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# **BETTER MUST COME: REGGAE AS A NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis discusses the intertwining relationship between the rise of reggae music on a local and global scale, and the political efforts of both Michael Manley and Edward Seaga to close the gap between the rich and the poor. Central to Manley's success was the wavering support from cultural spokesperson and icon Bob Marley. This thesis will trace how reggae music was co-opted by political parties during the early seventies with the view of securing votes and constituencies. The complexity of the wants of the people, most of whom were poor, marginalised and disempowered, but were fundamental to the grassroots reggae movement will be explored. Manley's politics of change and socialist ideology intended to establish equality and opportunity, however intense pressure from major financial institutions and a global recession made these goals difficult to achieve. These challenges were compounded by the changing values and expectations of the middle class and the shifting direction of reggae music, as the seventies drew to a close.

The role of reggae music as a new social movement will be unpacked and in particular how Bob Marley's passing and a new political ideology signified a change in the islands musical direction at the beginning of the eighties. Dancehall music's obsession with sex, sexuality, materialism and conspicuous consumption led to the weakening of an effective social movement. This thesis examines the overarching role of globalisation and technology in being new dissemination mediums for the global uptake and practice of both contemporary dancehall and more culturally orientated forms of reggae.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis will explore the in-depth development and progression of reggae music and how it was primarily employed as a vehicle for social change that highlighted the hardships experienced by the Jamaican poor, and their strive for equality and social well being. The focal point of this thesis is the idea of social change that one day can bring about a transformation in circumstances and opportunities for the majority of the population who experience a variety of forms of poverty and hardship. Central to the idea of reggae as a new social movement, was the active involvement and co-option of the music by the two political parties, who employed the music and its large following to make promises, gain votes and secure political constituencies. This perspective became more significant once Jamaica achieved Independence in 1962 as the nation prospered on its own determination and free will, without interference from British colonial rule. During the course of the seventies the two political leaders Michael Manley and Edward Seaga instigated a number of schemes, policies and destabilisation measures to uproot the other from governance and instil their own ideology. Leading musicians such as Bob Marley became political pawns, watchdogs and peace makers as Jamaica struggled through massive debt, malnutrition, unemployment, poverty and political violence.

Reggae music brought the ideas, values and expectations of the underclass together, where they could be more expressive, more powerful and direct in challenging the dominant ideology. Reggae was viewed by its supporters, adversaries and the middle class as 'rebel music', due to the fact that it challenged the state and authorities, and recognised Black Nationalism and foremost equality in an economic system designed to exploit and ignore those less fortunate. Roots reggae emerged out of Jamaica in the early seventies as an indigenous and vibrant music that expressed the frustrations, expectations and experiences of its predominately

Rastafarian ghetto sufferers. Music became the main form of expression for those anguishing from continual hardships and even though some communities were politically divided, music afforded a sense of unity, employment and hope. As will be discussed Manley recognised the considerable influence and power that reggae music had on the country and this coincided with his 'socialist vision' which positioned him as being sympathetic to those impoverished and in need of assistance.

The dawn of the eighties signified a change in government that was aligned to the right of the political spectrum and Jamaica embraced U.S market based policies and capitalist values such as materialism and individualism. At the time of Bob Marley's passing in 1981, dancehall music had taken over from the popularity of roots reggae, and it reflected its participant's interest in wealth accumulation and conspicuous consumption. Song lyrics that had articulated group consciousness, unity, black pride, and reality failed to move consumers the way they once had a decade earlier and in contrast dancehall focused on the demands and wants of the individual. Dancehall music reflected the lives and experiences of its inner city residents who resided among the heat and dust and espoused topics relating to sex, sexuality, guns and women.

Throughout the course of the eighties and nineties Jamaica endured a number of struggles under the terms and conditions of capitalism and free trade agreements. Both reggae and dancehall music were not immune to the ebb and flows surrounding materialism and consumption. Hence it absorbed and manufactured its own 'version' comprising of a diverse array of global styles and techniques, and in the process transformed reggae music from being a mere cultural Rastafarian modality and social movement, to one incorporating a heterogeneity of 'glocalised beats and pieces' that is played and practised worldwide. What is more trans-nationalism, new technology and globalisation have increased the availability and

dissemination of what was traditionally classed as 'reggae', but is now much more diverse, fluid and colourful.

This thesis commences from the 1962 Jamaican independence and Chapter 2 explores the hopes of the new nation, alongside the development of the local music and indigenous recording industry. Incorporating a vibrant blend of U.S soul, jazz and r&b-home-grown ska music took the island by storm. However by the mid sixties the anticipated wealth generated from independence failed to materialise, and many citizens experienced severe forms of poverty. Street violence flared up as unemployed youth expressed their frustration and boredom. Nationalist themes began emanating from the Civil Rights and Black Power movement in the U.S which coincided with other revolutionary happenings around the world and as a consequence social realism and social commentary began to be expressed more frequently in the music.

The emergence and popularity of the Rastafarian movement and the employment of reggae music as its main dissemination method are looked into in Chapter 3. During the late sixties the Rastafarians gained plenty of support from those in the Kingston ghettos who needed assistance, hope and respite. Reggae emerged from these conditions and its charisma and scope was heard by the many sound systems operating island wide. These mobile discos brought affordable entertainment to countless people, and became the preeminent means of expression in promoting awareness and social change. Reggae music began to develop the intentions of a new social movement as well as embodying forms of political praxis.

The adaption and co-option of reggae singers, music and symbols during the build up to the 1972 Jamaica election is documented in Chapter 4. Manley successfully won the election and steered Jamaica on a democratic socialist path focused squarely at wealth re-distribution and increasing opportunities for those without.

However meagre policy decisions compounded by a global recession meant living conditions worsened for those who were unemployed and without adequate food or shelter. Consequently the dispossessed reacted with violence and protest and reggae music became the means of expression and offered occasional respite and hope from the turmoil, heat and frustration.

A key actor in the deployment of reggae music as a new social movement was Bob Marley, who rose to local and global status throughout the seventies. Chapter 5 examines his co-option by U.K music producer Chris Blackwell, who diluted the music, split the band and marketed Marley as a 'rock god'. Yet Blackwell's techniques threw the global spotlight on both Marley and reggae music and the world took interest. Marley's influence on the Jamaican people was central to Manley and the Peoples National Party (PNP) using Marley's goodwill with the intention of securing political votes. At this time Jamaica also pursued a relationship with Cuba that concerned the middle classes, the elite and the U.S who were mindful of socialism in the Caribbean and this association ensured economic instability as many affluent Jamaicans migrated to more prosperous countries.

As the seventies drew to a close Jamaica experienced numerous destabilisation plots and instability, as well as a record number of deaths due to political violence. Chapter 6 details Edward Seaga's Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) political history and victory of the 1980 election, and how he gleaned approval and support from the U.S and global credit agencies. Yet these handouts and an endorsement of globalisation and free market policies failed to turn the economy around. The neo-liberal agenda of the JLP was beneficial to those with money and assets, but the majority of the population remained powerless and in need of assistance as state services became non-existent and shop shelves remained empty.

By late 1979 the rhythms had changed pace and slowed down considerably and the deejay/rappers began to emerge in greater numbers than ever before, which marked the birth of dancehall music. Light hearted deejay commentary on topical, social, local and sexual themes took some of the heat out of the political and social conditions Jamaica was suffering from as a consequence of IMF and World Bank restrictions and requirements. Chapter 7 comments on this shift from cultural themes disseminated earlier in the music, to ones more inward and sexually expressive that underlined a new genre titled 'slackness' that became widely associated with Jamaican popular culture. New and affordable technology in the mid eighties ensured many more people had access to musical making tools, which fuelled a burst of activity and creativity.

The slackness and sexual themes continue in Chapter 8 with the perspective firstly of the male entertainers creating a space to perform and gaining popularity, and then this space being challenged by up and coming female performers. One such entertainer Lady Saw's live performance, career and lyrical arrangements are looked into as her arrival in the mid nineties shook up the entire dancehall scene in Jamaica and caused a furore with the moral abiding middle classes. Lady Saw's 'low' social and moral standing was further exemplified by her poor ghetto upbringing. Over time attitudes have been softened and she is grudgingly accepted by middle class society who views her as being a successful product of the dancehall. Even though Lady Saw was by no means the first female entertainer, she broke a number of social norms and ventured into territory normally only covered by male performers, and as a result paved the way for a sizable change in dancehall attitudes and acceptance of women entertainers.

The global spread and popularity of reggae music will be discussed in Chapter 9 alongside its incorporation and crossover into both hip-hop music and mainstream popular culture. Early hip-hop pioneer Kool Herc employed facets of his Jamaican

heritage into establishing a New York based sound system. This paved the way for many interpretations and adaptations of both reggae and hip-hop as they grew and flourished side by side in cities such as New York, Miami, Toronto and London. Numerous Jamaican residents settled in these metropolitan areas bringing their culture, food, fashions and music with them. These cultural and social attributes were then dispersed into the wider culture of the host country and bred new forms of music and identity which have then been circulated worldwide due to globalisation, communication and technology.

Economic constraints originating from strict terms imposed by global financial institutions during the 1980s-90s led to more tough times for many Jamaican citizens. As a last resort, some turned to crime and the informal economy to make ends meet. Chapter 10 looks at how the political handouts dried up and people turned to their community leader or 'don' for support and protection. Dancehall music emanating from these inner Kingston areas reflected its residents pre-occupation with guns, drugs, violence, local happenings and sex. As dancehall was celebrated, owned and flourished in the dense urban areas, the government and tourist industry co-opted roots reggae and Rastafarianism as being legitimate cultural artefacts.

After eight years in power Seaga was replaced by Manley to once again lead Jamaica. Chapter 11 explores the prescription of the 'new' Manley, as to the surprise of many he adopted a framework that was aligned to a capitalist worldview, as opposed to implementing a socialist ideology. Jamaica was then able to benefit from sustained financial support from the IMF and World Bank which resulted in free trade zones and the importation of a variety of goods which damaged local production. During this time a cultural Rasta renaissance emerged in counteraction to the fiery demands and displays of the dancehall. As a result both the old and new cultural roots artists and deejays were rediscovered and endorsed.

In contemporary Jamaica, dancehall music and its adjoining culture are widely popular throughout the island, and its following has spread to numerous countries throughout the world. Nonetheless, the roots movement, albeit in slightly different and indigenous forms is popularised in many African, Asian, European and Pacific nations. Aotearoa/New Zealand is not untouched by this global flow and its popularity is maintained by a large array of bands that align themselves to the roots reggae movement. Historical themes and influences on contemporary Kiwi bands and the musical 'blend' that many of these bands subscribe to will be mentioned in Chapter 12. What is more the demands of the mainstream have impacted on the direction of some of these bands, and discussion is centred on the various styles these successful bands employ and incorporate into their repertoire.

Attention will be given in Chapter 13 to the concepts surrounding new social movements and how these highlighted certain features of reggae music that were concerned with the general well-being and betterment of Jamaican people. Central to a new social movement's success are egalitarian values, equal rights and communication leading to social change. Discussion will be undertaken regarding the various tools of co-option of reggae and the Rastafarian religion by the Manley government throughout the seventies that coincided with the global exposure of Bob Marley. Finally the identification and widespread use of reggae and Rastafari as a present day cultural commodity by the elite, business people, Jamaica Tourist Board and the government will be explored.

## CHAPTER 2: FOWARD MARCH

### Independence Ska

The lowering of the Union Jack marked independence for Jamaica on August 5, 1962, and up until this time many Jamaicans felt they were still under the influence, and held captive by the legacy of the earlier plantation slave masters. Independence for many marked a new awakening, a new future and the prosperity of a new Jamaica which recognised and practiced the national motto which declared 'Out of many, We are one'. However in a mixed race society maintaining a national identity was according to Nettleford (as cited in Chambers, 1985) problematic, as Jamaica was "caught between the melody of Europe and the rhythm of Africa" (p.153). Jamaica had a new sense of optimism, pride and determination to not only prove to the Caribbean, but the rest of the world that they were a social, cultural and economic entity that could stand on its own two feet and assert it's own identity. Relative prosperity followed independence for six years or so, as Jamaica enjoyed strong productivity and a large market share from the bauxite alumina industry.<sup>1</sup>

Music has always been an integral part of Jamaican culture, and during independence it featured prominently as people danced and celebrated accordingly to a fusion of Jamaican ska and r&b originating from the U.S. The popularity of ska music was increased through the independence celebrations, as the local recording scene became in demand. This time period highlighted when tourism became a worthy contributor to the national economy and many of the large hotels on the north coast employed proficient musicians and bands that entertained tourists on a nightly basis. Many singers and musicians performed on the north coast hotel

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<sup>1</sup> Jamaican manufacturing amounted to nearly a quarter of the world's market share of bauxite alumina production in the mid sixties (Lundy, 1999). Nonetheless these spoils only benefited senior civil servants, company directors and an array of multi-national companies based overseas and most of the wealth found itself abroad, as opposed to benefiting the people on the street (Nettleford, 1996; Bradley, 2000). The consequences and impacts of governmental policies on the local industry is discussed in chapter 3.

circuit, as it was a way of being seen and getting heard; it offered overseas travel opportunities for some of the top musicians; and for the most part offered regular and respectable wages compared to other forms of employment. Ska was directly associated with independence which some commentators suggest was the inauguration and development of Jamaica's musical heritage, as the rest of the world identified this music as belonging to Jamaica (Barrow & Dalton, 2004).<sup>2</sup>

Ska was performed predominately by Rastafarian musicians who resided in downtown Kingston, or lived in camps located at Bull Bay, Helshire Beach or ones elevated in the Blue Mountains high above the steaming heat and intensity of Kingston. The music was composed of brass instrumental compositions that reflected a large amount of Jazz influences, though incorporating Caribbean and African elements; such as hand drumming and percussive instruments. Played by indigenous ghetto youths, ska sought to declare Jamaica's independent spirit and talent that was determined to remove the American and European influences upon Jamaican popular music (Lewin, 2000). This was exemplified in 1964 with the success of Millie Small's 'My Boy Lollipop' which reached number one on the pop charts in the United Kingdom, and attracted global interest in Jamaican music. As a result ska became very popular with mainstream audiences in the United Kingdom and a delegation of ska musicians represented Jamaica at the 1966 World Fair held in New York.<sup>3</sup>

In accordance with Jamaican music being used to transmit and relay topical and social matters and news items, a number of songs were composed to commemorate

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<sup>2</sup> The influence of American big band, and specifically jazz and r&b had significant impacts on Jamaican musicians and the styles they emulated. See Kauppila (2006) and Barrow and Dalton (2004) for in-depth analysis of these influences on Jamaican music.

<sup>3</sup> Bryon Lee and the Dragonaires the representative band sent by the government to New York were viewed as an uptown band, that was aligned to the middle and upper classes. Hence, they looked respectable, were of the 'ideal' complexion and played 'safe' music. Whereas, the preeminent musicians the Skatalites were Rastafarian's from downtown ghetto areas, were of dark complexion and regularly smoked marijuana. As a consequence they were deemed not a suitable cultural representation by the political elite.

independence from colonial rule.<sup>4</sup> However, the celebrations and party atmosphere soon wore thin as the stark reality of being a small player in a global economic marketplace took hold. Popular singer and film star Jimmy Cliff observed recently that the nation's good mood diminished as the populace questioned "Where is this independence? What is this independence? They didn't see it. Life was becoming hard. Maybe harder than it had been before" (Ouzounian, 2009). The optimistic veil over the country only lasted for a few years or so, as the expected wealth generated from the benefits related to independence failed to materialise. Existing hardships felt by the majority, such as limited job opportunities and housing were still problematic for many of the dispossessed and marginalised.

### **Inner City Tension**

Nevertheless, music for many was a way of highlighting the tension prevailing in many of the inner city communities that were devoid of facilities, public services, employment and most importantly food (King, 2002; Katz, 2003; Barrow & Dalton, 2004). In the ensuing years after independence, the street corner gangs (or 'rude boy's) began to assert their status and authority by becoming more aligned to their political constituencies while expressing interest in the burgeoning drug trade.<sup>5</sup> The drug suppliers sought protection and support from the street gangs, as the marijuana trade broadened out from being associated merely with a local market, to one primarily with the U.S. To protect the market from hostile takeovers and intimidation; guns and ammunition were seen as part of an unofficial trade agreement between the two countries (Bradley, 2000; Gunst, 1995).<sup>6</sup> The 'rude boy' phenomenon coincided with the showing of Western movies in the cinemas that

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<sup>4</sup> Some of these were Jimmy Cliff's 'Miss Jamaica', The Skatalites 'Independent Anniversary Ska', Derrick Morgan's 'Forward March' and Stranger Cole's 'Out of Many One'.

<sup>5</sup> For many, this form of employment and associated lawlessness allowed them to be legitimated and empowered for the first time. Numerous youths asserted their new found status by inflicting crime upon their fellow ghetto inhabitants (Bradley, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> This marked the beginning of the localised political constituencies and the emergence of the heavily guarded and protected garrison communities that exist today in sections of Kingston and Spanish Town. See chapter 9 for a more detailed analysis.

influenced some of the music being produced. Song titles and music compositions would reflect this passionate interest, as theme songs would be adapted and reinterpreted while singers and deejays named themselves after gun slinging movie characters.<sup>7</sup> Enthusiastic cinema patrons would imitate the shoot outs (sometimes at the screen) and engage in bravado and swagger on the streets while sporting the latest fashions. Many of the disenfranchised and plainly bored youths empowered themselves with either German made ratchet (switch) knives or small pistols, to protect themselves and defend their neighbourhoods (White, 1984; Hebdige, 2003). In the preceding years Jamaican audiences were gripped by the 'Blaxploitation' movies such as 'Shaft' and 'Jackie Brown'.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Kung Fu and James Bond movies along with numerous television shows impacted upon countless song titles and musical arrangements.

The musical community reacted to this lawlessness by firstly celebrating the self-determining rude boy behaviour, as they pursued social and political justice against the middle class and the government. Compositions such as The Wailers 'Rude Boy', 'Jailhouse', Desmond Dekker's 'Rude Boy Train', '007' (Shantytown) and Derrick Morgan's 'Tougher than Tough' celebrated this young, anarchistic and wild faction of Jamaican society. The lyrics of The Wailers 1965 classic 'Jailhouse' highlights the relationship between the youths and the police, and suggests that the youth comes out on top:<sup>9</sup>

*Jail house keeps empty*

*Rudie gets healthy*

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<sup>7</sup> For an excellent cinematic representation of where a country boy comes to town and enjoys the spoils of petty crime, drug dealing and music see Jimmy Cliff in the 1972 classic 'The Harder They Come'.

<sup>8</sup> Movies were a particularly popular and affordable way for many Jamaicans to experience other cultures. The 'Blaxploitation' genre from the early seventies is a stereotypical mix of 'black and exploitation'. Many movies featured a black cast that also targeted an urban audience through themes related to crime, police, women, drugs, ghetto life and fashion. The soundtracks were comprised of funk and soul music.

<sup>9</sup> Justin Hinds and the Dominos counteracted The Wailers song, by recording 'Do Good Rudie'.

*Baton sticks get shorter*  
*Rudie gets taller*  
*Can't fight against the youth*  
*(Cause its wrong)*  
*Can't fight against the youth, now*  
*(Cause its strong)*  
*Prediction: Them people a going wild*  
*Dem a rude, rude people*  
*The message: we gonna rule this land!*  
*Right now*  
(The Wailers, 'Jailhouse', 1966)

Bob Marley's early group The Wailers were arguably most associated with this phenomenon. They celebrated and practiced the image, style and boastfulness of the rude boy's while effectively communicating this to their fellow ghetto residents (who were also their main audience). The Wailers were seen as strong, intelligent and 'staunch' youths who voiced their concerns related to the police, the government, the elite and despair about growing up in the West Kingston tenement yards (White, 1984; King, 2002).

### **Rocksteady Beat**

Eventually the driving ska music began to wane, as dancehall patrons found the free form horn solos, and frantic up tempo beat too tiresome to dance to. The next musical phase to emerge (1966-68) was the rocksteady era which emphasised a more relaxed, rolling and refined style of rhythm.

