are growing, and more music is being consumed. The problem is that the recording industry as it was known has more or less collapsed.

If someone doesn't want to or can't function at "the pointy end" of music, there are other possibilities.

In the fields of Popular and Traditional Music, the technical demands on players are usually modest. Both styles are replete with stories of self-taught musicians, playing one instrument but ending up on another, becoming the vocalist in a band because the designated singer doesn't show up, and the like. On that score (no pun intended), both Nat King Cole, who was a musician and bandleader and Lady Gaga who was primarily a composer were forced into singing due to circumstances over which they had no control.

Once we leave Pop and Traditional Music, everything else to do with music needs many years of assiduous study and practice, as everything is much more demanding.

TEACHING

Teaching music does not have most of the risks associated with being a performer. Teaching is probably the only job in music with a regular salary, though musicians who have resident work in hotels could also qualify. It is not as glamorous as performing and generally speaking pays less, but it is a steady job, and besides, teaching brings its own rewards. The one hiccup in this is that in Jamaican High Schools, when the inevitable budget cuts arrive, the first subjects to be cut are art and/or music.

Other issues affect employment opportunities in music. During 2018 one of the frequent scandals to surface in Jamaican life was one concerning a booking agency registered in Jamaica, but with Caribbean, non-CARICOM origins. For the last ten years, this organization has been facilitating the legal entry of non-Jamaican, non-CARICOM dancers and musicians into the country for the purpose of providing entertainment for the Tourist Industry and specially for some well-known hotel chains. Apparently, these entertainers are working in Jamaica legally with work permits issued by the Ministry of Labour. This importing of dancers and musicians is in direct contravention of the existing Jamaican labour law, which says in essence that a work permit cannot be issued if a suitably qualified Jamaican can do the Job. The details of this situation are too long for this discussion, but it is safe to say that a lot of money is being made, and necessarily not by either the dancers or the musicians. These foreign workers are replacing the local musicians and dancers, many of whom have been trained at the Edna Manley College and are looking for work.

If Hotel chains are allowed to continue importing musicians and other talent from outside the country, in direct contravention of the existing law, this will severely restrict a major source of employment for Jamaican performers and make it almost pointless for Edna Manley College to turn out Music and Dance School graduates.

OTHER MUSIC CAREER OPTIONS

There are other areas which offer earning opportunities. These include music publishing, event production, artist management and representation, public relations and marketing agents, and the provision and management of recording facilities as well as instrument supply and repair. There are also technical jobs associated with recording and live concerts; audio engineers lead the list, but in addition there are lighting technicians and engineers, emcees, dancers, special effects techs, and others who make their living off Pop concerts. These people may have musical sensibilities, but they are not musicians.

The main problem with many of these jobs is one of scale. Jamaica's market is too small to allow someone to specialize in only one area. It may be viable for a

time, but more competition and changes in trends can ruin the best business model.

Jamaica's Place in World Music

An important point to consider is that Jamaica is a small island nation; geographically speaking, just a cultural backwater.

In the developed world, Popular Music is a major component of the music landscape, but the total music palate consists of many more types of music. Typically there is also Classical, Jazz aside of other genres of music, as well as Folk. However, a significant part of Jamaican appreciation of music is filtered solely through the lens of Popular Music. So when Jamaicans think of a piece of Classical Music, they often think of the Pop version of that piece. Walter Murphy's "Fifth of Beethoven" instead of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

[Example: Walter Murphy – "Fifth of Beethoven"]

The same approach holds for Jazz, Folk and anything else.

In the USA during the early days of what became Popular Music, a good song had an attractive, memorable melody, a good lyric that made sense, an appropriate accompaniment, and had a distinctive quality or characteristic that made it unique. This is the era that produced Irving Berlin's "Alexander's Ragtime Band", the Gershwin brothers' "Someone Who'll Watch Over Me", Cole Porter's "Love For Sale" and other such works that have come to be appreciated as works of art or "Standards" despite their Popular Music origins.

[Example: Ella Fitzgerald & Sachmo – "They Can't Take That Away From Me" George & Ira Gershwin]

At the time of the 1960s when there was a major influence from Rhythm and Blues, the production values still held, but drums and percussion were much more important to the presentation and even the structure of songs. As Popular Music evolved, the importance of drum and bass grew, and this was arguably at the expense of lyric, melody and harmony.

The main complaints of the generation that grew up on 1960s – 1980s music are that today's melodies and lyrics are cliché, and the songs all sound the same. Given what was regarded as a good song before 1990 and the characteristics of songs from the 1990s onwards, this is not surprising. In other words, if you like pretty melodies, good lyrics and attractive arrangements, then you would be likely to prefer music pre 1990.

There are other reasons why today's songs sound the way they do. Record companies now make drastically less revenue than they used to, and as a result

are more careful with their marketing strategies and money. The rationale goes something like this. Launching a new act is an expensive process of choosing an act with the correct "Package" – therefore, the person or people have to look a certain way and perform a certain way, have a certain image and sing a certain type of song. These values are derived from evaluating what is currently fashionable, and also what has been successful before. So what the public gets now is a slick, appropriately packaged touring act. If it is a female, she will look attractive, dress fashionably and sound the part of the demographic she serves. If it is a rapper, he will look like a rapper and act like a rapper. The only problem is that something about the way these acts look will remind you of previous acts, perhaps from a few years back, and the songs they sing sound sort of familiar...
[Example: Yarbrough & Peoples (1988) – "Don't Stop The Music"- Rihanna (2007)]

This is not a coincidence; the record company is hedging its bet. To ensure success and a profitable return on a five-million-dollar investment, the producer is staying with the tried and true and what works. The more edgy and unusual artists are bypassed and unsigned in favour of the "sure things".

