

History of reggae



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The revolutionary music genre known as reggae came from a few other music styles known as ska, rocksteady, the traditional Jamaican music, or even American R&B. Most of these genres are originally found in Jamaica and Africa, but reggae was originally from Jamaica. The word “ reggae” was defined by a famous reggae artist, Frederick Hibbert as “ music from the rebels, people who don’t have what they want” (Shelemay 388). The instrument used in reggae music differs from bass, drums, guitars, electric keyboards, to vocals that follow the rhythm of the beat or the melody. The usual drums are tuned high to make it sound similar to the timbale and bongos are to be played freely. Also the bass guitar is often essential in reggae, for they call the bass and drums the main rhythm. The harmony is often very simple that will consist of one or two cords that will repeat, like a drone and this makes the form of reggae to be strophic. The melody is usually upbeat and lively. The tempo is moderate; it is not too fast and not too slow, but upbeat. Rhythm is the key to reggae music and the lyrics of reggae involve a variety of subjects, but mainly focus on peace and political issues. Other topics could include poverty, sex, religious beliefs, and social injustice. The texture of it may differ from biphonic to polyphonic, but rarely monophonic.

Rastafarianism plays a huge role in reggae music because it is a common religion among Jamaicans and Africans. So many lyrics contribute to this religion and also Rastafarian rallies or peace rallies mainly played reggae music. Reggae is mostly played in concerts, protests, or rallies. Many famous reggae musicians use their music to spread messages of political issues, peace, or social injustice almost like a battle cry. For example Bob Marley

and the wailers wrote a song called “ Zimbabwe” and performed in a stadium when Rhodesia got their independence from Great Britain. The audience sang along with Marley, but shortly after Marley was sent off the stage it became a protest. There are no specific roles when it comes to gender, but mostly men are reggae artists. A lot of the women sing in the background. There is no particular dance that goes along with the music style of reggae; the people connect to reggae through the lyrics and the rhythm of the beat. The Rastafarians use reggae music as protests and for hope living in the ghettos.

Bob Marley, the most well-known reggae artist, helped spread reggae throughout the world and still today his popularity grows, preserving this genre of music. Passed down to the next generation after death of Bob Marley, Ziggy Marley and Damian Marley are still spreading reggae music worldwide and keeping their father’s legacy alive. As for Reggae music, it has influenced a great deal of people and musician. It also influenced new genres that are popular today, such as Puerto Rico’s reggaeton music and the innovative hip-hop music.

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