The dominant brass sections that were a key feature of ska instrumentals were replaced with the languid tenors and graceful vocal falsettos that accompanied the

smoother rocksteady rhythms.<sup>10</sup> Numerous singers and vocal groups were notably influenced by and covered many U.S soul and r&b hits and romantic material with ease. This musical phase was described as being cool, elegant, and slinky as it was easier to dance to and had a relaxed feel to it (Hebdige, 2003; Barrow & Dalton, 2004).<sup>11</sup> Prominence was given to the undulating bass lines that were matched by subtle keyboard riffs and guitar strums. New technology introduced the electric bass guitar, and the space assigned to this and acknowledgement of its 'anchoring' and backbone temperament marks a significant shift in Jamaican music.<sup>12</sup> Rocksteady became immensely popular throughout the entire island and this recording period was also one of the most prolific in the islands history.<sup>13</sup> Moreover the new and emerging local recording studios such as the renowned Studio One, Federal and Treasure Isle ensured the dissemination, transmission and reproduction of localised music was available and conducted on a grand scale.

### **Social Realism**

However, throughout this time period of 'love lost and love won' the antisocial sentiments of the rude boys was becoming too frequent and problematic; and communities began to suffer under the turmoil. This resulted in many artists releasing material condemning the youth's aggressive and disorderly behaviour. Recordings such as Bob Andy's 'Crime Don't Pay', Alton Ellis's 'Cry Tough', Dandy Livingstone's 'Rudy a message to you' and Prince Buster's 'Too Hot' appealed for calm on the streets as lootings and robberies became regular occurrences. As a

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<sup>10</sup> Rocksteady spawned a number of singers and vocal groups who later became reggae superstars. The slowed down arrangements allowed the singers talents to be at the forefront of the music, whereas with ska the horn players and their solos dominated the rhythm track. Reggae stars such as Alton Ellis, Delroy Wilson, Slim Smith and John Holt commenced their illustrious careers during this phase.

<sup>11</sup> Cultural and topical themes were mentioned during this musical period, yet the most popular tunes dealt with notions of romance, socialising and dancing.

<sup>12</sup> This is a noteworthy development as the bass emerges in the next few years as being the foundation instrument of the reggae beat.

<sup>13</sup> Some estimates suggest that in the region of 20,000 records were produced in the 1966-68 time period.

result Jamaican music began to incorporate ideas of social realism and become a vehicle for social commentary, as the inner-Kingston street battles and widespread poverty became challenging for the citizens, government and the police (Bradley, 2000; Longhurst, 2007).

Moreover, the influence concerning the civil rights of Black America could not be ignored by the patriarchal mainstream, as oppressed and socially excluded people in dense urban areas such as Harlem, Watts, Detroit, and Newark all expressed their frustrations by rioting and protesting in the streets (Chambers, 1985). Black popular culture and national identity was also exemplified with James Brown's 1968 hit (Say it Loud) 'I'm Black and I'm Proud'. As a result Black Nationalism filtered down into the Caribbean and permeated itself among Jamaican purveyors of music and culture. The civil rights movement and other new social movements provide a type of "social glue" that aim to change and re-align the relationship between culture and politics (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998, p.78). New social movements are imperative in cultural transformation and knowledge production by incorporating people's ideas, concepts, and values that can ultimately shape their understanding, direction and way of life.

The concepts of the Black Power movement from the likes of Angela Davis, Louis Farrakhan and Stokely Carmichael (who was born and raised in the Caribbean) were interpreted by a diverse spectrum of the Jamaican populace. All of whom were interested in not only understanding their philosophies, but were intent on practically applying their ideas with the aim of increasing well being for those in need (White, 1984; Bradley, 2000). As mentioned, the post-independence period was a struggle for many, and the absence of foodstuffs, necessities, and regular employment ensured that discontent and unhappiness prevailed over the country. Jamaicans would have been monitoring the happenings in America not only with interest and concern, but would also compare their own social position and possible

ways and means to reverse their situation. No doubt the street protest and occupation in America would have inspired many to speak out, and participate in marches to draw attention to hardships being experienced locally.

Jamaican popular protest was exemplified in 1968 as Guyanese born academic Walter Rodney was refused entry after attending a writer's engagement in Canada. Rodney held a professorship in African history at the University of West Indies (UWI) Mona campus in Kingston. His lectures encouraged and attracted a wide range of people including disenfranchised youth, the poor, fellow academics and Rastafarians. Rodney endorsed Jamaican Nationalism and started a local Black Power movement on campus, complete with its own publication, titled 'Abeng' (Chevannes, 2001). Rodney argued that independence had not lived up to its promises and Jamaican citizens were encouraged not to recognise their own 'blackness' or sense of nationalism. His ideology caused a stir with the conservative JLP government and with the national paper the 'Daily Gleaner' who vividly "expressed the government's paranoia" (King, 2002, p.47). The Gleaner featured stories of widespread global student protest and of the burning American cities to inflame and frighten the middle classes.

As a result of Rodney's deportation a 'peaceful' protest was held by students and faculty at UWI, which eventuated in the death of three people, damage to fifty buses and around one hundred people arrested (King, 2002).<sup>14</sup> The end result of the 'Rodney affair' cumulated in frustrations felt by those experiencing harsh social conditions. These were a direct result of intense industrialisation, which amounted to a doubling of unemployment from 13% at the beginning of the sixties to 25% near the end of the decade (Chevannes, 2001). What emerged in the aftermath was a

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<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, Jamaican popular and revolutionary protest has been occurring as far back as the slave revolts against British plantation rule and colonial government. For an in-depth analysis into popular protest and civil unrest in Jamaica see Johnson (2006).

bond between the Black Power movement, Rastafarian ideology, and Jamaican nationalism that united marginalised and socially excluded groups.<sup>15</sup>

In 1969 Rodney's publication *Abeng* identified the strength and power of political songs that were becoming more popular and widespread amongst the singers and musicians (King, 2002). Music in this sense is particularly relevant to some social movements as it encourages social interaction through communication and interpretation of important themes and ideas. As the islands indigenous recording scene flourished, singers began to include notions of social commentary alongside popular r&b covers and love songs. Ideas from the U.S civil rights movement alongside feelings of nationalism gleaned from the 'Rodney affair' shaped and influenced a vast number of singers and musicians, who frequently began to express their frustrations and lack of opportunities. As the sixties came to a close, a proud sense of ownership and identity was visible in Jamaican music and it was no surprise as it became widespread and celebrated.

The next phase of the islands colourful pop music history known as reggae is discussed in the next chapter, alongside its relationship and dissemination of Rastafarian values. At this time many of the social and religious themes pertaining to the Rastafarian viewpoint were being articulated and expressed in the music, as unity, black pride and justice became more commonplace. The prominent and visible role of the sound system is analysed in accordance with the messages contained in the music, and how these all put together are a sustainable vehicle for a social movement.

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<sup>15</sup>According to Persuad (2001) during the 1960's and 1970's the Rastafarians surfaced as one of the most substantial protest groups in Jamaican society.

## CHAPTER 3: TRENCH TOWN ROCK

### The Rastafarians

Reggae music is the means of expression that is employed to transmit, educate and disseminate Rastafarian beliefs and values.<sup>1</sup> Rastafarianism is a religious based philosophy that incorporates pan-African themes of repatriation and a variety of Jamaican folk elements derived from burru, kumina and Maroon culture (White, 1984; Chevannes, 2001; Jones, 1988). It can be interpreted as a doctrine that highlights the philosophy of Jamaican-born 'prophet', radical campaigner and entrepreneur Marcus Garvey alongside anti-colonial sentiments and biblical elucidations (Persuad, 2001; Hope, 2006a; White, 2007). Throughout the 1920's 'Garveyism' was viewed as a political and social movement as it espoused black nationalism through education at the same time as encouraging local industries and trade that empowered people of Afro-Jamaican heritage. Additionally, the Rastafarian's regard the late deposed Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie as being Jah (God) and anointed him as the "King of Kings, Lords of Lords, Conquering Tribe of Judah, Elect of God, Earths Rightful Ruler" (Chevannes, 2001; White, 1984).<sup>2</sup>

Rastafarian's have been established since the thirties in Jamaica, with early communities such as Pinnacle developed by Leonard Percival Howell in 1940. Located in the hills of St Catherine parish, Pinnacle held communitarian values, was largely sustainable, and it grew a large number of crops with most attention focused on marijuana cultivation (King, 2002). The private wealth of Howell and the community successes drew suspicions from the authorities and in 1954 police raided

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<sup>1</sup> There are a number of purveyors of reggae music (throughout Jamaica and the world) who do not practise or advocate Rastafarian viewpoints. Additionally, not all singers and players of reggae are dreadlocked or practice vegetarianism, neither do they read the bible or are associated with a particular church.

<sup>2</sup> This conviction was derived from Garvey prophesying that 'his people' should look to Africa from where a black king shall be crowned. For a more comprehensive understanding see Chevannes 'Rastafari; Roots and Ideology' (1994) and Barrett 'The Rastafarians' (1997). Both Cattermole (2004) and Hawkeswood (1983) offer insights and analysis to the Rastafarian movement in New Zealand.

Pinnacle and burnt it to the ground and arrested Howell. As a result many of his Rastafarian followers were displaced to the harsh inner slums and gully banks of central Kingston.<sup>3</sup> In these squalid impoverished conditions, the Rasta's were able to still espouse their beliefs and sentiments of racial pride, equal rights, and better opportunities through the playing of music as their numbers grew in size. Intense urbanisation and lack of employment increased the numbers of the followers, who looked to Rastafarianism as an ideological salvation. Even so they were viewed as troublesome, social outcasts, racist, violent, drug addicts and revolutionaries by the Jamaican government, media and elite. Due to the high numbers of adherents the government and the dominant classes implemented a variety of strategies to manage the dissemination of Rastafarianism (King & Foster, 2001).<sup>4</sup>

When Selassie visited Jamaica in 1966 thousands of revellers turned up to welcome his plane, which greatly surprised him, as he was not comfortable with the divinity bestowed on him by the local Rastafarians. After the visit their numbers swelled in size, as the lower class had witnessed the Emperor in real life and notably he had acknowledged their existence by meeting local Rastafarian leaders. By the late sixties, reggae music became the musical expression of Rastafarian concerns and ideology, and this standpoint became more vivid throughout the seventies as the "Rastafarian movement increasingly employed reggae music as its chief form of social protest" (King & Foster, 2001, p.7). Aware of the inroads reggae was making and its ability to motivate national sentiments and unity, the conservative government deported Rastafarian leaders and persecuted a large number of reggae singers and musicians. During the sixties the government and the middle classes frowned upon the rise of reggae and the Rastafarians and viewed both groups as potential threats to national security, well being and domestic harmony (King &

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<sup>3</sup> Howell was arrested a number of times involving tax evasion, marijuana cultivation and sedition charges and was later sentenced to the Belleview asylum in Kingston (Foehr, 2000; King, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> The media painted them as being a revolutionary radical cult, and many people were openly harassed and arrested, one favourite tactic employed by the police was the cutting and removal of ones dreadlocks.

Foster, 2001). Nonetheless, this had little affect on the popularity and political influence of both the Rastafarian movement and reggae, as it developed into a significant form of protest music embodying social change and equality. The international success of Bob Marley and his openness concerning his Rastafarian beliefs ensured the movement was disseminated and interpreted on a global basis.<sup>5</sup>

As reggae music gained momentum and recognition throughout the seventies this negative perspective of the Rastafarians softened due to firstly the governance of the left leaning PNP. Secondly, the internationalisation of reggae coupled with the success of cultural icon Bob Marley brought about a change in perspective by the government and middle classes during the seventies. This set up the stage whereby the government co-opted reggae and Rastafarianism into symbols of national cultural heritage, thus recognising them both as reputable tourist attractions and income earners (King, 1998; King & Foster, 2001). As a result, the physical appearance and the visual displays of the red, gold, green colours of the Ethiopian flag adorn buildings, garments, flags and people throughout Jamaica. Reggae music and the associated cultural and spiritual Rastafarian movement are viewed by the contemporary government as being a valued contributor to the national economy.<sup>6</sup>

### **Birth of Reggae**

In 1968 The Maytals released a 7' record 'Do the Reggay' which many cite as the first use of the word 'reggae' albeit in its varied spelling forms.<sup>7</sup> Much debate surrounds the origin of the term reggae, yet it marks a pivotal shift in the islands musical

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<sup>5</sup> Currently, there are a variety of factions and churches throughout Jamaica espousing Rastafarian teachings, all of which have slightly differing rules, values and perspectives. Some of these consist of The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Bobo Dreads, The Twelve Tribes of Israel and the Nyabinghi to mention a few.

<sup>6</sup> See King and Foster (2001) for further explanation on the marketing and acceptance of reggae tourism as a viable and lucrative earner for Jamaica.

<sup>7</sup> Some commentators argue that the word is derived from the offensive Kingston street term 'streggae' meaning a woman who has low morals (Katz, 2003; White, 1984). Others suggest it is from the resounding 'reggae, reggae, reggae' strum of the guitar and organ skank which are commonplace in many reggae compositions.

direction as the rhythm changes path and seemingly becomes more indigenous and forthcoming. In the view of Hebdige (2003) “around 1968, the music shifted down another gear, becoming even slower and heavier with an even greater emphasis on the bass” (p.75). The musical discourse began expressing more righteous cultural themes, than earlier concerns with love ballads and U.S cover versions. As a result the reggae beat became more localised and authentic, as it reflected the harsh environment of the Kingston ghettos and government tenement yards where a considerable number of the musicians resided and yearned to get out of (Katz, 2003). However, its organic origins are debated by leading seventies roots producer Lee ‘Scratch Perry’ who suggests that reggae’s success is due to the influence of the country (through the processes of urbanisation), as opposed to the enchantment of the city. He believes that the country people bring the earth, trees and birds to great effect and influence when making music (Katz, 2003; Bradley, 2000).<sup>8</sup>

The interconnectedness of race, identity, language, religion, music and everyday life highlight past struggles within contemporary Jamaican popular culture, which reggae draws upon for sustenance, clarity, and strength of mind. Reggae is able to make use of this rich tapestry and heritage to either deconstruct or re-appropriate past musical trends and influences into contemporary musical forms (Chambers, 1985; Hebdige, 2003).

### **Roots Revolution**

The early seventies in Jamaica heralded a change in attitudes for those who were manufacturing, playing and selling music, as local and topical themes began to be voiced more regularly and with more passion. A wide range of global influences (namely those associated with Black Nationalism and identity) shaped and informed the political viewpoints of many of the singers and players. Equality, justice, truth

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<sup>8</sup> In many aspects this perspective rings true, as numerous reggae stars came from humble country origins (Bob Marley, Burning Spear, Lee Perry among others) with a dream of prosperity and remuneration awaiting realisation in Kingston.

and rights became popular rallying calls and featured prominently in lyrical discourse. Furthermore, the dissemination of Rasta's throughout the music industry assured that many of the songs composed were steeped in Rasta rhetoric and imagery as well as voicing social and political concerns. Arguably many reggae connoisseurs view the 1970 release from Bob Marley's group The Wailers titled 'Soul Revolution 1 & 2' as one of the bands finest and more militant releases. The album was produced by Lee 'Scratch' Perry and was played by his pre-eminent session band known as The 'Upsetters'. Many of the songs explored topics and themes related to ghetto living, impoverishment, power imbalance, and the ineffectiveness of social redistribution which ignored the circumstances of those less fortunate. Song titles (including the assertive album name) featured; 'Soul Rebel', 'Brain Washing', 'Fussing and Fighting', 'Keep on Moving' and 'Small Axe' amongst others:<sup>9</sup>

*Why boasteth thyself, oh evil man,  
Playing smart, and not being clever  
I say you're working inequity, to achieve vanity  
But the goodness of Jah Jah I-dureth For I-ver  
If you are the big tree, we are the small axe  
Sharpened to cut you down,  
Ready to cut you down  
(The Wailers, 'Small Axe', 1969)*

The album cover also matched the militancy of the song titles, it featured The Wailers dressed sharply and looking serious while each brandishing a children's toy machine gun. These early sessions with Perry are viewed as being not only the strongest material The Wailers produced, but also the most innovative and

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<sup>9</sup> One explanation implies that the 'Small Axe' is referring to The Wailer's chopping at the big tree (or three in Jamaican patois); the big tree is the dominance and monopoly held by Studio One, Federal and Dynamic recording studios who were financially successful and powerful (White, 1984; Waters, 1999). Another interpretation according to Farred (2003) is that the big tree (three) is the power and strength of the people against the Jamaican capitalist system (and the two dominant political parties), that is being challenged (by the underclass) and is ultimately reduced in its power and scope by the oppressed people.

politically conscious, whilst addressing issues pertaining to social and racial inequality (Hebdige, 2003). As reggae music progressed, Rastafarian principles with an emphasis on truth, rights and social consciousness have consistently featured.<sup>10</sup> The widespread harassment of reggae musicians and Rastafarians continued by the authorities and the conservative JLP government, and in the lead up to the 1972 election the JLP banned a number of campaign songs endorsed by the PNP.<sup>11</sup> Yet these tactics did little to dispel the progression of the Rastafarian movement and the overarching popularity of reggae music.

### **Sound System**

Sound system culture has been an integral part of the landscape in Jamaica since the fifties where people danced and socialised on a regular basis. With this in mind reggae is made to be played loudly and to capture and captivate the hearts and minds of the listeners. The music's appeal is its ability to be transformed when played at large volumes, as the rhythm becomes more spacious, notes become clearer, and frequencies more pronounced (Gilroy, 1987). A sound system can be described as a powerful mobile disco that includes speakers the size of wardrobes, turntables, equalizers, connecting cables, effect units, lights and amplifier racks that make a colourful and aesthetic display.

For many reggae followers the consumption of live music is the attraction of the bass and the rhythm. Songs take on new meanings and interpretations, as one is immersed by the resonance and by the 'weight' and power of the sound.<sup>12</sup> According to Willis (1990) this feature alone "has the ability to produce a grounded

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<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless occasionally the music strays from social/cultural empowering topics, to ones associated with materialism, masculinity, consumption and those pertaining toward a sexual nature. This shift is discussed in chapter 7.

<sup>11</sup> These include The Wailers 'Small Axe', Abyssinians 'Declaration of Rights' and Delroy Wilson's 'Better Must Come'.

<sup>12</sup> However, Willis (1990) suggests that many reggae fans get lost in both the feel of the rhythm and the impact of the bass, especially in the live context and ignore the significance of the song meanings and lyrical content. The average sound system has a sound capacity of around 20,000 watts, transmitted through large 18' bass speakers Stolzoff (2000).

aesthetic of sensual pleasure and to literally move the body, both physically and emotionally” (p.65). In the early sixties the popularity that the major sounds enjoyed was reflected in how many ‘sets’ a sound would have on the road at any one time.<sup>13</sup> Status was also reflected by the exclusivity of your music and by the volume your sound could dispense, as rival operators would set up within earshot of each other, and try and unsettle one another for supremacy of a particular street corner, vacant space, hall or ‘lawn’.

Before the production and manufacturing of locally recorded music, sound systems played soul and r&b imported directly from the U.S. To keep attendance figures high and the patrons updated and interested in their sound, the owners would make frequent trips to the U.S in search of new and rare records. Music also arrived in Jamaica from migrant workers returning from Miami, or from merchant seaman docked at ships that frequently berthed at Kingston or Montego Bay. Competition between the sound systems for the latest and greatest tunes became intense, as patrons would support or follow a particular sound due to the superiority of the music they possessed. Each time that the sound played, the followers would demand and expect to hear ‘their’ signature and unique songs that the sound possessed.<sup>14</sup> Some of the more sought after tunes would be renamed and record label information would be scratched out to protect its identity, thus reinforcing its exclusivity and the competitive nature of the scene. This action would prevent spies and record scouts from indentifying and obtaining records held in high esteem (Barrow & Dalton, 2004; Hebdige, 2003; Gilroy, 1987).

People would socialise around the sound systems on a weekly basis, enjoying food and beverages while dancing to the latest music. This musical activity promoted a

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<sup>13</sup> One of the most popular operators ‘Sir Coxson Downbeat’ had at one time six sound system sets travelling around the rural parishes of Jamaica during the sixties. Renowned sound systems of the sixties included Tom the Great Sebastian, Duke Reid the Trojan, King Edwards the Giant, V-Rocket and Prince Buster’s Voice of the People (Barrow & Dalton, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> These exclusive records were known as ‘acetates’ or ‘dubplates’.

form of collectiveness and cohesiveness to sometimes marginalised and disempowered lower class ghetto communities, as they were affordable means of entertainment.<sup>15</sup> Many sound systems were owned by entrepreneurs and local record producers who ‘tested’ the reception of many songs before they were released. Sometimes after a six or even twelve month waiting period, either the sound system owner or producer would release the tune to be consumed by a hungry record buying public.<sup>16</sup> Dancehall patrons would also attend dances to hear the talk over deejays who made announcements and introduced the records whilst encouraging the dancers. These early deejays imitated the style and fashion of Black American radio announcers by employing ‘jive talk’, interjections, and exhortations whilst adding humour and catchy phrases to excite the crowd and to retain their presence (Niaah & Stanley Niaah, 2006).