So, the variety that characterized the 1960s and 1970s has been replaced by an assembly line-like similarity. Ironically, Journey's "Don't Stop Believing", a 1981 song is the most downloaded song on I-Tunes.

People of my generation complain about the quality of today's Popular Music. I often hear comments such as "that is not music", or "what is that rubbish?", but aren't these familiar comments? Every older generation has said this about the younger generation's music. I tend to think the gap between the music of my time and the music of my children's time is wider than that between my parent's music and mine, but I could be wrong.

There are reasons that contribute to these differences, of course, and some of these differences are not exclusive to Jamaica. In fact, that great gulf between generations that opens somewhere in the late eighties divides music into two distinct camps – music up to the 1980s, and music after the 1980s, although each of these camps can be subdivided into smaller periods.

One complaint about today's Popular Music is that it glorifies gun violence, views women as sex objects, and generally depicts life in a coarse and crude fashion. Some people claim that the music, specifically Dancehall, is the cause of some of the violence and mayhem experienced. People believe that Dancehall has coarsened the society. To my way of thinking, the music is only speaking about the society as it is.

Art reflects the society, amplifies what is already there. In 1830 in Brussels which was at that time in Holland, there was a performance of a very nationalistic

opera that so fired-up the audience that they rushed out of the theatre shouting, "To arms! To arms!" and began to riot. The end result of this affair was the secession of the southern provinces and the creation of the Belgian state. In this case the opera may have been the spark, but the conditions for the revolt were already there.

Please note that on the subject of "slackness" in Jamaican music, Mento music is still the slackest of the slack music – certainly not the crudest, but definitely the slackest.

We have to try and preserve an accurate history of Jamaican music and resist the revisionists. For example, I have scanned various accounts of Jamaica's Pop Music history, and Ernie Smith and Pluto Shervington are given scant or no regard. They deserve better. Reggae, or Ska, to be more accurate, was not started by Rastafarians (but this perhaps is a topic for another essay).

The Role of Government

With the exception of Edward Seaga, who commissioned basic research into Traditional Jamaican Music and started the Jamaica Festival and the Festival Office of Jamaica (now Jamaica Cultural Development Commission - JCDC), successive governments have given little more than perfunctory support to music.

Even though he could and should have done more, Edward Seaga is the Jamaican Prime Minister who has done the most for music and its development, and by a wide margin. Mr. Seaga was the first to set up a record-pressing plant in Jamaica, established one of the first commercial record labels and, when his political career created a conflict of interest with his record business, he sold it to Byron Lee and the business, rebranded as Dynamic Sounds, continued to be a force in the Jamaican recording industry. In the meantime, Mr. Seaga created the JCDC and Jamaica Festival from which the Festival Song Competition became an important symbol of Jamaican culture. Seaga also commissioned research into Jamaica's Traditional Music and put music on the government agenda, a significant achievement.

Unfortunately, politicians jump on the Reggae bandwagon when it is to their benefit to do so, but there is no sustained effort to harness or develop the substantial human potential that exists.

There are other examples of the government's lax attitude to music. There is no purpose-built performing space in Jamaica. For amplified concert settings, there are a few hotel ballrooms in Kingston and Montego Bay, school auditoriums and gymnasiums, church halls, sports arenas such as the National Stadium, National Arena and National Indoor Sports Centre, and there are, of course, open air

venues, where the noise pollution laws are observed more in the breach than in reality. For an unamplified concert the possibilities are hotel ballrooms, churches and church halls, and dramatic theatres. None of these venues are ideal acoustically, as what is needed for unamplified concerts is basically a rectangular resonant box. What is so wrong with having a performing space that can perhaps accommodate two sizes of audience, seated or standing, which is acoustically suited for amplified sound but enclosed, so it does not produce noise pollution? Is that too much to ask? Other islands in the Caribbean have dedicated facilities. Why can't any administration see the benefit of such a facility?

There have been at least four much-heralded plans and even some groundbreaking ceremonies for a concert hall of some kind, and to date none of them have materialized. I thought music was important?

One of our governments perhaps read one of the UN or EU reports touting music as an area where the country had export potential, and as a result instituted a policy of no import duty for musical instruments in an effort to encourage and develop music. In practice this was initially such an impossibly tedious exercise in bureaucratic humbug that very few musicians attempted getting official clearance. Then the policy was instituted at the airports but with a few interesting variations. You could import a violin or a drum set duty-free, but you had to pay duty on violin strings and drum sticks. You could import a synthesizer duty-free, but if it "cost too much", then you had to pay duty on it. At present, no one can say what will happen if you present a new musical instrument or music-related piece of equipment to the customs. Quite possibly you will go through paying just the stamp duty, or just as likely they will assess a hefty duty plus consumption tax; who knows? Is this behaviour part of the effort to develop music?

The Jamaica Music Museum became a legal entity in 2010. This is a museum of musical equipment and paraphernalia used in all genres and from all eras in Jamaican musical history. At time of writing, the process of identifying and funding a physical home for this museum has now in 2019, nine years later, only just begun.

Preserving the Culture

Very few of us know more than a smattering of information about our musical culture.

When you talk about original Jamaican music forms, the Mento band is the low boy on the totem pole. If you take a look at an average Mento band today, you will probably see a small group of old men. These senior citizens are the keepers of the music of Jamaica before Ska and Reggae, and there are very few young men willing to continue the tradition. One of the reasons for this dearth of young men is cultural. Mento is the music of old men, and the current

music is more attractive to the younger generation, not to mention louder. The other main reason is certainly economic; Mento band wages are depressing. From what I can gather, band wages in 2019 hover around \$9,000 for a two-hour gig for three players! Is it any wonder that very few young men want to play Mento?

