

# Reggae college essay



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Reggae is the musical genre of the island of Jamaica. Reggae originated in the early 1960's from its precursor's ska, rocksteady, and dub. Its origins can be found in African, Caribbean, and rhythm and blues music of America. Reggae is often associated with the religion of Rastafarianism which spread throughout the world by the music of Jamaican born singer and songwriter Bob Marley who revolutionized the reggae.

Ska originated in Jamaica in the 1950's and was a type of music popularized by Jamaican " rude boys. The term " rude boy" was slang for hip young men who were employed by sound system operators to break up dance competitors' at street dancehalls. Dancehalls became a popular form of outdoor entertainment and musical channel of Jamaican music. " Disc Jockey's would load up a truck with a generator, turntables, and huge speakers and set up street parties.

In the beginning, the DJs played American R&B music, but as time progressed and more local music was created, the sound migrated to a local flavor. " (wikipedia) This local flavor brought rise to the musical sounds of ska and rocksteady. Dancehalls brought fierce competition between two Dj's: Clement Coxson Dodd and Duke Reid. The dancehalls would bring hundreds and even thousands people to enjoy the sounds. These two Dj's would win their popularity by introducing the newest sounds.

It was a way to circumvent the American sounds of R&B. To help promote and create the Jamaican sound, sound system operators begin to produce their own music. Coxson Dodd founded the production studio named '

Studio One' and Duke Reid found ' Treasure Isle. ' Ska, also known as blue beat was popularized by dancehalls and sound systems.

It is a form of music the combines the sounds of mento and calypso with American jazz and rythm and blues sounds. " It is notable for its shuffling, scratchlike tempo and jazz-like horn riffs on the offbeat. " (wikipedia) Ska was popular with rude boys, mods, and skinheads. Mods were middle class teenage boys in England who were obsessed with popular culture and fashion. Skinheads were part of a working class culture in Britain that were influential by the mods and rude boys.

The ska sound is popular for the arrangement of the guitar and piano rythms on the upbeats. There are several interpretations of the origins of the musical form. Some believe that the early jazz and rock-n-roll broadcasts from American radio stations were misinterpreted by an eager Jamaican music audience, hence the off-beat rhythms that almost mimick the breakup of weak radio signals that hit the West Indian shores. Others consider ska not a misinterpretation, but its own response to American music.

The upbeat sound can be found in other Caribbean forms of music, such as mento and calypso. " (wikipedia) The one cohesive theme that developed is ska developed a celebratory theme of national pride as Jamaica gained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1962. Prince Buster created ska music. According to a historian, Prince Buster told his guitarist Jah Jerry to " change gear," which emphacized the sound in the second and fourth beats.

Ska was music of the people. Jamaica was an island of the working class and ska facilitated the mood of the time. Discs were made to serve the purpose

of sound systems and not for sale. The artists would make money by recording their songs with the producer who would in turn sell them to the sound Operators. Sound operators would make their money at the sound systems by charging an entry fee, and a charge for food and alcohol. Ska music began the start of a lot of Jamaican artists careers.

It was a way for people to make money in a starved economy. Sound systems were in high demand and thus ska musicians were also. The Jamaican population begin to spread in England which facilitated the spread of ska as well. Although it took a couple of years ska did eventually briefly break into the British pop mainstream. Rocksteady succeeded ska and was also a precursor to Reggae. " Rocksteady differs from ska in that it has a more relaxed tempo, a diminished use of horns, and a changed role for the bass guitar.

With ska, the bass tends to play quarter notes in an even walking style, but with rocksteady, the bass part is more broken-up and syncopated, using aggressive, repetitive lines which were often doubled by a guitar. "

(wikipedia) Although rude boys were well known during the ska period, their presence enumerated a stronger position. As the ghettos of kingston began to flood with rude boys in towns such as Trenchtown, Greenwich Town, and Rivertown City, these poverty stricken youths began to exort a certain style of coolness that collaborated with unruliness. Rocksteady music took on a form to promote the rude boy persona in songs such as ' Rude Boy Gone a Jail, No Good Rudie, Don't be Rude, Girl I've got a Date, Take it Easy, Tougher than Tough, Hold Them.

Duke Reid still maintained his popularity with Treasure Isle during the rocksteady era. His record label helped develop the sound of this era with the production of some of the songs listed above. Where ska music developed in a national pride movement, rocksteady music dealt primarily with lyrics of love or rude boys. Popular musicians during the rocksteady era were guitarist Lynn Taitt, keyboard player Jackie Mittoo, drummer Winston Grennan, bassist Jackie Jackson and saxophonist Tommy McCook. The factors that developed rocksteady into reggae in the late 1960's included the change in the sound and style of the recordings. " Bass patterns became more complex and increasingly dominated the arrangements, and the piano gave way to the electric organ.