During the late sixties and in accordance with the prevailing norms, these deejays began incorporating social and cultural realism into their methods of speech and delivery.<sup>17</sup> The popularity of the sound system has transcended time, space and place. It is very much a time honoured Jamaican tradition, and is the first point where a new tune or rhythm is tested among a live dancehall crowd. This often determines whether or not the song will succeed in a commercial sense. Sound systems operate in an almost nightly spectacle in Jamaica, and dances are still the places to be seen, they offer spaces to interact, guarantee social and or political commentary and provide both visual and musical performance and entertainment.

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<sup>15</sup> ‘Uptown’ sound systems such as ‘Meritone’ played at clubs and respectable venues, as opposed to setting up on a vacant site or street corner and thus were able to attract a more affluent and well to do clientele.

<sup>16</sup> This process continues to this day, though its impact is lessened due to the availability and convenience of the internet and the ease of technological dissemination methods.

<sup>17</sup> The rise and prominence of the deejay is discussed further in the thesis. Initially they articulated the concerns of the poor by talking about topical and political themes, with the hope of changing the existing social structure. At later stages their viewpoint shifted to reflect more materialistic concerns.

Closely linked to the dissemination of reggae music, sound systems have also been reproduced and adopted in many overseas countries.<sup>18</sup>

### **Praxis and Social Movements**

In this thesis reggae music is argued as incorporating elements of political praxis with the intention to bring about a transformation in society. Jamaican society is class based and has incorporated a number of class struggles, which originate from the plantation days. The majority lower/working class account for over 97% of the populace and are seen as having minimal political influence or opportunities open to them. On the other hand the majority of the countries wealth is distributed among the white, coloured, Chinese and Syrian ethnicities. These groups make up the 'twenty one families' that are widely seen as controlling and influencing Jamaica's wealth and prosperity (Lundy, 1999; Persuad, 2001; Waters, 1999).

Praxis embodies action and reflection in a continual process whereby people's knowledge and way of doing things is continually transformed through activity.<sup>19</sup> According to Sanchez Vasquez (1977), "the principle agent of this transformation is the proletariat [being] organised in a conscious way under the leadership of a party devoted to raising its class consciousness" (p.161). The task of making music for the enjoyment and the empowerment of people is a social activity constructed among social conditions. The musicians and singers can be viewed as the active subject (or agent) as they compose and construct new songs by activity (or action). The number of acts or steps that are undertaken in the process of making music for consumption are numerous, and at any stage potentiality exists for further creativity and activity as people (and the agent) interpret the song differently at each of the stages (Sanchez-Vasquez, 1977). Even before the song is manufactured and distributed for

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<sup>18</sup> From what I can gather Aotearoa/New Zealand has two 'proper' sound systems including "Hometown Hi-Fi" based in Raglan and 'Vital Sounds' located in Wellington, which have their own amplification and array of large speaker boxes.

<sup>19</sup> There are other forms of praxis such as social, artistic and scientific according to Sanchez Vasquez (1977). However due to space constraints I will only be referring to political praxis in this thesis.

discussion, interpretation and consumption it may have already been transformed through social activity to read and to mean something different from its original idea and intentionality. Praxis as an activity is concerned with the practical steps and the set of acts which can be translated into an end result or product, that recognise the input and activity of the agent in the processes of change. Practical human activity is governed by consciousness which generates the idea and the intention. As a result of activity and development through the various stages the end product can be somewhat different from its ideal form initially devised.

As the musicians and singers are the agents of change, reggae music can first be considered social praxis as it is not an isolated practical activity and is concerned with transforming the group and the social class (Sanchez-Vasquez, 1977). Yet due to its inherent political nature and the continued class struggles displayed in reggae, and its determination to transform the social conditions of its followers situate it as a form of political praxis. The Rastafarians gave voice and expression to those marginalised, and advocated a transformation of the structure of society to one that was more equal and fair. Political praxis is the process of overall empowerment and transformative activity of the proletariat which highlights the inequity of their social position in relation to the elite. What is more, political praxis consists of power struggles, objectives, ideas, and effective organisation to gain power. In practice this activity can be pursued through revolutionary praxis (which is viewed as the most explosive and expressive form) and which transforms society to its most advanced stage. This advanced stage leads to the birth of a new society, one that reflects and embodies the consciousness of its proletariat, who were also the principle driving agents in the change for a new social order (Sanchez Vazquez, 1976).

The Jamaican government, along with the elite and the middle class viewed the Rastafarian movement with suspicion and apprehension, as it strived to educate and empower the lower working class during the sixties and seventies. As previously

mentioned the 'Rodney affair' brought to life a number of visible social injustices. The general population had experienced enough unemployment, malnutrition and poverty and reacted accordingly with protest and civil action. As a musical activity reggae music can be viewed as creating a space of cultural and political consciousness for the Jamaican poor (Jones, 1988). Praxis in this sense emphasises the role of musician's and singers as being a foundational agent in producing social change and emphasising collective identity.

Music can have a strong role in new social movements, and it can be instrumental in transforming society through a collective identity formation which enhances meaning and identity for those initiating personal and political change (Eyerman & Jamieson, 1998). New social movements are held together by collective or common identity which is grounded by the ideas of common understanding and common experience. New social movements seek to address social concerns and social injustices with the 'ideal' outcome of social change (Lundy, 1999).<sup>20</sup> Musicians and performers become the vehicle for social change as their consciousness and identity shifts from being a mere 'artist' to one of activist-performer that has the potential of "transforming the wider, dominant culture" (Eyerman & Jamieson, 1998, p. 164). Thus an effective social movement is able to not only influence, but question and ultimately transform people's lifestyle, behaviour and attitudes.

This chapter has looked at the rise of the Rastafarian movement and the birth of its main dissemination method; the medium of reggae music. Reggae emerged in the seventies as a tool for highlighting social injustices and poverty. The music was fuelled by a sense of nationalism, pride, consciousness and self belief that ones way of life could only improve. Central to the dissemination of the music, was the sound system that brought affordable entertainment to almost the entire island. In this environment, messages of hope, pleas of assistance, and roots revolutionary

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<sup>20</sup> Further discussion of new social movements and the role of reggae music are undertaken in the final chapter of this thesis.

material were readily interpreted, welcomed and accepted. In the next chapter reggae's co-option is discussed alongside the successful 1972 election of the left wing PNP government and its charismatic leader Michael Manley. The continual progression of reggae and the socialist policies endorsed by the PNP are examined, in conjunction with the collapse of the Jamaican economy.

## CHAPTER 4: NONE SHALL ESCAPE THE JUDGEMENT

### Michael 'Joshua' Manley and the PNP

After being a successful trade union organiser for twenty years Manley ventured into politics, specifically with the left leaning Peoples National Party (PNP) in the late sixties. Family connections paved the initial steps for Manley's induction into politics, as his father Norman was previously the PNP leader, while his uncle Alexander Bustamante was head of the opposition Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) for a number of years. Norman Manley was often referred to as 'Moses' by the party faithful for his work in establishing the drive toward the 1962 independence.<sup>1</sup> McCarthy (2007) argues that even though Michael Manley was born into political 'blue blood' he was focused on developing class consciousness by "challenging both European colonialism and American neo-colonialism" (p.49). This outlook went against the grain, as Manley was born into the small elite mulatto class, which would normally seek to retain their hegemonic power and influence over those less than fortunate. However, Manley's ideology was focused on equality which was garnered from the political views of his parents and from his education at the London School of Economics. Here he majored in politics and economics where he was influenced by Fabian socialism especially from lecturer Harold Laski who viewed that "liberty has no meaning save in the context of equality" (Panton, 1993, p. 35).

During his tenure at the National Workers Union Manley was able to build trust and gain respect from the workers he represented. It also became the ideal platform for him to perfect his oratory skills in dealing with both management, and those less empowered. In 1969 Manley was elected leader of the PNP and became focused on obtaining the populist vote to oust the JLP. He was aware of the impact and

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<sup>1</sup> According to Preston (as cited in Panton, 1999) on one occasion in the late sixties Manley was leading a strike and referred to the company headquarters as comparable to the 'walls of Jericho'. Someone in the crowd responded with 'Joshua, Joshua' which stuck; and became associated with Manley throughout his lifetime.

influence local music had on the population, and was keen to capitalise on this burgeoning social movement. Conversely, he understood the relationship between the Black Power movement and the Rastafarians and the nationalistic rhetoric they disseminated onto the indigenous populace.

This rhetoric was specifically reaching the lower classes, but increasingly middle class youths were identifying with the themes and concepts of both movements. In recognising the Rasta's growing significance in 1970 Manley ventured to their spiritual home Ethiopia and met with Haile Sellassie, where he was apparently presented with a wooden staff, which was christened by his supporters the 'Rod of Correction'.<sup>2</sup> The symbolic rod was held in high esteem by the Rastafarians and was also believed by some citizens to wield magical powers that "would correct the social and economic ills of the country" (Waters, 1999, p.111). The Rastafarians held the belief that Manley (as the biblical 'Joshua') could lead them into a new beginning (crossing the River Jordan), while his political incumbent Hugh Shearer was labelled 'Pharaoh' (Katz, 2003; Goldman, 2006). Equally Manley himself believed that as Joshua he would be able to transform Jamaica, by instigating policies that endorsed a framework based on socialist principles with the intention of creating an egalitarian society.

### **Better Must Come**

During the lead up to the 1972 election, some prominent singers collectively organised themselves to be part of a travelling 'PNP musical bandwagon' that entertained supporters and constituents on a weekly basis during the campaign trail<sup>3</sup>. This campaign highlighted the "systematic and deliberate use of reggae music" (Waters, 1999, p.137) to garner votes and political support. The singers and

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Seaga and the JLP always questioned the legitimacy and authenticity of the 'Rod of Correction' and dubbed it the 'Stick of Detention' (Chevannes, 2001). Additionally, Waters (1999) argues that the rod was "the most outstanding symbol of the 1972 elections" (p.111).

<sup>3</sup> Some of the singers included future stars such as Bob Marley, Alton Ellis, Delroy Wilson, Dennis Brown, Clancy Eccles and Max Romeo to name a few.

musicians benefited from free exposure, marketing and regular weekly wages. People would flock to the gatherings to hear Manley outlay his socialist vision, and at the height of the turnout Manley would produce the 'Rod of Correction' to much awe and excitement. This combined with the popularity of the predominantly Rasta singers performing ensured large and enthusiastic turnouts at the political rallies (Barrow & Dalton, 2004; Katz 2003).<sup>4</sup>

At this early stage in reggae's beginnings, one could suggest that the Rasta/reggae movement was being co-opted and engineered by the politicians to secure votes and in some ways potentially dilute the protest messages embedded in the music.<sup>5</sup> Reggae was entering the mainstream popular culture, and many songs composed that had no political standpoint, were being interpreted, adapted and adopted by the political parties to denote something entirely different than their original meaning. Astute to what was happening on the street, Manley began incorporating the message of reggae songs as slogans to bolster his campaign, and many of these carried overtly political and social messages. Some of the socialist slogans employed were: 'It's Time for a Government of Love', 'Power for the People' and 'Better Must Come'. The latter was a very popular local hit for Delroy Wilson and became remodelled as the campaigns main theme song, even though Wilson was not referring to the state of the nation, but to his own personal state of affairs (Panton, 1993; Persuad, 2001; Waters, 1999):<sup>6</sup>

*I've been trying for a long time, but still I can't make it*

*Everything I try and do, seems to go wrong.*

*It seems I have done something wrong,*

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<sup>4</sup> The courting of the Rasta vote is intriguing, given that they usually do not participate in voting as it is viewed as being part of the 'Babylonian' political system. Hence some commentators argue the Rastafarian vote would have been minimal and had little impact on the polls.

<sup>5</sup> The use and co-option of religious names and terms by the Jamaican political parties is thought provoking and warrants further research.

<sup>6</sup> Additional songs employed as part of the campaign included Clancy Eccles 'Rod of Correction', Junior Byles 'Beat Down Babylon', The Wailers 'Small Axe' and Max Romeo's 'Let the Power fall on I'. As already documented 'Better Must Come' was banned from radio airplay by the JLP.

*Why they trying to keep me down*  
*Who God bless no man curse*  
*Better must come, one day, better must come*  
*They can't conquer me, better must come*  
(Delroy Wilson 'Better Must Come', 1972).

Manley was a very charismatic and eloquent speaker who employed language and symbols spoken and used amongst the poor and the Rastafarians.<sup>7</sup> For these people Manley's rhetoric espousing equality and opportunities provided hope and an escape route from the daily struggle of survival and existence. This vision stood in sharp contrast to the ideology of the JLP (Katz, 2003). Manley wished to assist the poor by means of wealth re-distribution, establishing education facilities and developing state infrastructure designed to foster employment. Of note, due to the inroads and influence that the Rastafarians (as a significant cultural force) had made in Jamaica, the PNP conceded that they could not afford to ignore them (Persuad, 2001). Hence, they were open to the Rastafarians philosophical viewpoints and suggestions. On the other hand, the PNP stressed notions of unity amongst the wealthy and middle classes (who initially viewed Manley as akin to John Kennedy) and the mass bourgeoisie who likened him to Malcolm X (Waters, 1999). The nationalistic tones were supported by a fair number of the middle and indigenous upper classes who found favour with Manley's intellect and vision. In 1972 he was successfully elected to govern Jamaica.

Nonetheless, many viewed that Manley's smooth language lacked any real essence and power while being deficient in ideological substance (Panton 1993; McCarthy, 2007). For many Jamaicans the favourable redistributive social policies and assistance to the poor were slow to arrive, and many supporters were soon voicing disdain as election promises failed to materialise. To make matters worse the new

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<sup>7</sup> Waters (1999) suggests that symbols fall into the following types: "language and names, props, issues, and connections with specific individuals" (p.124).

PNP government also inherited a large national debt and this was further enhanced by poor financial decisions and the consequences of a global recession.<sup>8</sup> When Manley undertook diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1972, then with China soon after in 1973, Jamaica's elite along with the U.S questioned the nature of these relationships and the potential outcomes that may arise.<sup>9</sup> Manley was openly developing friendships with nations whose political ideologies were deemed unworthy by the U.S, and thus was placing Jamaica's political and financial position in jeopardy.

### **Democratic Socialism**

Despite the frail state of the economy Jamaica embarked on a number of programs under the guise of 'democratic socialism' in 1974. The programs were targeted to assist those suffering from poor health, low education and unemployment. Some of these include free secondary education and a nationwide literacy program (based on the success of Cuba's); the creation of cash programs to bolster employment; and the establishment of a land lease program for farmers (King, 2002).<sup>10</sup> In addition the government introduced a minimum wage for domestic workers and lowered the voting age from twenty one to eighteen. While these initiatives sought to improve the lives of many, critics suggest the social reforms failed to achieve real results and amassed a great deal of debt onto the local economy.

To fund these redistributive policies and employment schemes, the PNP looked at nationalising the two major bauxite mining companies, as they had enjoyed

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<sup>8</sup> According to Lundy (1999) Jamaica relies on the export of bauxite, sugar, bananas and tourism for the mainstay of its earnings. Moreover, Boyd (2001) suggests that this time period marked the beginning of "considerable social and economical hardships" (p.975) that only increased with the global economical decline.

<sup>9</sup> Under Manley Jamaica openly courted Libya, Russia and other eastern bloc countries that practised either socialist or communist philosophies. The next chapter explores the relationship with Cuba in more detail.

<sup>10</sup> The Manley government also nationalised the sugar plantations and foreign owned electricity, telephone services and hotels as part of its socialist reforms, as a result employment in these sectors declined dramatically (Clarke, 2001).

prosperity and relative freedom devoid of government intervention since the sixties. To instigate this, Manley implemented a production levy on the bauxite manufacturers that focused on increasing tax revenue from J\$25m to J\$200m over the course of one year (Boyd, 2001; Panton, 1993). The new tax was aimed at increasing mining and production that would lead toward greater employment and benefits to the local and national economy. As a result the multi-nationals sought out more hospitable developing countries whilst also reducing production and investment in Jamaica, and filing a dispute with the World Bank over the legitimacy of the production levy. The bauxite tax levy was compounded by the 1974 oil crisis, which amounted to the more than doubling of Jamaica's oil import bill from J\$65m to J\$177m during the course of 1973-74. The local economy and standards of living were affectively tightened as Jamaica relied on the importation of numerous goods, raw materials and foodstuffs (Panton, 1993; King, 2002; Lundy, 1999). The oil shortage and global economic crisis led to the overall decline in bauxite production and export of bananas and sugar, while tourism was notably affected.

Even dedicated PNP supporters questioned the legitimacy and the effectiveness of democratic socialism. For those already suffering, the standard of living worsened and food shortages of basic commodities such as rice and flour became commonplace (Katz, 2003; Persuad 2001). Overseas investment and development in Jamaica became less frequent and was mirrored by the wealthy elite and middle class who moved away in droves, taking their capital and local investments with them (Clarke, 2001).<sup>11</sup> Hard times followed for those who could not afford to leave, and many expressed their frustrations with violence and crime. Manley's confident rhetoric during the seventies according to Carl Stone (as cited in Panton, 1993) was replaced with "doubts, disillusionment, hostility and a sense of betrayal as the dream of social deliverance that he projected in many of his speeches was matched

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<sup>11</sup> Capital flight according to King (1998) amounted to US\$300m illegally removed from Jamaica, as people moved to cities such as Miami, New York, Toronto, London and Birmingham.

against the reality of the nightmare of hardships being experienced by the workers and peasants” (p.100).

These hardships were regularly expressed and disseminated through reggae music and many supporters that had assisted in Manley getting elected felt let down. Also Rastafarian political values and requests such as the legalisation of marijuana and African repatriation were plainly ignored.<sup>12</sup> Some of Manley’s ardent supporters on the campaign trail voiced concern about the state of the country in 1974-75 with songs like Max Romeo’s ‘No Joshua, No’, Johnny Clarke’s ‘Joshua’s Word’, and Glen Brown’s ‘Save our Nation’. Early PNP sympathiser and burgeoning star Bob Marley also lamented in 1974 on the state of the nation with ‘Them Belly Full (But We Hungry)’. On a positive note Marley urged the ghetto sufferers to momentarily disregard their poverty, malnutrition and unemployment by ‘dancing their troubles away’:

*Them belly full but we hungry  
A hungry mob is an angry mob  
A rain a fall but the dirt to tough  
A pot a cook but food no ‘nough  
Forget your troubles and dance  
Forget your sorrows and dance  
Forget your sickness and dance  
Forget your weakness and dance*

(Bob Marley and the Wailers, ‘Them Belly Full’, 1974)

Basic standards of living became very fragile and borderline for numerous urban and rural based people who struggled on a day to day basis. Sufferers in downtown

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<sup>12</sup> The Rastafarians own policy objectives were not recognised by the sympathetic PNP government. However their cultural symbols and identity was legitimised as a social movement, but this did nothing to shift their position on the ingrained Jamaican class system; neither did their political and economic status change (King, 2002).