By the way, how many Jamaicans know that Sir Willard White, CBE, OM, born in the rural town of Ewarton, was at one time one of the leading bass-baritone singers in operatic music, and even now he is in demand all over the world? The Oscar nominated, Golden Globe winner film "Green Book" is about the one-of-a-kind composer-pianist Don Shirley, a brilliant man who disliked being characterized as a jazz pianist. He had three PhDs, spoke eight languages and regarded himself a composer. Don Shirley was born in Florida to Jamaican parents. Thom Bell, Jamaican born, and one of the chief architects of the Philadelphia Sound, was songwriter arranger and producer for the Stylistics, Spinners, Delfonics, Ronnie Dyson and many other R & B acts from the late 1960s to the 1980s. These are three examples of Jamaican musicians, two from Art Music and one from Popular Music, who have achieved international acclaim while remaining virtually anonymous here in Jamaica.

With respect to Folk Music though not the first, the definitive study of Jamaican Folk Music began with Dr. Olive Llewellyn, who then passed the torch to Marjorie Whyllie, for others to continue building the body of knowledge. The Jamaica School of Music was given the materials – field recordings, transcriptions and papers, and also the mandate to continue this research. Sadly, the post of Folk Music Researcher at the School of Music has been vacant for more than twenty years.

Talent and Training

Jamaica is not short of talent, people with good ears, good voices, and a fertile imagination. Jamaica has as much raw musical talent as any other culture, but as some have already pointed out, Jamaica's biggest waste is the waste of its human potential. And even if the talent is spotted, look at what frequently happens.

When talent is spotted early, frequently families can't afford the individual musical training necessary. In addition, almost all talent is forced down the Pop Music pipe. I have encountered numerous potential talents in Classical, Jazz, Musical Theatre, both vocal and instrumental who are forced to try and achieve some success in the Pop arena, and have failed, not for lack of talent, but because that particular talent is not suited to Popular Music. I can remember a singer in the Digicel Rising Stars auditions with an extraordinarily rich bass voice – with training, this could be a very useful classical bass solo singer. His clip was played on TV but the audience ignored him, more than likely because his

singing did not sound like anything a regular pop audience would like. Popular Music tends to prefer a “package” of talent with particular requirements for look, range and timbre of voice and whatever else current fashion demands. Anything that falls outside that set of parameters tends to be summarily rejected.

Raw talent is just that. Spectacular talent emerges when raw talent is developed. The case of Dalton Harris is useful in this regard, as Dalton won the Digicel Rising Star contest in 2010 and subsequently availed himself of voice and performance training which undoubtedly helped him win the 2018 X-Factor UK contest.

The Importance of Reggae

Reggae is a very interesting genre of music. Something in that mix of New Orleans Boogie Woogie, Jamaica Mento, Cuban Mambo, lyrics running the gamut from love through protest politics to no words at all, and a celebration of life, finds a resonance in every corner of the world. Reggae is a classic example of fusion music. A mix of United States, Jamaica, and Cuba musical elements produced a novel genre of Popular Music. The entire world seems to have taken to this type of music and now it no longer ‘belongs’ to Jamaica, but to the world. For those who insist that Jamaica must “Take Back” Reggae, I say that once a musical genre has gone global, there is no “taking back”. The arts progress by building on what has gone before, and Reggae was built on something that existed before.

Reggae gets associated with a diverse array of human activity. For example, the “Yellow vests” protest in France that was a current talking point, where a Reggae song was one of the main pieces of music used to identify and unify the movement. Thousands of German citizens sang Marley’s “Three Little Birds” as the Berlin Wall was being dismantled. Another example is the significant presence of Reggae and Rastafarianism in New Zealand culture since Bob Marley’s 1979 performance there. Such was the influence that the Jimmy Cliff song “Rebel In Me” became a sort of anthem for the Maori People, the love song taking on a different meaning in their context.

[Example: Jimmy Cliff – “Rebel In Me”]

The perhaps astounding fact is that Bob Marley became a cultural and religious icon to the Hopi Nation in Colorado’s Grand Canyon. That Reggae was added to the ‘Global Cultural Heritage List’ by UNESCO in 2018 also speaks to its international recognition and prestige.

How We Developed our Musical Sensibilities

In the 1950s, there was one radio station in Jamaica, and this meant that the programming had to serve many different groups in the society as the only other mass medium was the newspaper. This “all-purpose community radio” had a side effect of exposing listeners to program material other than their normal preferences, resulting in a general public exposed to Popular, Classical, Jazz, Country, Religious Music, and who knows what else. A comment I like to make is that my generation could have preferences for certain types of music over others because we were exposed to all types of music. Today there are thirty odd licensed radio stations in Jamaica, most of which stick to one specific genre. For instance, there is Irie FM which uses an all-Reggae format, and Zip FM which plays ninety percent Dancehall and Hip Hop/Rap. The current generation of 15 – 25 year-olds like only the music they listen to...

But they've never heard anything else.

It is a startling revelation to hear that some young people regard music as the accompaniment to video.

I keep forgetting that my generation lived most of, if not all of Jamaica's Reggae history and should not be offended when a twenty something year old is annoyed that Jimmy Cliff is singing Noddy Virtue's “Rebel in Me”. For the record, it is the other way around; “Rebel in Me” is Jimmy Cliff's original song.

When you encounter a young person interested in music other than the current fad, it is likely that this would have arisen from one of two causes: 1) being influenced by folk at home, including listening to music, recorded or live, and attending performances in their childhood; and 2) having learned an instrument as a child and thereby forced to play a different repertoire than just Pop Music.

It is sobering to have to say that the value of music as an art form has declined. It may be that Popular Music's only value is as a medium of entertainment. Generally, for the first time in the history of Popular Music, the image of the performers has become more important than the music they produce.

