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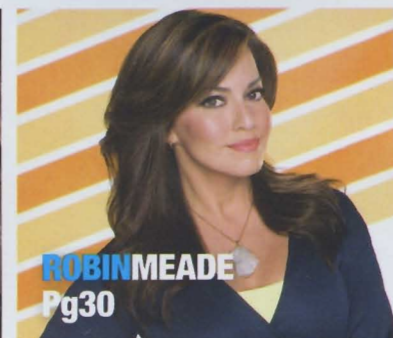
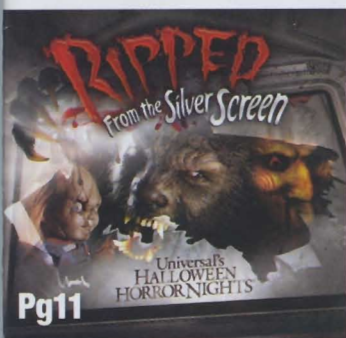
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ROOTS, ROCK, REGGAE

The evolution & influence of Jamaican music

By Bret Love

Just 145 miles long and 50 miles wide, with a population of 2.8 million, Jamaica ranks 139th among the world's most populous countries (putting it just ahead of Mongolia and Latvia). But it's impossible to quantify the remarkable impact the island has had

on global culture, thanks in large part to a legacy of musical innovation stretching back over 50 years. Without Jamaica, the world would never have known the sounds of ska, reggae or even hip-hop, all of which were born on this tiny island in the West Indies.



THE ROOTS

Though most people associate the island with the laid-back rhythms of reggae, Jamaica's first major musical movement was the more uptempo sound of ska. Combining elements of Caribbean mento and calypso with American jazz and rhythm & blues, ska arose in the wake of American soldiers stationed in Jamaica during and after World War II, and its celebratory sound coincided with Jamaica's independence from the UK in 1962. Early acts such as The Skatalites and The Wailers remain legends today, influencing '80s acts such as Madness, The Specials and English Beat and '90s icons such as Sublime, No Doubt and the Mighty Mighty Bosstones. But by the late '60s, as American soul music was becoming slower and smoother, ska began to evolve into reggae, whose central themes of peace, love, justice and equality mirrored the ideals of the American counter-cultural movement of the same time period.



THE HEART

The dawn of reggae found Jamaican music spreading throughout the world, with Bob Marley & the Wailers leading the charge. With lyrics that balanced sociopolitical discourse, religious themes and messages of love and positivity, songs such as "Get Up, Stand Up" and "I Shot the Sheriff" made them international superstars (particularly after the latter was covered by Eric Clapton in 1974). But they weren't the only Jamaican artists to break out: Acts such as ex-Wailer Peter Tosh, Jimmy Cliff, Burning Spear, Black Uhuru and Culture all emerged as stars on the global stage. Wailers producer Lee "Scratch" Perry was chosen to work with British punk legends The Clash, while British bands such as The Police and Steel Pulse proved reggae's influence was spreading far beyond Jamaica's borders. By 1985, the Grammy Awards had introduced a Best Reggae Album category, signaling the Jamaican sound's firm place in the mainstream.

THE BRANCHES

While the influence of ska and reggae cannot be overstated, it was another Jamaican music sub-genre that ultimately changed the world. Popularized by production wizards such as Lee "Scratch" Perry and King Tubby, dub is a largely instrumental version of reggae originally used to test sound systems. To hype the crowds at the parties and nightclubs where the DJs performed, they would get on the microphone and "toast" in hip rhyming patterns. When Kingston native Clive "DJ Kool Herc" Campbell moved to the Bronx, his legendary parties gave birth to the sound now known as hip-hop, influencing practically every DJ and MC that followed.



In recent years a bevy of popular musical forms have evolved out of Jamaican styles, including dancehall, reggaeton and trip-hop. Whether it's Bob's son Ziggy Marley singing the theme song to the children's TV show *Arthur*, a contestant on *America's Got Talent* aping Shaggy's "Mr. Boombastic," or chart-topping pop star Sean Kingston, these days Jamaican music is everywhere, ensuring the little island will continue to be a big influence for many years to come.

JAMAICA'S CAN'T-MISS MUSICAL LANDMARKS

BOB MARLEY MUSEUM (Kingston) – This museum features the world's largest collection of writings, photographs, artifacts, memorabilia and other mementos from the reggae legend's extraordinary life.

JAMAICA MUSIC MUSEUM (Kingston) – Currently undergoing revitalization, this museum chronicles the history and evolution of the island's music, from mento and ska to reggae, dub and dancehall.

PETER TOSH MEMORIAL PARK

(Westmoreland) – Still under construction, this memorial (overseen by Tosh's mother) includes his mausoleum, a small museum/gift shop and memorabilia of the legend's life.

REGGAE XPLOSION

(Ocho Rios) – Provides an extensive overview of Jamaican music history, including digital photo archives, music-related art, vinyl albums and a replica of a mobile record shack.

For more info: www.visitjamaica.com