Kingston physically expressed themselves by carrying out acts of violence such as burning and looting on those perceived to be more affluent. In 1976 Manley hastily called an election, which led to some of the first acts of political violence being displayed on the Kingston streets with hand guns and automatic weaponry. Many songs were recorded that commented on the rise of the political violence on the eve of the election, as families and friends were being drawn into conflict and were forced to take a stand on which party/constituent they stood for. Themes such as tribal war were regularly at the forefront of the music, as the Rastafarians lamented the political violence being perpetuated in the ghetto on behalf of the middle class politicians (Waters, 1999). The vocal trio The Mighty Diamonds remarked on the national state of affairs in the lead up to the 1976 election:

*Why me black brother why*

*Dis robbing and killing*

*Why me black brother why*

*Dis looting and shooting...*

*What you gonna do when the voice say come*

*Remember the day of judgement*

*Pick up your guns and you go to town*

*See your black brother and you shoot dem down*

*That's wrong*

(The Mighty Diamonds, 'Why Me Black Brother Why,' 1976)

Even though many were unhappy with the state of the country and the political ideology being subscribed to, Manley was re-elected to serve another term. This fuelled further violence and resulted in the government issuing a national state of emergency which lasted for nearly twelve months. However, a number of commentators including Manley himself argued that most of the 1976 street violence originated in a sustained and prolonged destabilisation plot engineered by the CIA (with the support of the JLP) to oust the PNP from political power and

eliminate potential communist threats (Stolzoff, 2000; White, 1984; Panton, 1993; King, 2002; Waters, 1999).<sup>13</sup>

### **IMF and World Bank**

In 1977 as a consequence of the bleak economic conditions Manley reluctantly sought assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, whereby the country received loans supported by the implementation of Structural Adjustment Plans (SAP). Jamaica was one of the first countries where the SAP's were applied, and some argue that the conditions of these early programs were particularly unforgiving (Lundy, 1999). Nonetheless, Harriott (2001) suggests that the programs "aimed at diversifying the economy and improving its competitiveness in international trade" (p.514). Manley held off from accepting the loan conditions for as long as possible, namely due to the strict criteria that Jamaica would have to abide by. Eventually with great reluctance and regret he accepted the terms and the adjustment plans. It was no surprise that the loan requirements only tightened things up for local producers, consumers and vulnerable groups as they now had to compete within the rules of the global marketplace. By implementing the SAP's it was hoped that Jamaica would be attractive to foreign investors with the lure of a large, cheap and disposable labour force.<sup>14</sup>

Even with financial assistance Jamaica struggled throughout the rest of the seventies. The SAP's introduced currency devaluations, tax increases and budget cuts all of which amounted in redundancies, price inflation and led to more destitution and suffering (Boyd, 2001). These internal pressures affected all social classes, yet were mostly felt by the poor who had limited access to resources and

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<sup>13</sup> See Panton (1993) for Manley's own recollections of the destabilization plots. White (1984) accessed files which proved the CIA were keeping tabs on Manley, Marley and the Rastafarian movement.

<sup>14</sup>SAP 'winners' are those industries associated with tourism, export processing and small scale industries (Harriott, 2001).

opportunities. Budget cuts ensured that essential social and public services became non-existent and many Kingston residents were without running water and proper sanitation facilities. Due to the re-occurring hardships experienced by everyday people, many resorted to receiving income derived from the informal economy as a means of survival (Harriott, 2001). This was mirrored by the growth and demand of the marijuana export trade that had surfaced in the sixties, but now thrived during the tough economic times of the seventies.

### **Music and Change**

Music became a form of revolutionary and political praxis for the Jamaican people during the mid seventies. Jones (1988) suggests that “reggae lyricists attempt not only to articulate the collective consciousness of their audience, but to organise and politicise it” (p.27). In reflection of these times, the messages contained in the music for the most part were searing and attacked the inability of the Manley government to keep its promises of helping the poor and displaced. Singers began expressing sentiments that Manley had failed to keep his word, and was not practicing what he had been preaching during the election campaigns. Also the Rastafarians were voicing contempt as most of their requests for political legitimacy were ignored, even though they were large in numbers (widely due to the acclaim and dissemination of reggae music). Nonetheless, while the popularity of reggae musicians such as Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff and Peter Tosh brought global attention and interest on Jamaica; it did little in the seventies to improve the Jamaican Rastafarian’s class status and political influence.<sup>15</sup> As a result song lyrics became one of the most accepted and effective ways to transmit hope, opinions and discontent endured by the governing political ideology and tight monetary policies enforced by the IMF and World Bank.

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<sup>15</sup> Early acclaim and success was given to Jimmy Cliff who starred in ‘The Harder they Come’ movie which toured internationally and became known as a cult classic. Additionally, Cliff, Bob Marley and Peter Tosh became in demand touring and selling records in the lucrative mainstream European and American pop markets.

Despite its global popularity reggae remained a vehicle of protest music and social critique and it continually commented on a wide range of social issues pertinent to Jamaica. This was fuelled by the creativity of the song writers who were able to draw on the rich source of rhymes, folk-stories, and proverbs associated with Jamaican oral culture (Jones, 1988; King, 1998; King & Foster, 2001). The harsh conditions and lack of political representation meant the people shared a similar set of experiences which ensured this social movement had a common purpose and interest to change the prevailing conditions experienced by many.

During the tough economic times people would still seek out entertainment as a form of relaxation, stimulation and enjoyment where they could dance and interact with their friends while listening to the newest and hottest music. The sound system became the most frequented and popularised event, as they did not need to travel far to experience it. Many neighbourhoods had local sounds that may have lacked in amplification and talent, but made up for it with character and atmosphere. What is more sound system dances were economical to attend and provided an eventful night's entertainment that often lasted till daybreak.

Those individuals who were a little more affluent either owned a radio or had access to small record players and were able to purchase cheap locally made 7' 45 singles on a weekly basis.<sup>16</sup> Both these methods of consumption allowed the listener and the record purchaser to keep abreast of what was 'happening on the street'. In addition small bars were situated throughout the Jamaican countryside and town centres and many of these had juke boxes containing the 'old time' hits alongside more contemporary tunes. Also public transport was utilised across the island and the buses and vans were complimented with large stereos playing the local radio stations at full volume.

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<sup>16</sup> For the most part during the seventies, the two Jamaican radio stations largely ignored reggae and it was omitted from daytime playlists and only confined to specialist shows that broadcasted in the early morning hours.

In the dances many of the sound system deejay's articulated and explained a song's intention as a way of introducing it and 'selling' its message onto the patrons. As a rule the deejays would add further commentary, reason and suggestions to stimulate the crowd and to assert their own knowledge, agenda and position. Some astute and entertaining commentators that addressed social and political issues included deejay/chanters such as U-Roy, I-Roy, Trinity, and Big Youth.<sup>17</sup> Of all the deejay's past and present U-Roy (Ewart Beckford) was by far the most popular and dominated this musical arena with his re-workings of old rocksteady classics throughout the seventies. His appeal, ability and success brought about a flood of imitators as many tried to emulate his style and word play. Alongside his countless 7" singles 'Daddy' U-Roy 'The Originator' also gained fame as being the number one deejay on King Tubby's acclaimed sound system, which propelled him further into the limelight as he developed a sense of nationhood, pride and cultural identity among his many followers (Niaah & Stanley Niaah, 2006).

Also still active today, Big Youth (Manley Buchanan) was known as the 'Human Gleaner' (the Gleaner being one of Jamaica's largest national newspapers). Big Youth earned the moniker as he informed people about local politics and topical social issues via his intelligent street smart lyrics, awareness and sharp vocal delivery (Barrow & Dalton, 2004; Hebdige, 2003).<sup>18</sup> The late I-Roy (Roy Reid) was also held in high regard for his lyrics and witty commentary, and the advice he dispensed to the unemployed and disenfranchised youths who hung out in prominence on the Kingston street corners. In his 1974 single 'Black Man Time' I-Roy urges the youths to support the government's newly commenced literacy programme:

*I talk to break oppression and set captives free  
So you got to understand I talk to rule the musical*

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<sup>17</sup> For an excellent piece on the early dancehall origins and how U-Roy became cemented in Jamaican folklore as being the deejay originator, see Niaah and Stanley Niaah (2006).

<sup>18</sup> Big Youth recorded hundreds of tunes, some of which include 'Political Confusion', '6 Dead 9 Gone a Jail', 'Every Nigger is a Star', 'Wolf in Sheep's Clothing' and 'Pope Paul Feel It'.

*Nation with justice and equality.  
So black man you got to be free like a bird in the tree,  
And live in love and unity for I and I.  
So maybe you can make it if you try  
Say it's a black man time. It's a black man time.  
(I-Roy, 'Black Man Time', 1974)*

The cultural deejays were able to express their sentiments on record and in the sound system dance, without significant consequences or retribution. Yet due to the political instability they had to watch their words to a degree and be mindful of potential fallouts from their lyrical discourse. I-Roy (as cited in Hebdige, 2003) explains further:

The music is a way of getting the thing across because...you couldn't come out in public and say bluntly maybe somebody would hit you on the head or a copper would take you in for public mischief. [But] you can say it on record and get away with it. Y' know, it's a way of protesting against certain things, against certain physical and mental things that we Jamaican people have suffered (p.88).

Michael Manley cleverly utilised the musicians skills and co-opted tenets of reggae music to place him into political power, whereby it was hoped through reforms and a socialist policy agenda he could break the poverty cycle experienced by the majority. Nonetheless, the 1974 global economic crisis firmly placed Jamaica on the 'back foot', yet this event did not prevent Manley from pursuing his own political agenda and ideology. As a result, social conditions worsened and the people who helped him rise to power were soon voicing concern and frustration at the state of the nation. Intervention from the World Bank and IMF only tightened up the economy and many citizens left for safer climates, as the political violence flared during the mid seventies. Significantly, for Jamaicans, music was seen as a projection of social commentary that informed the majority black underclass, many of whom were well under-represented in political and financial spheres. Reggae became a

voice for the voiceless, and song lyrics became the main communication medium as people struggled for assistance and social change. Central to the dissemination and global acclaim of reggae throughout the seventies is Bob Marley, who is discussed in the next chapter, as his lyrics covered a whole spectrum of social, political and cultural matters.

## CHAPTER 5: NATURAL MYSTIC

### **Bob Marley-The Organic Intellectual**

Collectively known as the 'King of Reggae' by fans and reggae connoisseurs, Bob Marley was widely regarded as being the Third World's first musical superstar, and the pre-eminent spokesperson of the Rastafarian movement. Yet the significance of his work, and striking lyrical content was really only comprehended after his passing on May 11, 1981. Marley directly challenged the neo-colonialist hegemony and addressed notions of justice, rights and social inequalities that kept a large amount of the Jamaican population disempowered, poor and marginalised. Seen as an astute and shrewd commentator on both Jamaican and global politics, Marley wrote lyrics that resonated amongst sufferers the world over from Mozambique to Detroit and from Birmingham to Auckland.<sup>1</sup> The global reach and dissemination of the messages embedded in the music allowed it to be interpreted by a diverse range of ethnicities and cultures.<sup>2</sup> During his reign Marley was reggae's most eloquent, popular, visible and discerning voice who espoused the moral and social philosophy of a burgeoning social movement that sought to bring about change to those who were experiencing social exclusion.

Bob Marley lived as a child in the rural parish of St Ann before relocating to an impoverished tenement yard in the West Kingston ghetto, known as Trenchtown. In this environment survival was paramount to one's existence, and music was one of the few respites that brought enjoyment and entertainment to those without basic amenities. Like many other Trenchtown youths Marley formed a singing group with long time friends Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer who became known as The Wailers,

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<sup>1</sup> The term sufferers is frequently used in numerous roots reggae compositions, signifying that Jamaicans suffered under slavery, and still suffered through consecutive change of governments and different ideology.

<sup>2</sup> The neo-colonialist perspectives found favour among diverse indigenous groups, such as New Zealand Maori, Indians, Pacific Islanders, Aboriginals and North American Indians. Further discussion on the global reach of reggae will be discussed in further chapters in this thesis.

and immediately they carved a name for themselves in the cut throat entertainment industry. In the early days of their career the reality of ghetto life and rude boy behaviour was re-enacted through music as The Wailers practised and celebrated lawlessness and disregard for authorities and the middle class. As the group became more successful during the late sixties, the boastful rude boy attitudes that the group was famously associated with began to diminish (White, 1984; Davis, 1994; Barrow & Dalton, 2004). Fundamentally they reached an understanding, that by espousing a Rastafarian philosophy, they could peacefully and righteously bring about social change and freedom. Marley's experience growing up in Trenchtown meant that he was legitimised among other ghetto sufferers and he was seen as a ray of hope, which could eventually bring about prosperity to those in need.

In the early seventies mainstream coverage of The Wailers was encouraged and promoted by U.K based Island records owner Chris Blackwell, who embarked upon a calculated marketing plan whereby the group were portrayed as 'young rebels' to European and American audiences (Gilroy, 1987; Jones, 1988). Blackwell could see the rebel image favourably impacting upon popular culture and as opposed to toning down the political and social critiques; he focused symbolically on the images of dreadlocks and marijuana smoking as universal forms of protest against the mainstream. Blackwell shrewdly employed techniques routinely associated with white rock bands to market the band such as the recording of full length albums, compared to the proliferation of 7' singles normally associated with the widespread independent Jamaican reggae labels (Alleyne, 2000; Barrow & Dalton, 2004; Davis, 1994; Hebdige, 2003).

A further practice that Blackwell 'suggested' was the remixing and editing of the recorded Jamaican material onto then superior recording equipment housed at his West London studios. As a result, it could be argued that the bands success in the early seventies was assisted by watering down techniques. This involved winding

back the prominent bass guitar and making the sound smoother, polished and refined by adding string instruments and rock guitar lines. For Longhurst (2007) this blatantly amounted to a “dilution of the music’s power for commercial purposes” (p.134).<sup>3</sup> However Barrow and Dalton (2004) are a little more encouraging of the appealing techniques, as they regard some of The Wailers early output on Island records as reggae being manufactured specifically for a mainstream rock audience.

Founding band members Tosh and Wailer resisted and resented Blackwell’s financial motive in steering the band towards global exposure and international stardom. Blackwell saw Marley as the most flexible and marketable of the trio, and he was encouraged in 1975 to lead the band by himself without the assistance of Tosh and Wailer, who left to pursue successful independent projects (White, 1984). Marley’s attractiveness in the U.K grew immensely during the seventies amongst the mainstream rock and pop audiences, as Island marketed his image and music extensively. Exposure was also enhanced by prolific live shows and by ‘rock god’ Eric Clapton successfully covering the Marley penned ‘I Shot the Sheriff’ which made significant inroads in the mainstream pop charts during the mid seventies.<sup>4</sup> The success of Clapton’s hit also brought with it royalty payments and expanded The Wailers audience. Music media were portraying Marley as “reggae’s first superstar” and British rock journalists were seeing Marley as “the black Mick Jagger” and suggested the quality of his lyrics was comparable to a “new Dylan” (Jones, 1988, p.76).

Promotional campaigns, flashy marketing and the rise of Marley memorabilia guaranteed increased mainstream exposure, which generated further record sales

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<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, the vocal content was militant and righteous including titles such as: ‘Get Up Stand Up’, ‘400 Years’, ‘Slave Driver’ and ‘Burnin and Lootin’.

<sup>4</sup> Clapton’s version was more popular in Jamaica when released, than the original Marley composition. Other mainstream musicians like Taj Mahal and Barbara Streisand were also covering Marley tunes to varying degrees of success (Davis, 1994).

and income.<sup>5</sup> As Marley's career developed alongside interest in Jamaica and reggae music, some purveyors suggested that in reaching this global audience that Marley's lyrical content began to wane by the mid seventies, lacked focus and began to express sentiments found in pop music (Jones, 1988).<sup>6</sup>

### **Smile Jamaica**

In the lead up to the 1976 election campaign, both the JLP and PNP were trading fire power with one another over political borders and constituencies located primarily in Kingston. Marley had loosely supported the 1972 PNP campaign where he performed on the musical bandwagon alongside other Rasta singers, yet he remained 'not partial' in taking a political position.<sup>7</sup> This was duly reflected in his Rasta beliefs which viewed the system (government, politicians, and police) as 'babylon' and was looked upon with caution and apprehension.<sup>8</sup> More than aware of the turbulence in downtown Kingston, Marley decided to organise the 'Smile Jamaica' peace concert to promote love and unity among the divided urban population, who were feeling the affects of the regular gun battles and disturbances.

Due to his apolitical nature and the prevailing inner city tension Marley did not want the government to be seen as either endorsing or sponsoring the event. Nonetheless he was friends with senior party members, 'dons' and area leaders from both political parties who tried their utmost to co-opt him into taking a

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<sup>5</sup> Marley's exposure and popularity (largely generated and fuelled by Island records), led to an interest by other English record companies to 'jump on the bandwagon' and endorse reggae as 'the next big thing'. This led to the signing of leading Jamaican artists to mainstream labels such as Virgin, CBS and EMI which embarked on huge publicity campaigns which 'played a central role in the popularisation of reggae in Britain in the 1970's' (Jones, 1988, p.71).

<sup>6</sup> See Alleyne (2000) for a detailed analysis of how the global recording industry commercially exploited and co-opted the natural and organic sound found in 'authentic' Jamaican reggae.

<sup>7</sup> Both Goldman (2006) and Davis (1994) suggest that the Rasta musician's performed on the PNP bandwagon, due to widespread belief that Manley was considering marijuana legalisation. This never eventuated, though police harassment of Rasta's was reduced during the terms of the 'sympathetic' PNP government.

<sup>8</sup> 'Babylon' does not refer to the ideal utopia, when Rasta's employ the term it has negative and oppressive connotations. It is commonly used to warn others when the police are approaching.

political standpoint.<sup>9</sup> Much to Marley's displeasure, within a few days after the concert date had been publicly declared Manley's government announced that the election would take place a few days after the concert. This was perceived by many as the PNP commandeering the concert for their own electoral benefit, as opposed to providing some relief for a people divided by gunfire and political boundaries. As a result JLP supporters were convinced that Bob Marley and the other performers were PNP sympathisers, and consequently were performing on behalf of the incompetent government.

Two nights before the concert, an assassination attempt was carried out on Marley at his residence, on the pretence of 'warning' him not to perform.<sup>10</sup> However, Marley and his entourage (a number who were subsequently wounded) performed to around 80,000 people at the Nation Heroes Park in a show of defiance to the ambush perpetrators and their sponsors. In the aftermath the PNP's political advertisements proclaimed the events success, and some observers suggest that it was one of the main reasons why the PNP won the election a few days later, given that many were unhappy with both Manley's political ideology and the dire state of the economy (Waters, 1999; Goldman, 2006). The above is another example of the PNP co-opting music and the good intention of the singers and musicians for political gain.

Directly after the concert Marley fled Jamaica for London and did not return for nearly eighteen months. He openly expressed his frustrations and mistrust of the PNP for co-opting the intentions of the concert, the musicians, their music and the

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<sup>9</sup> Senior community members or those with status and power were firstly known as 'area leaders' or 'rankings', then more recently as 'dons' as they hold a similar position to those of the Italian mafia. They are the 'gate keeper' for their neighbourhood and often use enforcement as ways of keeping the peace and are aligned to one of the political parties and are flanked by 'posses' of youths and supporters. To get anything done in a community one must receive the blessings of the 'don'.

<sup>10</sup> It is a widely held view among the literature (White, 1984; Davis, 1994; Barrow & Dalton, 2004) that the assassination attempt was undertaken by the JLP, but other commentators suggest that Marley's close associates were involved in scams linked to horse racing and had accrued unpaid gambling debts.

extensive use of firepower being used among the poor to defend political constituencies, on behalf of middle class politicians. Near the end of his London sojourn Marley met with two area leaders or 'rankings' from the PNP and JLP respectively. Marley, 'Red' Tony Welch (PNP) and Claudie Massop (JLP) proposed a solution to the smouldering violence and tribal warfare.<sup>11</sup> The solution once again involved music.

### **One Love Peace Concert**

The 'One Love' peace concert aimed to unite the divided people through the auspices of music, and with the establishment of a peace treaty between the segregated neighbourhoods. In May 1978 an estimated crowd of over 30,000 turned out to see an all-star line up, including the return of Bob Marley and the Wailers after a long absence. This event was illustrious on the Jamaican political landscape due to Marley's impromptu gesture of persuading both opposing political leaders Michael Manley and Edward Seaga to shake hands on stage. The 'peace treaty' was in full view of the Jamaican public and it was 'cemented' by Marley in the middle holding their hands aloft, while pleading for 'love and prosperity'. Unfortunately, only a few weeks after the concert Claudie Massop was shot 47 times by armed police in a roadblock, yet the work he and Welch had pioneered in establishing the peace truce lasted a remarkable ten months (Gray, 1997).

Nonetheless preparations began soon after the concert for the 1980 election campaign which was marked by record incidences of political violence, once the peace treaty had ruptured. Several political observers suggested that the politicians preferred the civil unrest, as opposed to people living in unity and harmony as they were harder to control and manage while in a 'calm' state (Goldman, 2006; Waters, 1999; Gray, 1997).

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<sup>11</sup> Welch owned a record label Socialist Roots and a sound system Socialist Roots Hi-Fi, that due to its title and affiliation with the PNP could only play music in designated safe areas, without the risk of political violence and intimidation.