Payola

Payola is still a problem. Despite all protestations to the contrary and efforts by government, the media, the industry, it certainly exists, and it is not hard to find either. If the listener is wondering why there is less diversity on the airwaves and certain recordings get heavy airplay while others get none, this could be one of the reasons.

The decline of Live Dance Music and the rise of Recorded Music and Live Concerts

There was a lively and thriving live music scene up to the 1970s, when a long line of bands played, mostly for dancing. Some of the bands include: Fab 5, Byron Lee, Tomorrow's Children, Sonny Bradshaw 7, Boris Gardiner and the Happening,

Carlos Malcolm & the Afro-Jamaican Rhythms, Mighty Vikings, Generation Gap, Bare Essentials. The reasons for the decline are in part economic – it is much cheaper to hire a “set” that will play records all night than to hire an eight-piece dance band for two to four hours. Additionally, tastes have changed, and Jamaican listeners now demand to hear the recording rather than a live interpretation of the song. Ironically, Fab 5 have sold thousands of copies of their Live Series recordings to people who would not pay to hear the actual band play live. Production values for recording, ever since the advent of magnetic tape that could be edited, have engendered a preoccupation with perfection of recorded performances. This seeming “perfect” recording is impossible to reproduce live.

Since the best thing that can be said about the recording business is that it is “in a state of flux”, live music has become even more important as the way to make a viable income as a professional musician. As stated elsewhere in this presentation, there are very few live music venues in Kingston and there is no dedicated performing space.

The country has had a surprisingly lively history of live music venues. In the heyday of the clubs there were many of note. The Colony Club, Silver Slipper, Champion House, Club Adastral and Club Havana, the so-called “Latin Quarter of Jamaica”, through the 60s and 70s with Glass Bucket, Sombrero, Bronco and the Red Hills Road Strip. Compare this activity with present – in Kingston live music is played at one or two hotels on a regular basis. There is a very vibrant musicians’ Jam Session every Thursday night at the restaurant Pallet and just outside of Harbour View in Bull Bay is the long running “Jamnesia”, which is actually a surfing camp that has a bi-weekly live music event. Any other musical event is staged on an ad-hoc basis usually at one of the restaurants or multi-purpose venues in the city. One can only hope that more live music venues will emerge, living up to the recent inclusion of Kingston into UNESCO’s ‘Creative City of Music Network’.

The live music in the tourist belt is in some ways more progressive than Kingston, as these locations are supported by the tourist trade. Outside of the hotels, Ocho Rios has the Island Plaza and Ruins Club, and in Montego Bay you will find Blue Beat Ultra Lounge, Hard Rock Café, Margaritaville, Pier One and Coral Cliff; and in Negril, live music is commonplace.

The music business in many instances was invented by businessmen so they could make money out of music. The creative people were important only as far as turning out the product and no further. Now that there is a new reality, this model is set up so that businessmen/women can make money out of music, and the creative component is making even less money than before. I think you could hazard a guess at whose side I am on. There also is a common practice in the hotel and tourist business, where there is a band manager who supplies a

working band to a hotel and collects the fees. Meanwhile, who knows what the musicians get!

Probably the most important purpose of Popular Music is to sell music with popular appeal and realize a profit over the production expenses. Many people have achieved this, and in some cases as an added benefit, good music has been made. Songwriters, artists and producers from the 1960s didn't expect their productions to be memorable beyond a few months. Many were surprised at the longevity. Similarly, songwriters, artists and producers from the 2000s didn't expect their productions to be memorable beyond a few months. This time there have been very few surprises.

On the positive side, the internet has enabled artists to completely bypass the record company and have direct contact with the customer or fan, therefore maximizing the potential income, at least in theory. The drawback is that without well-organized marketing to make the artist visible, this product is just one of hundreds of thousands or even millions of acts available on the internet, and as a practical matter, the artist is invisible.

Another positive development is that some musicians have started streaming services that give the artist much more autonomy over the product and pay much larger royalties. Once again, marketing is the limiting factor in this exercise. The advantage of the record company is that it has well developed marketing resources - money, systems and experience to maximize exposure and sales. The average new or small act cannot afford the cost of effective marketing.

Music as a business was initially concerned with promoting concerts, operas and publishing. Remember, these were the days of no electricity, therefore no electronic media.

The business model used since the invention of phono disks and sound recording until about 2003 has roughly been to pay up front to record performances on disks, then to mass produce disks and sell them to the public. Sales revenue pays for production expenses, talent fees and royalties, manufacturing, marketing and distribution costs, with of course the lion's share of the returns going to the record company. Without going into too much detail, this was a very successful business that was fueled by a surging market for mostly Popular Music with all its sub-genres, and other types of music such as Country, Jazz and Classical. This was for a very long time an extremely lucrative business. In the period 1985 – 1995 for instance, record companies enjoyed 30% growth.

Nowadays, after nearly two decades of the twenty first century, the world is not consuming less music, it is consuming more music. The world is simply not paying for most of this music.

The emergence of the personal computer caused nothing short of a revolution in many areas, and music was one activity that was profoundly changed. By the end of the 1990s and into the early 2000s, computer technology and the internet made audio file sharing a practical reality. Apple iTunes was the legal download, Napster was the so-called illegal one, and in any case, when the smoke cleared after all the lawsuits, the general public was happily sharing audio files. Some are paying for them, but the vast majority are not. File sharing services like Spotify offer subscriptions where for a monthly fee, the customer has access to hundreds of thousands of popular titles.