Other developments included horns fading farther into the background; a scratchier, more percussive rhythm guitar; and a more precise and intricate drumming style. (wikipedia)By the early 1970's, the Rastafarian movement gained popularity. Rastafarianism originated in Jamaica in the 1930's and was popular among the working class and peasant group. It is a religion that names Haile Selassie I as God incarnate or Jah. His previous name is Ras Tafari and the king of Ethiopia. Rastafarians believe that Africa is the birthplace of mankind and the God of all black people.

This movement is so revolutionary because it grew out of the oppression of the descendants of African's experienced in the island on Kingston. They rejected the white man and his views of superiority and oppression of the black race. " Rastafarians refer to this oppression as " Babylon", with obvious references to a state of slavery and cultural tyranny that all blacks must overcome. To greater represent the truth, Rasta rejects the Bible used

by most Christians, opting instead for a “ black man’s Bible” known as the Holy Piby.

” (swagga) Rastafarians expressed: “ Freedom of Spirit, Freedom from Slavery, and Freedom of Africa. ” (swagga) They place a high value on marijuana smoking and use it as a meditation on the word of Jah.

Rastafarians expressed their pride for their race. Sixty percent of Jamaican’s are Rastafarian’s. Many of the local youths adopted Rasta as they saw it as an opportunity to rebel against their parents.

However all true Rasta’s are peaceful. They wore dreadlocks to represent the lion of Judah. Rastafarian’s lead a humble life, requiring very little in material items. Rastafarianism gained its teachings from a Jamaican black nationalist Marcus Garvey, who preached a message of black self-empowerment.

He was most famous for social reform in his “ back to Africa,” teachings. He felt that blacks should move back to Africa, as they could not be respected in a European culture. Reggae became an avenue for the passage the Rastafarian message to the world, as so Rastafarianism became a key element in the evolution of reggae. Bob Marley, the world’s most notable reggae musician was a big advocator of the spread of Rastafarianism. “ Many of Marley’s songs contained Biblical references, sometimes using wordplay to fuse activism and religion, as in “ Revolution” and “ Revelation”: Revelation, reveals the truth..., It takes a revolution to make a solution..

(wikipedia) Bob Marley originally teamed up with a group during the ska and rocksteady era called the teenagers. They later became The Wailers and consisted of Bob Marley, Bunny Livingston, Peter McIntosh, Junor Braithwaite, <https://assignbuster.com/reggae-college-essay/>

Beverly Kelso, and Cherry Smith. They made hits like Simmer Down, and I shot the Sheriff. The Wailers broke up in 1974 and Bob Marley went solo but continued recording as Bob Marley and The Wailers.

Bob Marley's biggest hits include: No Woman, No Cry, Get Up Stand Up, Exodus, Rastaman and Vibration. Bob Marley performed and recorded many political concerts making a name for both himself, rastafarianism, and Jamaica. Uprising in 1980 was Bob Marley's final studio album. Although Rastafarianism rejected the white man, Bob Marley himself was half white.

His father white and mother black. His reflection of being of mixed race: " I don't have prejudice against myself. My father was a white and my mother was black. Them call me half-caste or whatever.

Me don't dip on nobody's side. Me don't dip on the black man's side nor the white man's side. Me dip on God's side, the one who create me and cause me to come from black and white. For its political movement Rastafarianism gained widespread recognition in countries like the United States and Britain. Musicians that sang about Rastafari focused their efforts on black consciousness, politic, and protest.

The 1960's particularly in America was a important time period as it marks a change in black history. Rastafari helped revolutionize a change in thought and protest. It helped strengthen a worldwide movement of black power and sparked an evolutionary change of the people. Reggae music is a reflection of Rastafarianism. Early reggae musicians besides Bob Marley whose music expresses Rastafari doctrine well are Peter Tosh, Bunner Wailer, Prince Far I, Linval Thompson, Ijahman, Levi, Misty in Roots, The Congos, The

Rastafarians, The Abbysinians, Culture, and Ras Michael and The Sons of Negus.

" (wikipedia) Reggae has brought about a change worldwide in thought and ideals. The music has put Jamaica on the map as a culture that leads in the revolution. Reggae used traditional R&B, British folk, and Carribean music to personalize the sound of Jamaica. Reggae is more than music of the people, it is a movement of expression.