Marley toured around the world for the remainder of the seventies and into the early eighties.<sup>12</sup> He collapsed while jogging in New York in the middle of his most extensive U.S tour, and received treatment for cancer before succumbing to the illness on May 11, 1981. Bob Marley was reggae's voice of hope and reason to the globally marginalised and dispossessed, and his music was able to transgress social and cultural barriers that brought enlightenment to many. He benefited greatly from the commercial successes of marketing and capitalism even though he did not trust the market or the system. What is more he was able to direct the power and influence generated from creatively making music, live performance and the media spotlight to highlight social injustices throughout the world. Foremost for Marley, he adhered to his Rastafarian doctrine throughout his career and disseminated this actively, in the attempt at bettering those who possessed little in the way of social, political and economical resources. Posthumously Marley's material has been extensively analysed, with the understanding that the quality of his writing, and the masked critiques contained were that of a genius whose talents, influence and power were identified years later. To this day, Marley is viewed by many as being the 'reggae king' that will never be de-throned.

In the early eighties any reggae singer who possessed talent and ability to articulate social problems was instantly heralded as the next 'Bob Marley'. As a result a number of entertainers have all failed to live up to the expectation and hype of filling his shoes and carrying the mantle.<sup>13</sup> Additionally media excitement and attention has done more harm than good to the reggae genre. The lack of suitable entertainers led to the global media and multi national record companies losing interest in reggae music and many foreign recording contracts failed to be renewed.

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<sup>12</sup> On April 16, 1979 Marley played to a capacity crowd at Auckland's Western Springs as part of his 'Babylon By Bus' Tour.

<sup>13</sup> Singers such as Barrington Levy, Jimmy Cliff and the late Peter Tosh and Garnet Silk all possess superstar qualities, but lack Marley's global appeal and charisma and ability to continually write hit songs and compositions.

The outcome is that both the entertainers and reggae industry have suffered due to the lack of an apparent 'real' heir to the reggae throne.

### **Cuba**

A few months after Manley's successful 1972 election Jamaica established diplomatic relations with Cuba which lasted until the change in government in 1980. Michael Manley and Fidel Castro also developed a close personal friendship, which led to the uptake in Jamaica of Cuba's foreign economic assistance programs that targeted a number of friendly socialist governments and allies. This assistance was mainly in the form of skilled human capital (Leogrande, 1982; Panton, 1993).<sup>14</sup>

Cuba enjoyed minimal crime, many citizens were employed, enjoyed good health and they benefited from a strong liberatory education that ensured high rates of literacy (Stolzoff, 2000; Kozol, 1978). Furthermore, foreign ownership was minimal and a sense of national equality prevailed, compared with Jamaica whose crime rates were of concern and its citizens experienced division, unrest and numerous social hardships. Cuba's socialist policies impressed Manley who was embarking on his Democratic Socialism path, much to the despair of the U.S who were cautious of the so called 'red tide' spreading through the Caribbean. Manley first visited Cuba in 1975 and the prosperity of the country and nationalistic socialist ideology had an impact on him. After the stay Manley undertook a 'brigadista' exchange program whereby unemployed Jamaicans studied Cuban construction techniques for a period of one year. Senior police officers and military staff also acquired skills and training in Cuba that caused further unease with the U.S. Jamaica benefited from this support and influx of human capital as Cubans built schools, a large technical college and hospitals for Jamaican residents (Kozol, 1978; Martin, 2008).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Other nations that were recipients of the programmes were: Angola, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Grenada and Nicaragua.

<sup>15</sup> Additionally, by 1981 around one thousand Jamaicans had been the recipients of university and technical training in Cuba that covered a wide variety of subjects and academic material (Cotman, 1993).

Cuba viewed that Jamaica and Manley's focus on 'Caribbean Socialism' was beneficial for the 'backyard' in ways of spreading Cuban influence and also fostering development and independence away from the U.S. Even though there were a number of ideological differences in the rhetoric of Manley and Castro, both countries were in agreement over a number of international issues; such as Manley establishing the International Bauxite Association and Manley supporting Castro's decision in the dispatching of Cuban soldiers to Angola (Leogrande, 1982; Cotman 1993).

Nonetheless, during the middle and latter part of the seventies nearly fifty percent of the Jamaican population in many districts were unemployed and as a consequence were experiencing severe hardships (Boyd, 2001). Manley's socialist application alongside a devalued economy led to food shortages, frequent power cuts and reduced public services which suggested that Democratic Socialism was not flourishing the way it was intended (Katz, 2003). Marxist political ideology put into practice may have been appropriate for Cuba, but would not necessarily be practical for Jamaica due to the fact that it contradicts "certain fundamental and deeply rooted values held by the Jamaican people" (Panton, 1993, p.98). Some of these are individual freedom and choice. Critics argued that Manley's socialist vision was unfruitful largely due to the lack of support from the middle class elite, and the large bureaucracy needed to oversee and fund the social programmes which was seen as costly and wasteful (Hope, 2006a).

The 1974 oil crisis and reduction in bauxite manufacturing also affected Jamaica's fiscal resources to fund the programs, which some political commentators suggest managed to benefit those overseeing the schemes as opposed to assisting those in need<sup>16</sup>. While participants of the schemes viewed their income as patronage handouts, as opposed to remuneration from working hard and improving ones own circumstances (Huber & Stevens, 1992).

The diplomatic relations with Cuba combined with the global economic recession of 1975-77 forced many residents to reassess Jamaica's affordability and suitability to safely reside in. Small businesses and factories were forced to close sharply raising unemployment and the price of living. As a result a number of skilled and educated people immigrated to more prosperous and risk-free locations like Miami, New York, Toronto and London (Panton, 1993). Singers and musicians reacted to the hardships, frequently voicing their frustrations and contempt. This was matched by album covers displaying images of Che Guervara, militants, and civil uprisings; while one of the most popular studio bands was named the 'Revolutionaries'.

### **Fighting for Power**

The increasing daily struggles and frustrations endured by many were often enacted through protest and violence, and political divisions became stronger and more pronounced towards the end of the decade. The destabilisation measures being undertaken supposedly by the CIA and U.S government only fuelled the resentment between the rich and poor.<sup>17</sup> Rumours began surfacing on the Kingston streets that the CIA was encouraging the gang warfare by supplying the JLP constituents with imported weapons, and this was visually displayed in graffiti with the amending of

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<sup>16</sup> Political party patronage systems have operated in Jamaica for many years and entail dispatching jobs, work schemes and programs to those affiliated with the party in power at that time. According to Edie (1986) the PNP's employment programs were used to mobilise the lower classes and guarantee their support in the polls.

<sup>17</sup> According to research by White (1984) the CIA were monitoring 'people of interest' in Jamaica that included Manley, Marley and the Rastafarian movement as they posed threats to the U.S. and their influence on the Caribbean.

Seaga's name to read 'CIAga'. In the lead up to the 1976 election Bob Marley also commented on the alleged involvement of the U.S Intelligence Agency in the song 'Rat Race':

*When the cat's away the mice will play*

*Political violence fill your city*

*Don't involve Rasta in your say say*

*Rasta don't work for no CIA*

(Bob Marley and the Wailers, 'Rat Race', 1976).

Most of the JLP election propaganda in 1980 was negative and declared that Jamaica was under a communist threat from Cuba and that the Manley government had mismanaged the economy through state intervention, patronage handouts and socialist practices. The Jamaican national paper 'The Daily Gleaner' was openly in support of the conservative JLP and this frustrated Manley immensely. The PNP exercised control of the sole television network and two radio stations and were able to dictate programming and election advertising, but had no influence on the independent Gleaner. Additionally U.S media such as the Wall Street Journal and Washington Post commented on the possible future of Jamaica under another PNP term and the possibility of the creeping communist/socialist tide that crept closer to the U.S (Waters, 1999). During the 1980 campaign both political leaders drew on reggae music once again to represent their causes and they re-interpreted sections of a new Bob Marley composition 'Bad Card' (without his permission) to strengthen their positions.<sup>18</sup> The lead up to the general election amounted in over 1000 people losing their lives due to political violence in which families, friends and neighbourhoods were further torn apart in loyalty and support for either one of the two parties (Waters 1999; Stolzoff, 2000; McCarthy, 2007).

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<sup>18</sup> The song 'Bad Card' was used as part of both parties strategy. Manley (mis) appropriated the lyrics 'You can't get we out of the race', of which Seaga replied 'You draw bad card'. The song was most likely intended for Marley's middle class neighbours who frowned at the Rastafarian presence in their uptown neighbourhood (Waters, 1999).

PNP supporters, Manley himself, Jamaican academics and the general populace argued that the violence and destabilisation measures were spearheaded and backed by the CIA, JLP and Daily Gleaner who were all apprehensive with the Manley administration, the Rastafarian movement, and Bob Marley (Panton, 1993; Gunst, 1995; White, 1984; McCarthy, 2007). Overall the inadequacies of the PNP lead to the majority of the Jamaican people believing that the government was powerless to manage the economy and preserve social order. Therefore, there was an “alliance of the private sector, the Church, the Army and Police Forces, the media, the intelligentsia, the workers, the unemployed and foreign forces to remove the government” (Edie, 1986, p.88). Each of these diverse groups had their own ideology and reasons for changing the government, and as a united front they were too powerful to be ignored. Additionally, the global economical crisis and Jamaica’s inability to secure more loans from international credit agencies, limited the power and influence of the PNP’s ‘beneficial’ electoral patronage system. This system was also restricted due to unemployment occupying nearly 30% of the labour market in the lead up to the election (Waters, 1999).

Many observers were not surprised when the JLP seized victory due to “economic depression, anti-communist rhetoric and revivalist choruses, [and] stepped into power determined to place Jamaica squarely in the camp of free enterprise and pro-Americanisation” (Waters, 1999, p.247). Jamaican people voted for safety and security and this resulted in the conservative JLP successfully governing Jamaica, lead by Edward Seaga and instilling a fresh new political ideology. This was sympathetic to the U.S, materialism and consumption and welcomed investment and globalisation with open arms.

Bob Marley quickly made a name for himself home and abroad by playing and promoting reggae music and Rastafarian values. Yet his talent and abilities were recognised and co-opted by U.K record producer Blackwell to sell records and by

Manley, who utilised Marley's background, connections and affinity with lower class ghetto people to secure political votes. Even though Marley launched reggae around the world, he was torn between the conditions endured by his own people, and by the global marginalised and dispossessed he came into contact with. By the time the JLP gained power Marley was spending large amounts of time away from Jamaica and as a result was distant from the happenings of the local music scene. Nonetheless, his championing of human rights and equality has made him a global household name, and his popularity is exemplified by the continual strength of his record sales and success of his children whom spread to the best of their ability his message of peace and love through reggae music. The next chapter unpacks the new ideology of Seaga and the JLP and how determined they are to instil a fresh set of political values and goals upon Jamaica, while turning the economy around.

## CHAPTER 6: UNDER HEAVY MANNERS

### **Edward Seaga and the JLP**

Despite their title, the Jamaican Labour Party are aligned more to the right of the political spectrum and were inclined to endorse policies that focused on economic growth, prosperity, individualism and entrepreneurism. Seaga was born in the U.S to Syrian parents of the privileged middle class and was initially viewed as a 'radical populist' in his early days of Jamaican politics. Seaga (like Manley) was educated overseas and gained a degree in Anthropology from Harvard (Huber & Stevens, 1992). In 1974 Seaga attained leadership of the JLP after the electoral defeat of then Prime Minister Hugh Shearer.

During the independence term (1962-1972) Seaga was the minister for development, welfare, and culture under the JLP and later became the finance minister. Being the culture minister enabled him to establish a National Festival that celebrated Jamaica's cultural and traditional musical forms represented in regional performance contests. Some were critical of the National Festival because it promoted middle class sentiments, as opposed to recognising more contemporary and popular forms of music (Stolzoff, 2000). These popular forms are those ascribed to the dancehall and are thus devoid of state control or influence. Additionally, the lower class (that for the most part) embraces dancehall culture, held to views which could have been seen as counter ideological to the view of the state. Years later in 1980 the JLP were not embracing, neither were they tolerant of the Rastafarian movement and their nationalistic demands.

As a result the social movement had little influence on the new government, compared with the former sympathetic Manley regime.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless they were 'understanding' and encouraging that reggae music and Rastafari could be co-opted into "symbols of Jamaica's cultural heritage" (King & Foster, 2001, p.10) and thus be deemed valid tourist attractions and income earners.

Seaga had a reputation among his supporters as a 'manager and fixer' and it was viewed that he could transform the Jamaican economy to one of prosperity, opportunity and one that offered political stability (Stolzoff, 2000). His political constituency was one of the roughest inner Kingston settlements, and to the surprise of many, Seaga remained in that seat and refused to relocate to somewhere more auspicious and relaxed once he had gained popularity within the party. One reason for this was when Seaga decided to forcibly remove shantytown squatters in his constituency to make way for a new housing complex in 1966. Known as Tivoli Gardens the new development was a reward to Seaga's loyal supporters, and was seen as firmly entrenching partisan politics and securing Seaga's political stronghold in Western Kingston (Stolzoff, 2000). Local gang leaders were hired to ensure the construction went smoothly and that protests and objections from the squatters was minimal. However, the squatters reacted to being homeless and destitute and in the violent aftermath the JLP were forced into declaring a 'state of emergency'.

What resulted changed the face of Jamaican politics forever, as both political parties hired youth gangs and rude boys to protect their voters and constituencies from each other. Kingston electoral districts became divided by the gangs who became political 'patrons' that were rewarded by their local politicians with lucrative labour

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<sup>1</sup> Seaga had undertaken an in-depth study of early Jamaican musical forms and Afro-Jamaican religious cults while at Harvard. During the sixties he was also a well known record producer who was adept at talent spotting (Stolzoff, 2000). This background provided him with valuable insights into the importance of locally recorded music and the competitive musical scene, yet once he entered into politics he no longer pursued music production.

contracts, employment, guns and ghetto status. Stone (as cited by Hope, 2006a) describes the political patronage framework as “the exchange of economic and social favours to a poor and socially fragmented population in return for support” (p.3).

Once elected in 1980, one of the first political moves undertaken by Seaga was the curtailing of any joint Cuban/Jamaican projects and the expulsion of a large number of Cuban diplomats and state sector employees that were based in Jamaica. Immediately after taking office Seaga flew to Washington to meet with Ronald Reagan to declare Jamaica’s new political ideology, which was a rejection of social democracy and a focus on free market philosophies. Seaga was warmly received and Jamaica promptly received moral and financial aid from the Reagan administration.<sup>2</sup>

### **Impacts of Globalisation**

As to be expected, this opened the door to fresh negotiations with the IMF and World Bank who felt comfortable with the new political direction and provided Jamaica with a three year credit agreement of nearly US\$650 million (Edie, 1984). In comparison to Manley’s ‘forced’ deal a few years earlier, this credit agreement was far more lenient, generous and flexible and it did not enforce state layoffs, raise inflation or devalue the Jamaican currency. Moreover, the pro-market model endorsed by the IMF, was also clearly at odds with Manley’s democratic socialist ideology (Panton, 1993). Part of the IMF and World Bank’s casualness was due to the fact that Seaga had cultivated conservative U.S support in the late seventies and was also able to generate substantial foreign loans while optimistically and unrealistically projecting economic growth (Huber & Stevens, 1992). This seal of approval from the IMF and renewal of U.S support attracted a number of foreign investments and the Jamaican middle classes and business entrepreneurs back to

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<sup>2</sup> In the period 1981-1984 Jamaica received around US\$200 million, compared to US\$47 million that the Manley administration obtained in 1979 (Hope, 2006a).

Jamaica. Development and investment in the tourism sector also grew significantly due to positive U.S media reporting and warmly received promotional campaigns. During the 1980's tourism became one of Jamaica's mainstays in foreign earnings, and was viewed as one of the bright spots in the economy.<sup>3</sup>

The loan requirements of the IMF and World Bank compelled Jamaica to incorporate aspects of globalisation, such as the lowering of tariffs into their economy. This resulted in Jamaica relaxing import controls, in which all manner of goods flooded the local market, leading to an overall decline in exports. Domestic manufacturers, producers and agricultural growers felt the impact of the free-market ideology, as it became harder to sell their commodities locally, as they competed with products manufactured and grown cheaply in the U.S (Hope, 2006a). In addition the requirements and implementation of SAP's led to wage freezes, cut backs in social spending and reducing the amount of government employees. The negative social and political outcomes were widespread and plentiful, as both urban and rural people suffered once again from the shortage of food stuffs, unreliable public services and widespread unemployment. As inflation rose during the 1980's basic food stuffs increased accordingly and many supermarket shelves remained empty, due to Jamaica's reliance on the importation of food goods and raw materials.

Although Jamaica did embrace elements of globalisation and was committed to a neo-liberal agenda, Seaga reneged on some of his obligations to the U.S and the global funding agencies, as he was sympathetic to some state intervention in the economy. He added to the nationalist foundations constructed by the PNP and supported a number of state intervention polices throughout the 1980's. Even though this perspective was at odds with the official government rhetoric and position of the IMF, it reflected his personal preference and his support of the long

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<sup>3</sup> For further analysis on the relationship between the Jamaican government and tourism industry and the cop-option of both reggae music and the Rastafarians see King and Foster (2001).

serving JLP patronage system (Huber & Stevens, 1992). By 1982 Seaga had nationalised a number of industries such as a oil refinery owned by Esso, the Montego Bay Freeport, and the government re-opened a bauxite/alumina plant in 1985 that had previously been closed by the U.S multinational Alcoa.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the government became the sole importer of cars under the Jamaica Commodity Trading Corporation (Huber & Stevens, 1992). By late 1985 the economy was not in good shape and Jamaica failed the prescriptive tests by the IMF. However despite not adhering to the conditions Seaga was able to get additional loans with relaxed terms and constraints.<sup>5</sup>

Many Jamaican citizens were frustrated with the neo-liberal approach and lack of social assistance to the poor and unemployed and as a consequence the JLP trailed in the polls from 1982. People viewed the JLP as catering to middle class needs, while ignoring the poorer quality of life experienced by the majority lower class (Stone, 2001). The impact of the SAP's, monetary restrictions and the tightening of state budgets resulted in the removal of subsidised health care, and led to crowded schools and high interest rates (Katz, 2003). Enforced currency devaluations and cutbacks in social spending guaranteed that people protested and demonstrated regularly at the alarming rate of price increases and lack of state services. In January 1985 all of the unions went on a nationwide strike, severely crippling gas, water and power supplies to thousands of households for a one week period. As a consequence, Jamaica became as financially troubled under the JLP administration

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<sup>4</sup> The Montego Bay Freeport operates similarly to the Kingston Free zone, whereby goods (namely material) arrive tariff free from large U.S multinationals and are assembled in Jamaica, then shipped back to their country of origin. The manufacturers pay minimal tax, no duty and also compensate their workers very poorly who have to work under meagre terms and conditions. See Stephanie Black's (2003) 'Life and Debt' documentary for more discussion.

<sup>5</sup> Partly this was from earlier relationships that Seaga had nurtured with liberal Republican politicians who also invested in Jamaican developments, and believed in Seaga's optimistic economic growth figures and outlook.

as it had previously been under the PNP (Hope, 2006a). Financial assistance from the U.S had become markedly reduced with the incoming Bush administration, as focus on Jamaica and the Caribbean basin became less significant.

Seaga took over from Manley and had immediate support from the global credit agencies, the U.S and the affluent middle class. Yet the cash injection coupled with the terms and conditions of the SAP's and the focus on globalisation placed Jamaica once again in a perilous position, as people continued to suffer from poverty. Additionally, the passing of Bob Marley in 1981 heralded a shift and focus away from earlier dominating Rastafarian values and social and cultural based ideologies. Reggae music began to develop and reflect the meta-narrative of capitalism and its overarching belief system centred on individualism and materialism. This is explored and developed further in the next chapter, as the emergence of dancehall music and its associated popular culture challenged the state, the middle class and all other earlier musical forms previously discussed.

## CHAPTER 7: ROCK AND COME IN

### **The Birth of Dancehall**

This section highlights where praxis breaks down as the revolutionary content and collective social and political awareness of reggae music becomes fragmented for a period of time, loses its historical momentum and gets lost in the auspices of capitalism. The neo-liberal political agenda of the JLP encouraged free market ideals and endorsed individual traits such as materialism and individualism. The relationship with the U.S led to the expansion and development of free market enterprises and of the uptake of U.S popular culture, values and ideology in Jamaica. This was further intensified with inter-island migration, improved telecommunications and the widespread availability of U.S foods, clothes, music and television shows.