This situation of “hundreds of thousands of titles” being available highlights another major reason for the devaluation of music. There is so much content – literally a century’s worth of recordings, and this content is available from a variety of sources; some of them are free, and others are cheap, so the buying public has less of an incentive to buy new music when there are so many other alternatives. Although, it should be noted that young people do buy new music, that is, after they have exhausted all efforts to download it for free.

Consequences of this upheaval are that streaming services are making some money, but the artists who before were making a small portion of the revenues, are now making even less – miniscule amounts in fact. Record company artist contracts are no longer only for recordings, but “360 contracts” where the company gets a cut of all activities associated with the act, including revenues from live performance, merchandising and of course, endorsements.

An astounding reality is that before year 2000, artists performed live to generate interest in their recordings, which constituted the main money-earner. After 2000, the situation was reversed, where artists make recordings in order to promote their live performances, which is now the primary-earner. U2's 2009-2011 360-degree tour earned in today's dollars over 820 Million US dollars.

Numerous people complain that contemporary Pop Music is mediocre, puerile, formulaic and uninspired. Well, not quite. For example, the complaints from people of my generation are some of the loudest, but are they simply signs of the generation gap? Do people my age remember how horrified our elders were at the popularity and wild abandon of Ska tunes, noisy Motown singles, noisy *and* jangly Beatles songs and the like?

ART MUSIC

The term Art music refers to what is loosely called Western Classical Music and, in my opinion, also Jazz. This is music created as an artistic gesture, but the definition is sometimes broadened to include music for theatre, for dance, church and generally music that supports another artistic activity. This is not music created and produced in most instances toward a commercial end.

One interesting thing about groups of people and music is that everyone hears something different. Some people will think a particular piece of music is the best thing they have heard while others regard it as rubbish. There will perhaps be a majority who will like it, and there will also be a minority who will think that there must be something more than this. This minority could be the sector of the society that appreciates Art Music, Art Films, and all things artistic. I think that every society has these individuals, and they are undoubtedly found at all socio-economic levels.

The biggest problem with playing music in Jamaica is that this is a small country. The economies of scale work against us. In Kingston there are probably half a dozen venues where live music is played on a regular basis, so it doesn't take many playing gigs to be seen at all the available venues. If a performer goes around the same musical circuit too many times in a short space of time, it is not long before the performance seems old and the audience tires of that act. In addition, Jamaica is a "bandwagon" type of country. This tendency to 'do what the others do' may partially explain why we have not done more creative exploration of these truly original styles of music, Mento, Ska, Rock Steady, Reggae and Dancehall.

The social, economic and political upheavals of the 1970s precipitated a brain drain and financial drain. In the music community, there was an exodus of teachers, a reduction in students learning musical instruments, and importantly, an extreme curtailing of the audiences for Art Music. The end result of these phenomena was a decimation of most of the formal music education in Jamaica. I suppose it could be argued that the situation allowed Reggae to flourish and develop, but it can also be said that the Popular Music would have developed with or without a formal music component.

The primary activity in Jamaican Art Music is performance of Art Music, as opposed to composition. There are a number of Classical Music concerts, with varying degrees of success. Similarly, there are Jazz sessions held at regular intervals throughout the year, also with varying degrees of success.

Art Music in Jamaica cannot sustain itself by selling tickets for concerts. It has to have additional support, both government and private sector.

In Kingston, Classical concerts that are properly promoted have a typical attendance of three to four hundred, but depending on various factors, the numbers can be as few as two hundred and, as was the case when Luciano Pavarotti performed here, as large as four or five thousand. The Jazz crowd is better but not by a whole lot. Attendance is sometimes dependent on the price of admission, as most free concerts are well attended. On the other hand, Jamaican Jazz pianist Monty Alexander gave a concert at the Pegasus Hotel for a charity where the ticket prices were at eye-watering levels, and the ballroom (about 1200 patrons) was full, so go figure!

JAZZ

Looking at Jazz, the important fact to bear in mind is that Jazz, the Art Music, comes out of Jazz, the Popular Music.

[Example: Glen Miller – “In The Mood”].

In Jamaica, bandleaders like Eric Deans, George Moxie and Sonny Bradshaw entertained the public with music that nowadays would be called Jazz. When that music started changing and explored the Be-Bop technicalities from Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, while simultaneously the Popular Music insurgency was rapidly turning into an explosion, that is when Jazz in my opinion became Art Music.

Like Classical Music, Jazz has an uncertain future as the audience is aging, and it is contracting, and not enough young people are taking up the slack. Some Jazz fans developed a taste for the music because Jazz recordings were played at home, but far fewer households play Jazz in the home so there is a consequent drop in new interest. It seems the only other source of new audience is the relatively few students who have to study Jazz and have developed a liking for it.

I interviewed Desi Jones, drummer extraordinaire, who is a major player in all things Jazz in Jamaica, and he had a few interesting views. First, Desi thinks there is real Jazz and fake Jazz. The real Jazz is the thing that is dying slowly because the audience is shrinking. The fake Jazz is what for example happened to the much-hyped ‘Jamaica Jazz & Blues Festival’ where there was hardly any Jazz or Blues. It seems that the word “Jazz” has become some kind of non-specific marketing term indicating music that isn’t Pop, sort of. So Kingston’s ‘Jazz in The Garden’ is mostly cabaret with the occasional real Jazz number.

Desi thinks that the Foundation Jazzmen such as Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis and Max Roach all created their innovations through trial and error and experimentation, and this is what stimulated creativity and diversity

[Example: Miles Davis – “Seven Steps To Heaven”].

The younger generation doesn't have the responsibility of creating new ways of playing; they just have to copy what has already been developed. In addition, the internet and particularly "The University of YouTube" has made these techniques available to all, in five easy steps, even. So the new young players are more technical, faster and faster, cleaner and cleaner, amazing players – but often without an ounce of emotion. A writer whose name I forget was commenting on young Classical players, but it is equally applicable to young Jazz players. He remarked on "the icy brilliance of today's virtuosos".