Dancehall music had its origins in the early dances of the 1950's and 1960's where the deejay would introduce the record at a dancehall and entertain the dancers with encouragement and banter.<sup>1</sup> At this time and during the seventies the deejay played a minor role, as most attention was focused on the actual record that was playing, while its content and 'danceability' was deemed more essential rather than the person playing and introducing the record. What occurred in the mid seventies was that these roles became reversed; as people came to see the deejay perform (as opposed to a singer or vocal group). The deejay's role became more valued and was seen as crucial to the success of a sound system, alongside the quality of the records they selected and the power of the sound. Moreover, sound systems provided the opportunity for the deejays to chat or talk-over the instrumental 7' 'b side' versions

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<sup>1</sup> The dancehall venue may comprise of a proper facility with a dance floor and other amenities, or it may be as basic as an outdoor vacant lot or yard enclosed by a makeshift security fence.

of popular tunes that dancehall patrons were familiar with.<sup>2</sup> The deejay would extend and amplify the tune with signature catch phrases, vocal injections and exhortations such as ‘ribbits, oinks, and bong-bong-dong-didiliys’ to name a few. This style was eventually replicated onto the vinyl record format and deejays soon gained acceptance, acknowledgement and popularity during the later half of the seventies.<sup>3</sup> Up until that time the deejays (apart from a number of highly skilled and articulate ones) were seen as a novelty and were for the most part associated with appearing at live sound system dances.

Sound systems are viewed as keeping “the traditions and spirit of reggae music alive”, as they are at the grassroots level of Jamaican music and keep abreast, and to a degree educate and inform the people of “new dances, new attitudes, new tastes and trends” (Hebidge, 2003, p.87). The popularity of the deejay style in the early 1980’s was further legitimised by the arrival of a number of new sound systems that challenged the dominance of the earlier established sounds. These new sounds sprung up in neighbourhoods’ island wide and were not short of new, aspiring talent from an array of youths wanting to make it in the big time.

Singers and traditional vocal groups were the accepted choice among the Jamaican record buying public until the late seventies. However, the dancehall/deejay phenomena marked the demise of the popularity of the singers, who were still being recorded but were outnumbered by the deejays in unparalleled quantities in terms of record sales (Hebidge, 2003; Barrow & Dalton, 2004). Nonetheless those singers that had encountered sound system experience were still able to remain successful, due to their skill and improvisation techniques. This stems from their ability to be

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<sup>2</sup> The practice on Jamaican 7” singles of featuring the singer or group on the ‘a side’, then an instrumental version on the ‘b side’ of the same rhythm has existed since the late sixties. Other versions of the same rhythm may include horn, flute, melodica, percussive or organ pieces.

<sup>3</sup> This ‘talk-over’ style has maintained its popularity until the present day and has influenced a considerable amount of rap and hip-hop artists over the years.

spontaneous and articulate, while also being proficient in interacting with a live dancehall audience.<sup>4</sup> Jamaican music has always had a pre-occupation with sexual matters, suggestive content and heterosexual relationships. The dancehall phase is one chapter where this foray has been the most visually and vocally expressed in the music.

In 1977 a cultural chanter by the name of Trinity who was viewed as a disciple of Big Youth, instigated the shift to material and sexual concerns that dominated the preceding decade and beyond. Trinity's song 'Three Piece Suit' was a massive hit on the island, and even though success was given to the vocal delivery, the rhythm track was an updating of an earlier rocksteady hit which may have added to its popularity and familiarity with the record buying public.<sup>5</sup>

*Yu should have seen me and the big fat ting*

*Tell yu, when I scrub her in Constant Spring*

*Tell yu, when I dub her in Constant Spring*

*Tell yu, when I dub her on the big bed spring*

*In my three-piece suit and ting*

*In my diamond socks and ting*

*In my Earthman shoes and ting*

(Trinity, 'Three Piece Suit', 1979)

In the above instance Trinity is objectifying a woman as an object of his desire and lust. Moreover, he is highlighting his material looks and possessions that could be situated as being alluring to the opposite sex. This ideological shift from conscious

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<sup>4</sup> Some singers that maintained popularity through the eighties (largely due to sound system appearance) were Barrington Levy, Frankie Paul, Cocoa Tea, Sugar Minnott, Michael Prophet and superstars Dennis Brown and Gregory Isaacs.

<sup>5</sup> 'Three Piece Suit' was immensely popular and spawned a number of answer versions by other deejays; another light hearted example was by Ranking Trevor titled 'Three Piece Chicken and Chips'. In 2004 the rhythm was further utilised by contemporary dancehall/hip-hop crossover artist Sean Paul who had a massive hit with 'I'm still in love'. However original ownership of the rhythm has resulted in a number of law suites in recent years.

material toward vocal content aligned with less political and cultural topics emphasises the change of the times, and of artists focusing on more entertaining and light hearted subject matter.<sup>6</sup>

### **Rub a Dub Rhythm**

During the rub a dub era (1979-1985) a lot of attention was afforded to the rhythm or backing track and in 1979 the rhythm tracks being constructed in the studios became sparser, slower, stripped back, and militant (matching the mood of the country). Studio mixing techniques emphasised the 'weight' of the rhythm section giving prominence to the bass guitar and drums in particular. By far and large the two most popular engineers during this time were Overton 'Scientist' Brown and Lloyd 'Prince Jammy' James who both became extremely competent and highly regarded at remixing, voicing and editing songs at Osbourne 'King Tubby' Ruddock's inner Kingston studio.<sup>7</sup> The studio was renowned in regards to the equipment setup and the skills of his young employees and this ensured the songs recorded and mixed here stood out, in comparison to the other studios. As a result many producers would go to Tubby's for 'dubplates' and the final mix before the eventual pressing of the record.<sup>8</sup>

The abundance of entertainers and the diverse individual vocal styles yielded the record producers with potentially numerous takes and versions of just one recorded

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<sup>6</sup> It must be pointed out that cultural deejay's such as Charlie Chaplin, Brigadeer Jerry and Peter Metro among others still articulated social concerns to the dancehall audience during this time frame.

<sup>7</sup> King Tubby is most associated with the reggae sub-genre titled 'dub', which he is known as the originator and the most respected mixer. Dub is the editing and re-mixing of vocal tracks, while utilising the instrumental rhythm track as the blank canvas of the mixer. Tubby and his employees would fade instruments and vocals in and out of the mix and used analogue effects such as tape delay, reverb and space echo to distract the listener and highlight certain sections of the song.

<sup>8</sup> A 'dubplate' is an exclusive vocal recording sung by a prominent singer who is paid to endorse and sing the merits of a particular sound system. Hence the dubplates are one off mixes of a certain tune and are held in high esteem by both sound system operators and dancehall patrons. Tubby's studio was renowned for high quality and long lasting dubplates.

rhythm. Occasionally deejays would voice several sides for one producer often on the same rhythm, thus ensuring production and studio costs were kept to a minimum. As a result this signalled the phase where the reliance on un-reliable, fussy and expensive studio musicians began to wane, as they could be employed to cut just one rhythm for a host of performers to record over. In the preceding years the session musicians were employed on a daily basis to record a selection of rhythms for a variety of producers and studios. The life of the rhythm is reliant on its catchiness, 'danceability', record sales, radio play and foremost its acceptance with dancehall crowds. Furthermore, if the rhythm is able to stand the test of time it will be replicated by other producers, who will cut their own 'lick' of the rhythm, usually maintaining familiar musical phrases and samples that the original piece had employed (Manuel & Marshall, 2006).<sup>9</sup>

During the eighties deejays reached the acclaim of their singing counterparts, on 7' record and also in live sound system dances. They chatted freely on rhythms that were updated versions of what are commonly referred to as 'dancehall staples' due to their familiarity and popularity with dancehall audiences. From the late seventies through the early eighties a considerable amount of dancehall tracks were built on roughly six or eight foundation Studio One rhythms.<sup>10</sup> What is noteworthy is that these rhythms continue to be re-used up until the present day, with some of the rhythms featuring in over several hundred different recordings, spanning a number of decades whilst appearing on a myriad of record labels. Furthermore, Barrow and Dalton (2004) claim that "by 1983, indeed it was unusual for anyone to have a Jamaican hit employing a completely original rhythm track" (p.275). By and large the main reason for the use of the old rhythms was economic, due to the fact that the

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<sup>9</sup> Studio One rhythms were the most copied or 'versioned' in Jamaica for many years until the mid nineties when the studio owner Coxson Dodd employed a New York lawyer to enforce the copyrights and ensure that publishing rights were returning to its rightful owner.

<sup>10</sup> Some of these staples from 1967 include 'Real Rock', 'Nanny Goat' and 'Never let Go'. While, 1968 yielded such gems as 'Heavenless', 'African Beat' and 'Full Up' (Manuel & Marshall, 2006; Barrow & Dalton, 2004).

rhythms were well known to musicians, thus reducing expensive studio rehearsal time. Also if the record buying public were acquainted with the rhythm, then its purchase was more likely to occur as it was familiar to them.

### **Deejay Dominance**

The passing of Bob Marley in 1981 changed the direction, influence and understanding of reggae music on a global scale. It created a huge vacuum to fill by other reggae entertainers who had trouble dealing with the expectations of the world's media and reggae buying public as their appearance, content and charisma failed to make inroads into mainstream U.S and European chart success. At the beginning of the eighties Jamaica bore the brunt of the free market policies endorsed by Seaga that coincided with 'Reganomics' and 'Thatcherism' which focused on the 'trickle down effect' of neo-liberal economic reforms. As previously mentioned the harsh economic conditions imposed by the global financial institutions resulted in cuts to social spending, health provision and ever increasing costs of food to the Jamaican populace. These internal and external influences amounted in dancehall music becoming more concerned with the local, as Jamaica struggled with the economic constraints of open markets and capitalism (Hope, 2006a; Barrow & Dalton, 2004).

This decade highlighted the individual deejay's who all wanted attention, fame and a share of the spoils. Many would adopt monikers and act out film or movie characters and take on that persona. Hence the musical space comprised of the 'Lone Ranger', 'General Echo', 'Captain Sinbad', 'Clint Eastwood', 'Charlie Chaplin', 'Ranking Joe', 'John Wayne' and 'Yellowman' among others. These characters were obsessed with not only themselves, but their image with the record buying public and dancehall audiences who would shower them with praise and recognition wherever they played. The success of the deejay was reliant on their ability to not only 'ride the rhythm' but to articulate and communicate topical issues, trends and

fashions (Hebdige, 2003; Barrow & Dalton, 2004; Hope, 2006a). Due to the competition for recording contracts and stage shows, turnover was rapid and the Jamaican dancehall crowd would let a performer know in no uncertain terms that they were no good, out of time, or not up with the play.<sup>11</sup>

### **Yellowman 'Mr Slackness'**

Of all the deejays that moved in and out of the sound system scene, one stood out for a number of reasons. Winston 'Yellowman' Foster became immensely popular in Jamaica and was known as 'King Yellow' and crowned 'King of the Dancehall' throughout the period 1980-1984. This fact is quite remarkable considering his humble upbringings, and that as an orphan albino, he was relegated to the lowest form in the Jamaican class based social system (Barrow & Dalton, 2004). Nonetheless, Yellowman used his looks and status as points of humour and proclaimed himself as being 'Mr Sexy', irresistible, attractive and sexually desirable to female dancehall patrons. Initially he was booed off the stage by the unreceptive audiences, but as he worked on his repertoire and his confidence grew he became accepted and extremely popular. His combination of catchy, witty and highly sexual lyrical proclamations identified traits of inner city life and marked a notable change in the dancehall culture of Jamaica.<sup>12</sup>

Not only was Yellowman sharp and articulate, he employed unsophisticated language in a way that brought attention on himself by describing his relationships with women, sex and money as opposed to more serious cultural matters that had been the focus of the previous decade (Hope, 2006a). Notwithstanding both the Jamaican elite and the Rastafarian inspired cultural singers openly expressed their

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<sup>11</sup> Crowd frustrations were displayed verbally and by the projecting of objects onto the stage such as stones and bottles to further unsettle a nervous or unskilled performer.

<sup>12</sup> Some slack titles from Yellowman's huge repertoire include: 'Give mi vagina', 'Love fat thing', 'Lost mi lover', 'Cocky did a hurt me', 'Wreck a pum pum' and 'Morning ride'.

displeasure for this new style of music that was making serious inroads into contemporary Jamaican popular culture. Yellowman's achievements yielded plenty of aspiring imitators who adopted his vocal style and delivery (as opposed to his looks) who 'rapped and chatted' through the course of the decade. His success also highlighted an individual's determinism and inner strength to beat the odds in becoming a superstar, while rising against oppression, poverty, childhood neglect and the effects of being a social outsider.

As it was the deejay's role to inform and entertain dancehall patrons, their lyrical material became more lightweight in counteraction to the tough economic hardships many were experiencing and became chiefly concerned with entertaining topics. In the dominant male environment stories around love won/love lost, sexual ability and promiscuity became the hot topics in the dancehall. Closely related though in no preference were subject matters concerned with material possessions (many entertainers adorned themselves with gold jewellery), travel, friends, guns and local happenings. Stolzoff (2000) elaborates that during the eighties Jamaican people embraced a new style of entertainment that "celebrated consumerism, sexuality, the gunplay of gangsters and the local" (p.99). This form of entertainment became widely known among reggae purveyors and followers as 'slackness' with its main preoccupation with sexually explicit lyrics. The Jamaican dancehall has always been dominated by males, and this perspective was duly enforced by the practice of slackness which reduced women to lowly forms of sexual interest for male arousal and entertainment.

### **Digital revolution**

In early 1985 a rhythm was built by two entertainers on a Casio programmable keyboard, it became known as 'Sleng Teng' and changed the face of Jamaican music for ever. It marked another milestone in the direction of Jamaican music, as Jamaica embraced digital technology with a passion. The global popularity and phenomenon

of this digital rhythm allowed the original producer King Jammy to invest in a multitude of further versions with a diverse array of deejays and singers, and to continue the success with the hungry record buying public. In true Jamaican fashion other rival producers cut their own takes or slight variations of the rhythm.

Moreover, this breakthrough had an immense impact on both musicians and large recording studios, as they were suddenly no longer required by many of the older producers. Musicians with real training and experience abruptly became redundant and a number of record studios simply closed their doors. The success of the 'Sleng Teng' ensured that many producers simply shelved their non-digital rhythms in favour of computerised ones. What's more a large number of traditional reggae fans were appalled at this digital development and viewed it as a mere phase (Barrow & Dalton, 2004). This was not to be, and as a result of the digital breakthrough record producers sprang up literally on every street corner, often with no understanding of the music business or knowledge of arranging music or song writing. Hence you had plumbers, builders, clerks, and taxi drivers all claiming to be record producers as it became affordable and relatively easy to construct a rhythm in 'backyard' studios or houses that possessed a programmable keyboard. Deejays and singers had much more choice of the rhythms they could perform over, and producers and studios could experiment with techniques, beats and rhythms.

The ever changing face of Jamaican music hit another milestone with the popularity of the deejay and their articulate lyrical skills during the early eighties. However a change in government, the passing of Bob Marley and severe economic conditions led the deejay's to comment on more humorous and light weight material. This was lapped up by a receptive Jamaican public, who enjoyed this deviation from more confronting and pressing matters on hand. This heralded the emergence of deejay Yellowman and the birth of 'slackness' which permeated and infused itself as part of the Jamaican soundscape for years to come. New technology ensured that as

opposed to music production being in the hands of a few was available to numerous musical enthusiasts, who could explore new styles and techniques. The next chapter looks at the development of the slackness genre and how it manages to sustain itself, in amongst challenges from decent society, the elite and the standards authority.

## CHAPTER 8: SEXY BODY GAL

### Slackness, Gender and Sexuality

As mentioned earlier, forays into sexually recorded material have been a feature of Jamaican music for many years. Even though the genre received notoriety, exposure and popularity during the early eighties through such protagonists as the lewd Yellowman and the late General Echo (also known as Ranking Slackness); recordings from the sixties ska period were equally as forthcoming.<sup>1</sup> Even through the conscious roots period of the seventies, the odd risqué tune would appear now and then, that counter acted the dominant cultural material of the day. However debate exists around the word play of the exotic sensuality and the sexual/slack songs that have been written about in this time period. How much different are they from today's sexual out pourings and meaningless desires? For example in 1973 Bob Marley acknowledged and displayed his preference for a 'downtown girl' and the no strings, good times approach in 'Kinky Reggae':

*I went downtown*

*I saw Miss Brown*

*She had brown sugar*

*All over her boogawooga*

*I think I might join the fun*

*But I had to hit and run*

*See I just cant settle down*

*In a kinky part of town*

(The Wailers, 'Kinky Reggae', 1973)

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<sup>1</sup> Examples from the mid sixties from later luminaries include 'suggestive' material from the likes of Prince Buster 'Rough Rider', Lee Perry 'Doctor Dick', Jackie Opel 'Push Wood' and The Wailers 'Pussy Galore'.

In Carolyn Cooper's (2004) seminal piece on dancehall culture 'Sound Clash' she states that there are "obvious points of intersection between old school reggae and dancehall" (p.81). These days the ideas and dialogue surrounding sex and sexuality are represented and are more illustrative, graphic and less restrained, than what was displayed in the past. Talented and successful early dancehall deejay Johnny Ringo remarked to Lesser (2008) that the female dancehall participants loved the slackness talk, especially when it was directed toward them. Veteran cultural deejay Ranking Joe also commented that slackness in the early eighties was more humorous, fun and less vulgar and explicit than what is voiced and displayed currently in the dancehall (Lesser, 2008).<sup>2</sup> The period from the early eighties through till the mid nineties heralded an unprecedented focus on carnal matters and sexuality in particular. In 1995, Beenie Man profoundly displays his preference for the sexual abilities of a downtown ghetto girl, in his song 'Slam' (slang for sex):

*Gi mi di gyal dem wid di wickedest slam (sex)*

*Di kind ah gyal who know how fi love up she man*

*Man if yuh want fi di get di medal*

*Yu haffi get a slam from a real ghetto gyal*

(Beenie Man, 'Slam', 1995)

### **Ghetto Feminism**

Throughout the ensuing decades that highlighted a number of musical shifts, cultural directions and lyrical pre-occupations the notion and discourse related to topics concerning a sexual nature has never really waned from the dancehall or reggae entertainers for that matter. In the early nineties dancehall star Shabba Ranks was often targeted by moral and religious groups for his overtly sexually graphic lyrics. It could be suggested that the middle class felt threatened by Rank's

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<sup>2</sup> One might disagree here with Ranking Joe's account, as one of his tunes from 1980 was titled 'Big Long Cock' which needs little explanation or detailed analysis.

outward celebration of his sexual politics, and viewed it as being akin to destabilising their moral 'social space' (Cooper, 2004). Moreover, Ranks became immensely successful and was able to benefit from a lucrative recording contract from a U.S major, which highlights the fact that if there was no market for this type of material, he would not be able to succeed. In addition Barrow and Dalton (2004) assert that it is largely Jamaican women who purchase these sexually explicit tunes. Namely they argue that women are "able to assert some sort of power" (p.315) over men and the continual recording of sexually explicit material by men suggests that they are uneasy about this challenge to their 'dominant' societal position. This viewpoint is also supported in the Jamaican context by Cooper (2004) in that this material "affirms the sexual power of women" (p.103).

Ideologically, this can be further illustrated by the steady rise and popularity over the past twenty years of what is known as 'ghetto feminism' (Thomas, 2004).<sup>3</sup> This distinguishes the role that women play in the dancehall, as well as perform in Jamaican society and how these women failed to incorporate or assimilate middle class gender ideals into their world view and way of life. As the atmosphere of the dancehall is often sexually charged due to the large prominence and display of women in various regalia and poses; it is the women (even though they are at the mercy of the male gaze) who flaunt, display, flirt and ultimately decide who they want to be with (Hope, 2006a). As a result it is the women over the men who take their self-presentation more seriously in the dancehall space. Often female dancehall regalia will consist of lavish costumes featuring 'bare as you dare' outfits, impressive wigs, conspicuous jewellery and prominent make up accompanied by the consumption of expensive beverages. Of note, these outfits and hairstyles will frequently change and be updated reflecting wealth and social mobility for some.

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<sup>3</sup> For further explanation of the term 'ghetto feminism' and the rise of the lower class working women in Jamaica that challenge the male and often white established social order, see Thomas (2004), Pinnock (2007) and Cooper (2004).