In my opinion, Jazz is an Art Music worth keeping, even if it means an uphill struggle. More events need to be held until hopefully the market improves and it is a more financially sound venture. It may help if some of the radio stations played more Jazz, aside of Dermot Hussey's 'Friday and Sunday Riffs', and music in the schools could include Jazz appreciation in the curriculum.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

The audience for Classical Music is contracting everywhere for various reasons, some mentioned earlier, and the art form suffers another disadvantage. People's attention spans and level of concentration have shortened considerably since the advent of MTV, the cell phone, and Twitter. People want to be mentally stimulated in a short space of time and move on to the next stimulus. If you put this comparatively new taste against the fact that many of the great pieces of Classical Music are longer than your average Pop song – in fact, some are a whole lot longer than the average Pop song – then you have more people who do not have the time or the level of attention to enjoy Classical Music. By way of explanation, in the 1960s, for technical reasons, Pop songs were not much over two minutes long. Nowadays, Pop songs are between three and four minutes long. Compare those lengths with an early Haydn symphony clocking in at around ten minutes, a Mozart symphony at between eighteen and twenty four minutes, and Mahler symphony no. 9 from the late nineteenth century at eighty four minutes.

[Example: Mozart – "Symphony no. 40 in G minor, first movement"]

By the way, for opera fans, Wagner's opera 'Götterdämmerung' is five and a half hours long! And yet some modern people will binge-watch TV series like "Game of Thrones" for a weekend or longer.

Having said that, the appreciation of Classical Music in Jamaica could be greater if the radio stations would play more of it. At present, I think only NCU Radio and Love FM play Classical Music on a regular basis.

Of all the types of performance, choral performance is the most vibrant and it is very heartening to see such a wide range of people having the interest to sing many different types of music.

An interesting and encouraging growth is in my area... composition. In the last few years, compositions by Jamaican composers have been premiered with increasing frequency, particularly new works by Andrew Marshall.

The activity in Classical Music is to my mind, about what you'd expect from a former British colony. Again, it must be remembered that in the great North American exodus of the 1970s, a number of players of instruments, music teachers, and importantly, the audience (the people who consume music) left the island. The result of this was a decimation of Classical Music activity in Jamaica. It took a number of years for people to realize that the absence was not a good thing and the rebuilding of Classical Music did not start in any serious way until the middle of the 1990s. So here we are in 2019, still in the rebuilding stage, where efforts like The National Youth Orchestra of Jamaica (NYOJ), The Immaculate Conception High School Orchestra, the UWI Classical and Jazz Ensemble (CAJE), Edna Manley's Community Orchestra, and the Philharmonic Orchestra of Jamaica (POJ) will one day produce a functioning Classical Music community.

RELIGIOUS MUSIC

The Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and other traditional denominations occupied a large footprint in Jamaican religious life, as too have the Revivalists, Pocomania, but since the mid-70s they have had to accommodate the rise of the Evangelical, Charismatic and Pentecostal denominations.

All churches revise and update their music from time to time. Probably in an effort to be more relevant, and also to attract and keep their congregation, most have included more Caribbean material, and in the Jamaican arena, it is common to encounter hymns from Noel Dexter, Barry Chevannes, Grub Cooper, Ernie Smith, and who could forget Peter Tosh's "Jah is My Keeper".

[Example: Peter Tosh – "Jah Is My Keeper"].

The traditional denominations have also relaxed their attitudes towards instrumentation and in most churches you can also encounter band instruments – drum sets, hand drums, amplified guitars and electronic keyboards. Even though the changes may not be welcomed by all, they are here to stay and there seems to be acceptance.

There was a question in the late 1980s going around in the USA – "where have all the sophisticated Rhythm and Blues songs, singers and musicians gone?" Where are the people who could produce "Reasons" and "I Wanna Dance With Somebody"? With the ascendance of Rap Music, the singers and the pretty and slick songs seemed to fade into the background and when we heard anything

like that again, it was simpler and more overtly sentimental rather than slick and sophisticated.

[Example: *Boyz II Men & Mariah Carey – “One Sweet Day”*]

The answer is that many of the highly technical musicians resurfaced in Gospel Music, supporting the evolution of primarily contemporary American Gospel Music and the emergence of the Praise and Worship repertoire. An interesting sidebar is that quite a few of the Pop musicians also have a “church gig”. So they work Saturday night playing one repertoire of songs, then Sunday morning they’re playing another. This actually may be somewhat easier to do as many of the new songs are Pop songs with religious lyrics.

[Example: *Israel & New Breed ft. Tye Tribbette – “Chasing Me Down”*]

This new repertoire of songs, overwhelmingly from the USA, was a major influence in the Evangelical, Charismatic and Pentecostal churches in Jamaica. Coupled with the highly publicized switching of some high-profile Pop Music artists (such as Papa San, Lady Saw, Lieutenant Stiche and Carlene Davis) to Gospel music, there was a mini musical revolution in the church. Now, the vehicles of expression include the Pop forms of Reggae and Dance-Hall, and this has been a powerful tool in attracting young people to the church. These events and their effects probably prodded the expansion of the repertoire of the traditional churches.

The musicians who play in the bands are an interesting study. They are almost all young and have a lot of energy and seem to be, on the face of it, more technically capable than say my generation at that age. I dug a little deeper into this situation and found out that, as alluded to in the Jazz section, the advent of the internet and the almost ubiquitous YouTube has allowed rapid and comprehensive dissemination of the techniques and all the latest styles, and since many Jamaicans are very good at mimicry, it appears that there are many musicians with impressive abilities. The down side of this is that many of these musicians cannot give a technical account of what they are playing, so as they can’t apply the principles in other situations, their musicianship is a bit one-sided. Hopefully this will eventually change.