## **Masculinity**

Nonetheless, dancehall culture developed in its early inception, according to Hope (2006a) as “a predominately masculine space under masculine power and control” (p.77). This was illustrated in the amount of male entertainers, compared to female ones and also the representative gender imbalance in relation to male/female dancehall promoters, producers, and managers. The route of these imbalances lie in the post colonial (re)construct of Jamaican society, which is held in place by a patriarchal framework built and maintained around the social organisation of society. The dominant Eurocentric values seen and adhered to in Caribbean societies have been instilled in Jamaica since the days of slavery and plantation rule (Thomas, 2004; Pinnock, 2007). Consequently hierarchies have been formed around the notions and social processes concerning race, class and gender.

Prevalent in Jamaican society are the darker skinned people who often reside in the crowded and impoverished inner cities and have been traditionally “situated at the base of Jamaica’s race/colour/class structure” (Hope, 2006a, p. 45). Consequently, the men who reside in these areas are more prone to displaying their masculine traits, as they are limited in terms of gaining social mobility and economic power through conventional norms. Men of lesser socio-economic mobility and who have restricted access to symbolic material wealth and power such as fast cars, money, jewellery, property, flashy clothes and the like will be more direct and pronounced in their sexuality, availability and their sexual ability. Some of these men will also attempt to dominate women in this context to serve their needs and enforce their masculine power. In the lower class space of the dancehall this is ritualised and practised with slack, vulgar and overtly sexual lyrics and explicit dance moves.

The conservative political and social order held in high esteem by the elite, is thrown into chaos by the expressive and sexually charged expressionism of the lower classes that frequent and celebrate in dancehall revelry (Pinnock, 2007; Hope, 2006a).

Therefore, for those people with higher socio-economic status the space of the dancehall and its ensuring brand of popular culture mark the point of destabilising the dominating cultural, social and economic ideologies present in modern day Jamaica.

### **Lady Saw-Queen of Slackness**

Lady Saw (Marion Hall) also referred to as 'The First Lady of Dancehall' and the 'Queen of Slackness' originally started out as a cultural artist. However after receiving luke warm audience responses and little chart success, she gained widespread notoriety and exposure for challenging the slack male dancehall deejays at their own game. Lady Saw's change in focus was primarily for economical reasons as opposed to ideological ones, and this career path has endured negative publicity and has also resulted in her being charged a number of times for the use of indecent language (Hope, 2006a; Cooper, 2004).<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, like a number of other multitalented Jamaican dancehall entertainers Lady Saw can switch easily between characters by incorporating socially conscious lyrics, which confuses some of her morally abiding critics. Some of her more recent titles are concerned with topical and personal subjects including relationships, infertility and miscarriages. Also material concerning religion ('Glory to God') and safe sex ('Condom') appear in her repertoire alongside the odd inclusion of a country and western ballad. This versatility suggests she is more than a one dimensional dancehall artist. Regardless Lady Saw is widely acknowledged as the 'Queen of Slackness' due to her openly sexually explicit live performances and controversial lyrics aimed squarely at confronting the male dancehall audience and middle class (Hope, 2006a; Barrow & Dalton, 2004).

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<sup>4</sup> Some of Lady Saw's more risqué titles from her catalogue include: 'Stab out the Meat', 'Life without Dick', 'Want it tonight' and 'Best Pum Pum' (Vagina).

Her arrival in the mid nineties signalled an unprecedented and direct approach related to sex and sexuality, that originating from a woman was hard to take for many middle class Jamaican citizens. At the conclusion of her hallmark 1994 appearance at Reggae Sunsplash, Montego Bay Lady Saw was the talk of the airwaves, print media, talk shows and public spaces. An example from her repertoire that raised a few eyebrows was 'Stab out mi meat':

*Mi hear you can grind good and can fuck straight*

*Stab out mi meat, stab out mi meat*

*The big hood [penis] you have a mad gal outa street*

*Stab out mi meat*

(Lady Saw, 'Stab out mi Meat', 1994)

Her show on Dancehall Night ignited the crowd, who lapped up the slack talk and erotic performance and consequently demanded more. According to one reviewer from the Gleaner newspaper, Lady Saw's exhibition in comparison, made Yellowman look like a boy scout (Cooper, 2004). The performance drew discussion from all corners and fuelled not only the class debate, but encouraged a re-thinking of women's role in society and as entertainers. Middle class morals and values declared that Lady Saw was too confrontational, lewd and counteracted against decent Christian society.<sup>5</sup> Yet no mention or comparison was made of the lyrical content of some of the male entertainers who made open references to guns, encouraged lewd sexual acts and disrespected women during their appearances. Therefore double standards were being employed, as the ethics 'police' and moral watchdogs were failing to examine the issues whole heartedly and from a balanced gender perspective.

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<sup>5</sup> As a result councillors from the St. James Parish Council (which oversees Montego Bay) wanted to ban the raunchy Lady Saw from future performances in their Parish (Stolzoff, 2000). A ban was imposed, though it was not successful or long term.

As Lady Saw was one of the first woman entertainers to challenge male perspectives on women and their role in Jamaican society, she 'opened the door' for other female performers, but at the same time incurred the wrath of 'decent' society along the way. Stolzoff (2000) suggests that because Lady Saw is dark skinned and was raised in poor circumstances her rise to the top and immense popularity is seen as a social threat to the upper classes, which see their status as privileged and well earned and guard against new arrivals. Problematically for them Lady Saw is a both a product and a "representative of downtown culture" (p.242), who has become financially independent and successful as a female dancehall artist. In challenging the critics of the social and moral high ground, Lady Saw wrote the evocative and poignant track 'What is Slackness':

*Want to know what slackness is?  
I'll be the witness to that  
Unu come off a mi back  
Society a blame Lady Saw fi de system create  
When culture did a clap dem never let me through the gate  
Now as me seh 'sex'  
Dem want fi jump on mi case  
But pick the beam out of your eye  
Before you chat in a mi face  
Slackness-is when the road want fi fix  
Slackness-when the government break dem promise  
Slackness-when politicians issue out guns  
So the two party a shoot one another down  
(Lady Saw, 'What is Slackness', 1996)*

As opposed to being concerned with her lyrical content and performance, Lady Saw is arguing that the parish councillors, politicians and decent citizens should be concentrating on more pressing and relevant social issues, such as the real obscenity

of letting the country run into ruin and disrepute through poor policy implementation, lack of vision and continual support of gangsters. As a clever and witty lyricist Lady Saw reconstructs the range of the word 'slackness' to point the finger at the state, and to declare that slackness "becomes a public matter of communal accountability" (Cooper, 2004, p.112). Saw also clarifies in the song that when she chatted topical and cultural lyrics it was met with no response, so she opted for the more provocative, controversial and entertaining path of slackness. Lady Saw paved the way for a number of other female entertainers to confront the male deejays derogative lyrical content and middle class patriarchal viewpoints<sup>6</sup>. Therefore the female entertainers "refusal to accede to traditional heterosexual constructions where women must take what they can from men signifies their empowerment from the traditional debilitating effects of patriarchy" (Pinnock, 2007, p.69). Conversely, Saw has also been at the forefront of highlighting women's rights and gender politics in Jamaican society through the auspices of music, and by practising self-determination and belief in ones abilities while in the face of prolonged criticism and personal attacks.

It could be argued that Lady Saw's continued presence, popularity and publicity has improved Jamaican women's position in society, by challenging the dominant norms and chauvinistic tendencies handed down from generation to generation and held in place by rigid social structures that serve those with socio-economic status and mobility.<sup>7</sup> The dancehall then is seen as a space for revolutionary attacks not only on perceived gender roles, but also on the traditional and Eurocentric ideologies and values held in place by the middle class. Therefore this challenge can be another example of dancehall/reggae music being employed as a social movement to instil

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<sup>6</sup> These include Sasha, Spice, Etana, Macka Diamond and Ce'cile to name a few.

<sup>7</sup> This ideological shift in the traditional business and social structure is partly due to a large number of women being self-employed 'local' importers and business entrepreneurs concerning a wide range of products that are often related to the activities of the dancehall space.

change in Jamaican society in this example for the betterment of women. Over the ensuing years a number of women came to occupy positions of prestige and importance in Jamaican society and are actively involved in the music and dancehall industry. As a result, this has to a degree improved women's social position and financial standing in Jamaican society and over time Lady Saw has been tolerated and accepted in general by wider society.

The dancehall space and the societal position that males occupy is continually challenged, and is increasingly reflecting the success, strength and determination of women (Cooper, 2004; Hope, 2006a). The next chapter discusses the cultural exchanges and transnational flows between Jamaica and migrant communities of the U.S and the U.K. Reggae music alongside other cultural commodities was practised and consumed by new residents and began to permeate cultural boundaries and spaces. Dancehall in these new locations was replicated and fuelled by globalisation and consumerism, and have resulted in a blend of beats, styles and fashions different but similar to what was emanating from Jamaica.

## CHAPTER 9: BROOKLYN AND JAMAICA

### Cultural Flows

Due to the similarities in talking styles or ‘rapping’ over instrumental beats or rhythm tracks the emergence of a cultural flow was becoming more visible between both the dancehall and hip-hop communities during the early nineties. A cross over in both lyrical and rhythmic styles, beats, fashions and subject matter had been shared throughout the seventies between the two genres.<sup>1</sup> Trans-national exchange alongside ‘creative dialogue’ between Kingston, New York and Miami has resulted in dancehall becoming immensely popular with African Americans, more so than roots reggae was ever able to achieve (Stolzoff, 2000). Nonetheless one could suggest that this two way relationship was initially developed by the earlier work of Bob Marley, who was aiming to raise the awareness of Black America and empower those people through the auspices of music that recognised their African origin and culture. However, Stephens (1998) argues that Marley’s popularity and status stemmed from contemporary trans-nationalism, through the “growth of international capital and the rise of the multinational corporation” (p.141). Increased migration and cultural exchanges between the Caribbean and the U.S have also supported this idea.

As a result this ‘new’ reggae/dancehall/hip-hop audience may be, to some degree, aware of this earlier connection and may possibly be open to hearing contemporary developments in Jamaican music; although with a completely different take that the previous generation had encountered. Marley’s music, political legacy and social and cultural awareness have had varying degrees of influence for contemporary producers of hip-hop, as they can construct an idea of the “revolutionary 1960s and

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<sup>1</sup> One of the earliest New York DJ’s Kool Herc was of Jamaican parentage and recognised as the was first to play records on two simultaneously playing turntables. Additionally, Herc also established a sound system in his Bronx neighbourhood and encouraged acquaintances to sing or chat on the microphone over the top of instrumental records.

1970s both nostalgically and politically” to understand the present (Stephens, 1998, p.163).<sup>2</sup>

### **Kool Herc**

In the early seventies Jamaican born DJ Kool Herc (Clive Campbell), started playing parties in his West Bronx, New York neighbourhood. These street parties became legendary over time due to Herc’s ability to select great records, his skills on the microphone and most importantly the size and clarity of his father’s sound system- which no one could match. Herc was re-appropriating what he grew up with in Trench Town, Kingston into his high density New York neighbourhood, but the main difference was in the style of music being played.<sup>3</sup> Due to the community demographic Herc concentrated on funk and soul breaks, which lead to the beginning of the musical genre known as ‘breaks’ or ‘breakbeat’. This entailed the playing of the highly percussive instrumental breaks on twin record players and switching between the two, as opposed to the single turntable used in traditional sound system use (Barrow & Dalton, 2004; Hebdige, 2003). Kool Herc wanted to recreate the same ‘vibe’ he had encountered at dances back home in West Kingston. He achieved this by employing a heavyweight sound that was accompanied by Master of Ceremonies MC ‘Coke La Rock’s’ spoken word/rap. Coke La Rock pumped up Herc’s crowds by developing his own catch phrases, rhymes, slang and dance moves (Chang, 2007).

Herc’s reputation grew immensely and within a few years he was the number one deejay in the Bronx. Herc viewed himself as ‘the people’s choice’ as he was accompanied by the powerful sound system, quality music and a large assortment of

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<sup>2</sup> This analysis could be viewed as problematic, as Stephens (1998) suggests that “the construction of reggae music in the U.S today is caught in a dialectic between the cultural attitudes of hip-hop on the one hand, and world music on the other” (p.165).

<sup>3</sup> Early on Herc observed that the party goers were more interested in dancing to the soul and funk records, as opposed to Jamaican music he was more familiar with.

dancers and rappers who followed him everywhere he played. By 1976 Herc was playing in night clubs (as opposed to street block parties) to a regular paying clientele. However, by 1977 other acquaintances and followers (such as Grandmaster Flash) had caught up with Herc's esteem and many possessed their own sound systems and had their own individual neighbourhood followings. These acquaintances were not only more flamboyant and skilful behind the turntables, they had crews of rappers and dancers that ignited crowds anywhere they played, and they eventually lured Herc's crowds away from the Bronx (Chang, 2007). Kool Herc is viewed as part of the hip-hop trinity that founded the hip-hop movement and the associated global culture (Chang, 2007).<sup>4</sup> Herc's narrative illustrates the transformation of cultural and social norms from his 'home' country to the newly adopted place of residence. Employing Jamaican sound system techniques and methods with the aim of building and maintaining neighbourhood connections and developing 'cultural production', Herc revolutionised the way U.S deejays went about their business (Stephens, 1998). In the process he introduced rapping and free-styling techniques over the top of instrumental breaks, which became the predecessor for the hip-hop movement/generation that has engulfed the world over.<sup>5</sup>

### **Consumerism and Globalisation**

The labour orientated movement emphasising work and opportunities in the U.S ensured that many Jamaicans arrived in search of wealth and regular employment in stark comparison to what was offered in Jamaica. As a result of this diaspora, the market for reggae became more scattered across Western economies (Chude-Sokei, 1997). These new residents identified the need to keep in touch with their home

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<sup>4</sup> According to Chang (2007) the other luminaries of the 'hip-hop trinity' are Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaataa.

<sup>5</sup> Barrow & Dalton (2004) argue that when many contemporary hip-hop luminaries are asked about the relationship and influence of reggae on hip hop, few acknowledge its existence and influence. Even though many of these entertainers would have grown up in the described neighbourhoods and would have seen and heard the sound systems presence.

country through the medium of reggae music which highlighted local and indigenous trends and cultural developments. Primarily in the Jamaican context this was achieved by the discourse of the sound systems, which materialise in communities wherever Jamaicans would re-locate to and significantly became a central social point for the dissemination, production and articulation of Jamaican roots and culture. They were viewed as culturally authentic by these migrants and the sound system culture supported a host of related neighbourhood businesses that specialised in either electronics, construction, Jamaican food, drinks, hairdressers and fashion boutiques to name a few. For the residents of these communities the idea of 'home' became even more visible, pronounced and patriotic.

Even though the music being produced in Jamaica was distinctly Jamaican (and for Jamaica) the amount of sales and the size of the Jamaican communities abroad ensured that some of the music was "produced by and for people who perpetually circulated through communities in London, New York, Miami, Toronto and back to Jamaica" (Chude-Sokei, 1997, p.198).<sup>6</sup> Moreover, authentic Jamaican sound systems and a large number of entertainers and musicians would regularly travel between these migrant communities, performing, transposing ideas, tastes, and trends to consumers located at home and abroad. Globalisation, labour market movements and people's mobility have not only influenced, but fuelled both reggae and dancehall culture, as it now is a blend of rhythms and influences located among the wider global context. Additionally Cattermole (2004) asserts that "reggae has transcended geographical and cultural boundaries, and can be said to have multiple homes, or places of performance and consumption" (p.55).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Indeed a number of recording studios, record labels and record shops sprung up alongside sound systems in various towns and cities across Canada, the U.K and the U.S during the seventies.

<sup>7</sup> See Alvarez (2008) for discussion on globalisation, identity and the reggae diaspora concerning indigenous peoples from North America, the Pacific, Australia, and Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Indeed this diverse global landscape of cultures, languages and ways of seeing the world have influenced and strengthened the correlation between hip-hop and dancehall music. This so called 'marriage' between the genres is ultimately strengthened by the children of first and second generation Jamaican migrants being raised in the U.S on a diet of colourful global styles, fashions and rhythms. New York is seen largely as the hub for the deployment of cross over styles and this is also represented by a number of small independent record labels whom incorporate both genres into their productions (Hebdige, 2003; Barrow & Dalton, 2004). As a result a number of dancehall artists have signed successful (and not so successful deals) with major recording companies and have to a degree diluted both their content and language to appeal to Western consumers with the likelihood of increasing their profile and income.<sup>8</sup> In the early nineties, Shabba Ranks who became one of the first dancehall artists to sign with a major U.S label, posed somewhat of a problem for industry executives as they struggled to deal with his authenticity and rawness in the cross over market; while at the same time maintaining his original hardcore dancehall audience (Stephens, 1998).

### **Cross over Appeal**

Barrow & Dalton (2004) argue from a reggae perspective that "in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the music of the Jamaican dancehall has moved even closer to U.S hip-hop, both in the rhythms employed and the lyrics dropped" (p.433). This has ensured continued popularity in the cross over markets that feature collaborations between hip-hop/r&b artists with their dancehall counterparts. Among some of the more famous partnerships encountered were dancehall sensation Beenie Man teamed up with Janet Jackson; dancehall singer Baby Cham with r&b diva Alicia Keys; dancehall artist

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<sup>8</sup> Often the major labels sign up the next 'big thing' and then due to a number of reasons when the release fails to sell large amounts of units, the artist is rapidly dropped from the label. Jamaican dancehall artists who have experienced this behaviour are: Bounty Killer, Tony Rebel, Beenie Man, Buju Banton, Danny Red, and Mr Vegas to name a few.

Shabba Ranks and hip-hop legend KRS- 1; New York dancehall artist Shaggy with r&b star Akon; and Sean Paul collaborating with hip-hop gangster 50 Cent.<sup>9</sup>

These collaborations increase the exposure of the dancehall artists, but at what cost to the creativity of dancehall music? Primarily, enhanced exposure and publicity may lead to more record sales, contracts, sponsorship and tours for the artists involved. Nonetheless one has to question the driving reason behind the achievement of cross over success and exposure into the U.S market. The dancehall artists that have been presented with this 'opportunity' make the most of it and are comfortable with locating and re-inventing themselves for that particular audience. Also due to the availability and rapid turnover of dancehall performers in Jamaica, artists are quick to grasp what monetary opportunities come their way, as overseas income fares much better compared than what can be earned in Jamaica.

Confusingly for some, dancehall artists are equally as comfortable switching from 'one hat to another' in reference to singing about dancehall preoccupations one minute; then the next recording conscious or uplifting material for the mindful foreign roots market. One could suggest that the reason why these modern day 'Rasta converts' (such as Buju Banton, Sizzla, Capleton and Beenie Man) still occasionally resort to recording slack tunes is so that they can continue their popularity with that segment of the dancehall audience that appreciates the controversial and hardcore approach (Stolzoff, 2000). Thus their flexibility gives them more creative freedom and expression (depending on how they feel) while ensuring wider market appeal. Global markets have fuelled this approach of Jamaican artists being looked upon as 'all rounder's' whereby, they are comfortable

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<sup>9</sup> Additionally, crossover into the mainstream pop market still presents itself as another possibility for dancehall artists, and has been achieved by Lady Saw who recorded with band No Doubt in 2003 resulting in a Grammy award for their combination.

moving between local sub-genres and pleasing the needs of the global audience by incorporating hip-hop/r&b elements into their repertoire. From a marketers perspective possessing the ability to record in a number of different styles ensures your audience and income is much more diverse.<sup>10</sup>

In fusing the themes of consumerism and globalisation together, the next chapter mixes and mingles the local with the global. In the nineties similarities were shared between the hip-hop and reggae fraternities as they indulged in gun lyrics, gangsterism and slackness. The reduction of social services and patronage politics in Jamaica led to inner city people becoming more reliant on their community leaders for support. This climate insured people sought income from the informal economy such as crime and drugs, as opposed to the state or from regular employment. Therefore dancehall music emerging from these areas reflected the wants, hopes and desires of its residents. The next chapter explores the complexity of the relationship between the dancehall and the inner city and how its residents coped with limited social assistance or support from the government.

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<sup>10</sup> In 1995 New York based dancehall/crossover artist Shaggy had one of his songs ('Boombastic') used for a Levi jeans television commercial, and as a result was able to top the pop charts simultaneously in both the U.S and U.K (Barrow & Dalton, 2004). Shaggy's success in the pop market draws criticism from both dancehall authorities and so called roots experts who both question his legitimacy, focus, loyalty and musical direction.