A survey of church music in Jamaica in 2019 shows a spread of styles from the time-honoured European-style church music on one hand, the USA-influenced folk guitar and hand drum styles, passing through the Caribbean fusion, and then the USA influence of black Gospel and southern white Christian music, and the urban Pop-culture gestures of both Jamaica and the USA (Dancehall, Rap, Reggae and others).

I have heard the comment that some Gospel artists do not view their artistic careers as part of or an extension of their life philosophy but as a for-profit

business. On a personal level I have witnessed behaviour of this kind, but I don't know how prevalent it is in the field. In addition, a complaint I have heard from musicians who work in this sub-sector of the music business is that the music is now mainly about entertainment, and the performing is about business, and the tone of Gospel music is moving in the direction of the brainless hype normally associated with Dancehall.

Gospel artists have been recording in Jamaica for decades. In keeping with its constant effort to move closer to the mainstream, the co-opting of Popular styles was common, with groups like Change, Birthright and Grace Thrillers using Reggae. The appearance of established pop artists in the Gospel field opened the floodgates and since then there has been a steady flow of singers and deejays from Pop. The new cadre of artists has brought even more of a street vibe to the music. I was told of a riddim that was used by the dancehall artist Spice now being used by a Gospel artist to deejay on. Some people will be offended by this, and some won't; what do you think? Just like the Popular music business, recordings are used more as promotional tools than as recording units to be sold.

It should also be mentioned that Jamaica has a sub-culture of non-Christian Religious Music, from India and the Far East, the Middle East and Africa, Kumina being a well-known example, and these music forms have from time to time been assimilated into the Jamaican music palate, whether religious or secular.

MUSIC EDUCATION

Education is underfunded, and within the education field, music and art are the most underfunded subjects, so music and art are the least funded of all the school subjects. Not to mention that the Ministry of Education is officially not paying music teachers at Primary level. In the High Schools, if an institution is short of cash, the first subjects to be dropped are music and/or art, and some schools do not even have a room for teaching music or an adequate number of instruments.

Speaking of the High Schools, the schools that make and sustain the investment in music frequently achieve good results. When a High School wins awards in the JCDC Festival, it's probably because of a good teacher with unlimited energy and a supportive school. This seems to be the secret sauce, as the talent is certainly there in the schoolchildren, so guidance and hard work will produce a winning choir, band or instrumentalist. It should be noted that JCDC is vital to the development of these school music programs despite being woefully underfunded.

Private Music Studios have been around from at least the early twentieth century and their main process is straightforward – turn out instrumentalists and

singers, but mainly pianists and violinists, also teach them the rudiments of music, make them take international standard examinations at regular intervals, and then expect most of them to leave the studio when they finish High School. A handful will continue to study with the Studio and others may even go away and study music in other countries. These Music Studios cater to the parents who can afford the classes and the instruments that will be needed for proper study. For the masses of the people, exposure to music has to occur in Primary and/or High School.

Learning to play a musical instrument is a discipline where the younger you start, the better. As a matter of fact, in Europe and North America, the matriculation standard and the competition in Music Colleges and Conservatories is so high that if a violin student wants to enter a prestigious school, he or she had better have started classes by age six!

Speaking of teachers, this is where questions arise. I have spoken with two specialists in the music education field and what I get from them is concern over the standard of music teacher produced by the Teacher's Training Colleges. Here is an example of a problem that contributes to the sometimes low quality of teachers. The Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE) used to make the curriculum decisions for the entire teacher-training body. In the case of the Diploma in Education with an emphasis in music, it used to be that within the three-year course, students did three years of music education in addition to the other subjects. Now that the Colleges set their own curriculum, the norm has become that a four-year Bachelor Programme in Education with an emphasis in music contains only one year in specialist music training. And it gets worse! Music theory is taught for one semester, and in the second semester, get this, they are expected to learn recorder, guitar, drumming, keyboard and choir conducting! In approximately ten weeks! Is it any wonder many of them are under-prepared?

Many students entering the Edna Manley College to do music, whether for teaching or performing, start at a disadvantage. College level music requires a level of proficiency that can only be had by at least five to seven years study prior to entering College. While some students come into Edna Manley's School of Music with perhaps some proficiency on an instrument, they have often little formal training, so the learning curve for all the components of a course is very steep.

Attending a function at the National Stadium can yield an interesting phenomenon. If the National Anthem is sung, you will hear the melody being "flattened out" and at the end "Jamaica, boom!" where the tympani is simulated. Now this rendition is a significant distortion of the original Lightbourne-Poullé-Sherlock work by the general public. I must say that when the Anthem is

sung at more uptown venues, the Anthem fares much better. What is the reason for this distortion by the rank and file? This question could be more accurately answered after more research, but at the very least, it speaks to no musical training at all, perhaps combined with and exacerbated by the current Pop Music which celebrates melodies of between one and three notes. This could account for the musical insensitivity and lack of awareness of other possibilities in music.

The Ska/Reggae revolution seems to have surfaced out of the slums of Kingston, from the deprived, undereducated underclass of Jamaican society. This is not exactly true; competent professional musicians developed the style, and some of the singers had skills and training, albeit in other areas. Some of the recordings of the 1960s sound rough because the big developments in recording occurred as a result of electronic technology developed in the latter half of the 60s, and the Beatles' innovation of using the studio as a musical instrument happened in the late 60s. As such, everyone - recording technicians, musicians, singers, producers were all part of a learning experience that became a thriving recording industry. Also, some recordings could sound rough because they were poor recordings of incompetent musicians accompanying singers who only spoke creole trying to sing Standard English using misheard lyrics. What is also true is that this industry developed with very little help from the government, and the spread of Reggae music all over the world may have given rise to the hope that Jamaica will create another world-favourite if you make no effort to develop it. So, leave it to develop on its own. It is true that you can't legislate creativity, but that does not mean nothing can be done to encourage it.

The short answer is training, training and more training. Once again, it is not to say that there are no pitfalls associated with training, but the advantages by far outweigh the disadvantages.

A few years ago, I had an entertaining conversation with a young lady about that eternal question, which is better, poetry or music? She was heavily into poetry and I was defending music. We had pleasant banter, this was not one of those hammer-and-tongs arguments. After a few exchanges the lady said words to the effect that "well, I understand how powerful a song can be, but when you encounter a well-crafted poem, I don't think anything could be better" and that was when I realized that she was comparing poetry and songs - music with words, and I was comparing poetry and music without words. Many people who speak with serious faces and gravitas about profound emotions associated with a particular piece of music, it is more than likely instrumental music, they don't call music "the international language" for nothing. I'm not saying that either is superior, just that there is more to music than songs, and we have to at least recognize the difference. One example springs to mind, where Jamaica's former Poet Laureate, Professor Emeritus Mervyn Morris wanted a

lyricist to join us in the creation of the Reggae Opera 'Mikey', since he was concerned that he did not know enough about writing lyrics.

POPULAR MUSIC

Jamaica's Popular Music would have developed in the same way as that of any other island. That is to say, it would probably have a Popular Music culture with a lively local component - bands and singers performing the local Popular Music, but by and large a music culture dominated by that of the developed world. The Popular Music of Trinidad and Tobago which is globally known is a good example, where Calypso and Soca are both important to that nation, to the region and to the Caribbean Diaspora. Calypso and Soca are valuable cultural assets for that twin-island state.

Jamaica probably would have developed this way but for the appearance of Ska, Reggae, all its evolutions, and Dancehall. Jamaican musicians and singers came up with this novel hybrid of New Orleans Boogie Woogie, traditional Jamaican music with some Cuban elements that became a unique entity.

[Example: Prince Buster – “Hard Man Fe Dead”]

More importantly, this new type of rhythm was embraced outside of Jamaica. Because it was popular with Jamaicans in England, Ska started to spread to other groups in the general British population and this eventually grew into a situation when, during the 1960s, at regular intervals some Jamaican Ska, Rock Steady or Reggae songs would go up the top forty charts. By the end of the 1960s, Reggae was said to be "The Next Big Thing" inside the music industry.

One fact that should be remembered is that most of these “pioneering, visionary, and talented” Reggae producers were scamps and scoundrels who comprehensively and cynically cheated the artists and musicians, taking advantage of their ignorance of what was due to them. Today, the situation is slightly better, but not by much. Nowadays as the technology has undergone a revolution, an artist/musician can do his own recording, although the process from conception to hit song is a much more complicated one than just pressing the 'record button'.

In the early days of recording, the singers, songwriters, musicians and arrangers were regarded as shop-floor workers in the producer's factory. Nowadays the singers, songwriters, musicians and arrangers are regarded as shop-floor workers in the producer's factory. Until these attitudes change the creative team will never get their due.

Ska was sort of 'adopted' first by English Skinheads, and then hopped across the Atlantic Ocean to the west coast of the USA and has now emerged as a current genre of Popular Music that would be unrecognizable to many Jamaicans. This

transformation is very interesting because the original rhythm formula was developed by Jamaicans in the early 1960s. In the 1980s English and American musicians re-imagined it, changing among other things tempo and the type and feel of songs more towards Rock with less from Rhythm and Blues. This new Ska has taken life and there are dozens of groups making successful careers playing Ska music.

[Example: *The Mighty Bosstones – “The Impression That I Get”*]

In addition to the re-emergence of Ska, there are many Reggae groups all over the world performing songs that did not originate in Jamaica. The attitude of Jamaican musicians and singers that "any song can be done in Reggae style" is proving true from another angle.

In the Arts, individual artists create the trends and lead the other artists. This has happened when you hear that a certain style of music, visual art, speech pattern is "fashionable". This happens in any society, large or small. Jamaica is a small society so that effect of an individual tends to be amplified even further to the point where anything different from the prevailing fashion is roundly rejected.

It's value judgment time. I think Dancehall has been chasing its tail for at least ten years. Dancehall and Rap are Pop Music styles where a major component of music, the pitch component, is severely diminished in importance. The pitch parameters of the song are no longer singing parameters, but the parameters of speech. I have always been suspicious of a form of music that changes such a fundamental component in such a radical way. How long can it hold its appeal?

Current Jamaican production values have benefitted from Reggae being a World Music. Jamaican Popular Music has been exported since the 1950s and those decades of exposure to international standards have meant that now, after over sixty years, the standards of production are quite high. The problem with contemporary Jamaican productions is not the production, but the songs. From my perspective, many of the songs are good, but they are not great. Come back, Bob Marley, all is forgiven, eh?

Popular Music is by the age group of the listeners. Whatever young adults find entertaining is what is defined as the Pop Music of the day.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

I have been watching old news reels where US soldiers are being entertained by performers from Ella Fitzgerald to Leonard Bernstein, performing Classical, Jazz, Broadway and anything else, and the servicemen would listen to it all with rapt attention.

Jamaicans nowadays tend to only react to vocal music from Pop Culture. Everything else is less interesting to them. I know the Jamaican culture is different from the American, but I just wish the Jamaicans' palate would accommodate a wider variety of music. This would open a whole world of expression and sensation for them.

And on the matter of the generally poor quality of Jamaican music, don't worry, if you fix the country, the music will improve.

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