## CHAPTER 10: BORDER CLASH

### Gun Lyrics and Gangsters

Another example of the cultural flow between the U.S and Jamaica was the arrival of 'gangsta rap' in the U.S which deviated from more conscious and self-empowering cultural hip-hop material. This was duly replicated in the Jamaican dancehall with 'gun lyrics' during the late eighties and early nineties. It was complimented with the 'fast chat' or 'ragga' style which resulted in the song content being chatted so fast the lyrics were almost incomprehensible to the average listener. In particular the Jamaican use of patois and slang further emphasises and identifies the perspective of the 'local' whereby it is "produced, consumed and enjoyed in the ritual spaces of the dancehall" (Stephens, 1998, p.162).

From the early eighties firearms became the weapon of choice and protection for the inner city youths and gangs. Accessibility of firearms on the island was increased as more people sought employment through the informal economy, and the gun became renowned as a source of power "in the male dominated space of dancehall culture" (Hope, 2006a, p.89). Jamaican deejays such as Ninjaman, Shabba Ranks, Supercat, Mad Cobra and Cutty Ranks endorsed automatic weaponry and hand guns (often appearing at live stage shows brandishing firearms).<sup>1</sup> These 'badman entertainers' would also frequently name check gun/gang 'posses' both in recorded material and in live appearances. In the live stage shows this form of acknowledgement was regarded as paying respects to the local 'community dons', area leaders, posses and their supporters (Johnson, 2005; Stanley-Niaah, 2004;

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<sup>1</sup> This pre-occupation with weapons dates back as far as the ska/rock steady period when ex-policeman turned record producer Duke Reid would enter a dance with two loaded rifles draped over his shoulders. In the seventies the firing of blanks or shooting of guns into the air at a dance would signify a favourite or popular song, that would have to be re-played from the start.

Hope, 2006a).<sup>2</sup> In an example from 1991 Cobra salutes or 'big ups' two of the most feared 'posses':

*You t'ink a little gun*

*Bad boy sit down pon*

*Respect bad boy from all direction*

*Me want hear the rude boy dem gun a clean*

*Me want hear when dem change the magazine*

*Me want to hear Junglist gun dem a clean* (Junglist posse-based in Kingston)

*Me want hear shower man gun dem a clean* (Shower posse-based in New York, Miami and Kingston)

*Bad boys, yes we run the scene*

*Nah run when we hear police siren*

(Cobra, 'T'ink a little Gun', 1991).

Cobra also demonstrates the attitude of these modern day gangsters as they have little time or respect for any form of authority and in many cases act above the accordance of the law. Furthermore, it highlights the control over the inner city neighbourhoods the dons have, whereby permission must be obtained in many areas from the don before one may enter or conduct any business dealings within the vicinity. In this context the dons, community/area leaders operate in what is termed a garrison community. These largely exist in the inner city areas of Kingston and Spanish Town. Figueroa (as cited in Johnson, 2005) describes the garrison as a "totalitarian social space, a political stronghold and a veritable fortress in which the lives of those who live within its boundaries are effectively controlled" (p.582).

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<sup>2</sup> The 'Don' in the Jamaican context is known as a "title of distinction afforded to men who are considered to be of high social, political and economic status in Jamaica" (Hope, 2006b, p.129).

### **The Inner City 'Dons'**

As mentioned previously, patronage politics that featured prominently throughout Jamaica in the seventies and eighties relied on the block voting and support garnered by the placement of inner Kingston communities and neighbourhoods. However the implementation of the SAP's and rigid economic constraints during the 1990s led to for the most part the patronage/clientelist politics being phased out. The lifting of economic constraints in the hope of 'freeing up' the market and the corresponding reduction in state support in the form of material resources has left a void in the downtown settlements (Sives, 2002; Johnson, 2005). Thus financial sustenance from local politicians has been replaced with support, protection and material benefits by the area don. A number of commentators assert that frequently in the garrison communities the dons distribute food and clothes on a regular basis and as a result the recipients strongly support their respective don and assist them in maintaining their power and control (Hope, 2006b).<sup>3</sup>

As a result of the introduced neo-liberal measures, the informal economy throughout Jamaica has bloomed. This includes such illegal practices as drug dealing, fraud, trafficking of firearms, money laundering, theft and extortion. Such an environment has enlarged and augmented the don's power, excessive wealth and status over their urban communities and political electorates. Often the roles of 'politician don' and 'drug don' are blurred, yet around election time they re-exert their electoral position-this is often accompanied by political violence and community instability (Sives, 2002). Previously, turf wars between rival gangs were over the battle of political constituencies, yet since the early eighties the focus has shifted to protecting drug dealing territories and re-enforcing these borders against intruders and potential opponents.

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<sup>3</sup> Noel Harper the owner of the long running Killamanjaro sound system commented to Stolzoff (2000) that many dons launder their drug money through the auspices of music that might consist of owning a sound system, record shop or label. As this is a front and many of these 'community leaders' have no understanding or real interest in the music, their output often lacks creativity, vision and talent, as they have little knowledge of the music business.

The lack of opportunities, employment and earnings that is prevalent in these marginalised downtown ghetto communities result in a large amount of youths seeking out a career through entertainment. However if they fail to impress music producers or are provided with no opportunities, then for many the only option to survive is to undertake 'work' serving the informal economy. This can entail a variety of methods and options, but often the most risky and prosperous are normally those associated with crime. Since the SAP's were implemented crime in Jamaica has 'restructured', which has led to a consistent increase in the reporting of violent and fatal crimes (Hope, 2006b).<sup>4</sup>

In addition, more than half of the violent crimes practised in Jamaica are in the inner urban areas of Kingston and St Andrew, which incidentally also house the garrison communities that are routinely plagued with violence, frustration and poverty.<sup>5</sup> Since the mid eighties, a considerable number of entertainers have emerged from these inner city neighbourhoods, which in some ways can explain the prominence of violence, gun talk and slackness in dancehall music, as it reproduces these lived realities experienced by these residents. Hope (2006a) further elaborates:

The close relationship between lyrical and real violence is particularly evident within the socio-political and economic realities of the inner cities, because the lives and practices of individuals in these communities impact directly on the flood of violent symbols and messages that are emitted in the dancehall's lyrical and cultural output (p.88).

A career in crime is common for people living below the poverty line, who as a last resort often turn to illegal activities to make the ends meet. It is problematic for the youth when they see dons and their posses in their neighbourhoods profiling and

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<sup>4</sup> Sives (2002) also argues that drug trafficking become more proficient with the introduction of the SAP's.

<sup>5</sup> The garrison communities and the dons who preside over them exist in the inner cities of Kingston and Spanish Town and are non-existent in middle class and up town neighbourhoods.

modelling their proceeds obtained through crime and other means; such as the wearing of high fashion, the adorning of jewellery and driving the latest sports cars. The harshness of ghetto life incorporating a pronounced lack of opportunities, the availability and destructiveness of harsh drugs and peoples obsession with material possessions concerns many entertainers including deejay Buju Banton (Mark Myrie). In 1992 on 'How Massa God World a Run' he examines the pitfalls for ghetto residents:

*Though the poor can't afford the knowledge, dem get none*

*The rich man 'ave the dollars an no want give we some*

*Bragadociuos and boasty talk him a fling down*

*Pure 190-E Benz 'im bring down*

*Sell the most crack, cocaine, heroin an opium*

*Dem no want see ghetto youth elevate out a the slum*

*So dem give we all type a things, try turn we down*

(Buju Banton, 'How Massa God World a Run', 1992).

Furthermore, Banton suggests that these 'possessions' and recreational pursuits are not only visible and well liked by some in these areas, but they are secured in place through an established hegemony. This is reinforced and supported by the middle class who view with disdain the people who reside in the ghettos and have little sympathy for their low status and poor standard of living. Banton further states the upper and middle classes 'plan' is to keep the marginalised people where they are in society, as in some ways they are easier to control and do not pose any institutional or challenging threats to the government and elite. The wealth divide is very real in the ghetto areas and the lure of becoming an area leader or community don becomes very attractive to those growing up without basic necessities. Numerous songs have been composed that stress to the youth the importance of either becoming a dancehall singer/deejay or seeking an education, as opposed to

livelihoods determined by crime and badness. One such example is from the self-proclaimed 'King of the Dancehall' Moses 'Beenie Man' Davis who implores:

*Long time we preach and warn everyday  
Tell the ghetto youth dem, say badness don't pay  
Yes, she a put your whole life on display  
Robbing and killing and shooting everyday  
Police lock me up and young man you get slay  
Better you did cool and go turn deejay*  
(Beenie Man, 'Bury your dead', 1994).

### **Dancehall and Kingston**

The competitive and over crowded surroundings of the inner city (in particular the Kingston Metropolitan Area) accounts for 22% of the Jamaican population (579,137 residents) whom are squeezed into an area spanning roughly 8 square miles (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2009; Stanley-Niaah, 2005). A number of inner city social tensions exist alongside one another that include poverty, gangs, violence and desperation which are overseen by the dons and their legion of supporters. Yet for all its misgivings and dangerous elements the inner city is the most visually expressive, creative and rich environment for the conception and production of dancehall culture, fashion and above all music.

Dancehall has evolved and materialised since its early arrival and inception through a variety of musical forms, dance moves and so on. It is highly prized and guarded by the residents of the inner cities, who regard themselves as being aligned with the marginalised lower class. Thus its origination, ownership and consumption, is external to middle class social positions, aspirations and ideology (Stanley-Niaah, 2004; Hope, 2006a). It is then no surprise that the dancehall space is accepted and consumed by residents of these inner city communities as it reflects their own internal culture. This environment has also nurtured and fashioned many reggae

performers over the years that have challenged and protested against the social norms and expectations held in high regard by mainstream society.

During the nineties and to this day a number of dancehall entertainers wrote and sang chiefly about their experiences growing up in Kingston ghettos. These topics Hope (2006a) suggests include: “poverty and deprivation; political and gun violence; police brutality; sex, sexuality and homosexuality, self worth and importance; materialism and consumerism” (p.13).<sup>6</sup> Sadly (for many outside observers) the unifying nature of reggae music espoused earlier was replaced with dancehall glorifications, boastfulness, aggressiveness and masculine bravado. Nonetheless, one could argue that these lyrical themes and topics are only a reflection of the type of environment these people have been brought up into, and some currently reside in. Due to their inability and lack of opportunities to move beyond these circumstances, the music and associated dancehall culture that emerges belongs to these people, its organic in form and raw in nature and is celebrated as so.

For those people who reside among the heat, dust and tension the dancehall space is viewed as a way of releasing pressure and having fun by dancing and enjoying the company of friends, accompanied by a well-liked local sound system. Additionally some commentators, community leaders and dancehall promoters assert that when the community dancehall celebrations are un-restrained and expressive, the mood is buoyant and relaxed and as a result violence, crime and rivalry are almost non-existent.<sup>7</sup>

### **Reggae Tourism and Co-option**

Over the past few years the rigid class divide has been diminishing in dancehall participation. Perhaps, in part this may be due to middle class attitudes relaxing and

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<sup>6</sup> Homosexuality, reggae music and the Jamaican populace have been receiving a lot of media coverage recently, yet space restrictions will prevent this thesis from exploring this topic in detail.

<sup>7</sup> See earlier Bob Marley lyric from 1974 urging people to ‘forget their troubles and dance’.

becoming more accepting and tolerable of dancehall culture. This can be directly attributed to the co-option of reggae (and dancehall to a lesser degree) and Rastafarianism as unique Jamaican cultural tourist symbols, which are utilised to generate income to people with tourism and business interests (King & Foster, 2001). The earnings derived from reggae and dancehall industries are recognised (by the government and business associations) as being significant contributors to the local economy. Each year many tourists venture to Jamaica for the annual reggae festivals such as Reggae Sunsplash, Sumfest, Rebel Salute and Sting. In the past decade reggae music (more so than dancehall) has been used by the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) as a means of enticing people to the island. For a number of years their theme song was Bob Marley's 'One Love' which was adapted and co-opted to reflect the cultural diversity, unity and feelings of good will present in Jamaica. Apart from the adaptation and commercialisation of the song by the JTB, the lyrics were written by Marley who appropriated Curtis Mayfield's composition 'People Get Ready' in regards to coming together under the Rastafarian faith and 'living as one'. The lyrics implore the listener to:

*One Love, One Heart*

*Give thanks and praise to the Lord and I will feel all right*

*Let's get together and feel all right*

(Bob Marley, 'One Love', 1977)

Recently a number of motion pictures have also been produced in the dancehall space, such as *Dancehall Queen* (1997), *Third World Cop* (2000), *Rude Boy* (2002) and *Shottas* (2002) exposing, celebrating and confronting dancehall life and culture to audiences around the world.<sup>8</sup> Even though these movies are receiving acclaim, the middle classes in general are unhappy with this portrayal and the cultural forms

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<sup>8</sup> According to Hope (2006a) 'shottas' is a Jamaican patois/creole term which refers to "gun-toting men who are ranked lowest on the continuum of the violent masculinities that exist in inner city and garrison culture" (p.94). However a number of 'shottas' have gained notoriety and almost celebrity status in some communities.

of hedonistic self expression on show, and still associate dancehall to the darker lower classes who reside in downtown neighbourhoods. In contemporary times the Jamaican dancehall epitomises the spectacle which showcases extravagant costumes, jewellery, hairdos, and raunchy dancing alongside aggressive displays of masculine behaviour fuelled by bravado, sex, drugs and alcohol (Hope, 2006a; Stolzoff, 2000; Barrow & Dalton, 2004).

For Stanley-Niaah (2004) this amounts to a series of contradictions and dichotomies such as “slackness versus culture, mind versus body, and Africa versus Europe” (p.114). This viewpoint is also confirmed by Cooper (2004) who argues that the black working class women in Jamaican society is “rarely validated in the middle class Jamaican media, where Eurocentric norms of delicate female face and figure are privileged” (p.86). Downtown or ghetto culture is seen by those with socio-economic mobility as a threat to ‘good’ societal norms and values. These people who view themselves as more affluent, well mannered and cultured yearn for a society that has decent morals and behaviours. For these citizens the dancehall space and culture is the anti-thesis of everything they assume decent society should be comprised of, as it is raw, hedonistic, sexual, ‘in your face’ and expressive. Dancehall culture “incorporates revolutionary sites of resistance and struggle against the traditional social order” (Hope, 2006a, p.21). Due to a number of global factors (including market demand, tourism, communication and technology), the voices and images of urban Kingston and Spanish Town have reached far beyond Jamaica and inhabit a number of global spaces and places.

Throughout the eighties Seaga was under economic constraints as a result from the SAP’s enforced by the IMF and World Bank. These conditions resulted in the drying up of patronage handouts and employment for certain political constituencies. The next chapter un-packs the successful re-election of Manley’s PNP and how he subscribes to a similar political ideology endorsed by Seaga. The media portrayed

him as the 'new' Manley as he rejected his socialist sentiments and past relationships with countries whose political philosophies were deemed threatening by the U.S. In a similar vein, his view of the Rastafarians also changed and this is noteworthy as reggae music re-discovered its cultural roots in the mid nineties, despite the unreceptive local political climate and focus on the dancehall spectacle.

## CHAPTER 11: TROUBLE AGAIN

### **Manley's Fresh Ideology**

Seaga's JLP held the sway of power for eight years before Manley was re-elected to govern Jamaica in 1989. During Manley's period of absence, Jamaica had transformed itself into becoming an ally of the U.S, and benefited (in some ways) from sustained loans and support from the IMF, World Bank and other financial institutions. Even so, Jamaica under the leadership of the JLP and PNP has had to endure long periods of hegemonic control and influence over civil society with particular attention afforded to the inner city garrison communities. The two political parties through hegemony have had "the ability to contain radicalism either by absorbing it, repressing it, or ensuring that it never surfaces has been one of the strengths of the Jamaican elite" (Sives, 2002, p.69). As already shown, wider society and those people who are marginalised, harbour strong feelings toward the governing elite upper classes. The majority of Jamaicans who struggle for survival on a daily basis reside in the inner city communities, and place a fair amount of responsibility on their political constituent (or don in recent times) to provide basic necessities. This support by the political party develops relationships over time, and facilitates in engineering a sense of belonging, community spirit and hope for these citizens.

Manley was successfully able to capitalise on his friendship and support from the Rastafarian musicians during the early seventies and this led to sympathy for his socialist policies which aimed to benefit the people, rather than the individual. However when Seaga gained power, not only was the world becoming more capitalist orientated and focused on global relationships, Jamaica was experiencing huge migration to countries that were not only more economically rewarding, they were also safer and offered better prospects. In line with the paradigm of the JLP Seaga openly courted the U.S and global funding agencies and received financial

backing for development and infrastructure. This opened doors for Jamaica and provided local investment, employment and a sense of security for many.<sup>1</sup>

### **The 'New' Manley**

When Manley and the PNP won the 1989 election, Manley inherited a completely different country than what he had previously governed. For a start the labour movement was a lot weaker, in comparison to the business community who had been openly and systematically singled out during the election campaign. In the lead up to the election the PNP had spent considerable time and effort cultivating its 'new and improved' relationship with the U.S (Huber & Stephens, 1992). Manley was speaking more warmly of relations with the U.S than of Cuba, and was more prone to use language associated with the market, than with socialism. His appearance had also received a make-over, gone were the drab seventies safari suits, in were corporate business suits. It was no surprise that the international media who covered the election campaign dubbed him the 'new' Manley (Payne, 1992). Apart from these changes he was still in firm belief of retaining his "commitment to social justice and equality of opportunity", but this philosophy was to be undertaken with an approach that advocated market based principles (Panton, 1993, p.151).

In complete contrast "the policies of the new PNP government marked a sharp departure from its orientation in the 1970's and [echoed] a surprising continuity with the policies of the JLP government" (Huber & Stephens, 1992, p.77). Following instructions from the IMF the government inflicted tax increases; applied budget cuts (mostly in social spending, health and education); removed food subsidies and also devalued the currency. These economic provisions were implemented in the hope of maintaining stability in the light of the earlier introduced SAP's. However, these measures had little affect on the outcome of the economy and some

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<sup>1</sup> Yet, the global rules governing these loans and the corresponding neo-liberal strategies and SAP's impacted greatly on Jamaica by reducing state sector involvement and lessening the government's social expenditure. Consequently, this caused upheaval in Jamaica's political stability (Sives, 2002).

observers were quick to draw conclusions that Manley's policies had already been tried, tested and failed by Seaga in the mid eighties (Panton, 1993). Also the damage inflicted by Hurricane Gilbert in 1989 caused further economic and social strain on the country and as a consequence Jamaica once again failed the IMF test. In an unprecedented move to meet the IMF instalments the PNP government undertook to sell off some of the state owned assets. These events and a focus on economic growth, as opposed to more social orientated policies resulted in many hardships for Jamaicans across the board, as the currency fell to record levels. The forced currency devaluation fuelled the growth of the informal economy and black market, which according to Panton (1993) "was one of the largest in the world" (p.143).

### **Life and Debt**

Manley's change in rhetoric and philosophy also affected the early supporters of the PNP, namely the Rastafarians. In the 2007 BBC documentary 'The Story of Reggae Music' noted singer and PNP sympathiser Max Romeo details how support and belief in Manley by the Rastafarians was paramount in him gaining power in the 1972 election.<sup>2</sup> This understanding, assistance and mutual respect by both groups progressed through the seventies alongside Manley's socialist rhetoric and implementation of policies aimed at closing the gap between rich and poor. However Romeo, lamented with disbelief that once Manley was re-elected in 1989 he quickly forgot about the wants and circumstances of the Rastafarians, and viewed them with apprehension and wariness and once again they became the focus of harassment by the authorities.

Manley was more than aware of the daily struggles and social pressures that most were enduring and argued that these must be tolerated in order to break through to the other side. The other side consisted of setting up Jamaica as a viable global

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<sup>2</sup> See chapter 5 about details of the 1976 pre-election campaign, co-option of reggae concerts and Manley securing another term, as Jamaica struggled against the world markets.

exporter, which would hopefully “propel the economy into self-sustaining growth” (Payne, 2002, p.473). In Stephanie Black’s 2003 documentary ‘Life and Debt’ detailing Jamaica’s trials and tribulations with the IMF and World Bank, Manley in ill health speaks candidly and frankly. Describing the conditions and sacrifices placed upon the country by the two financial institutions with focus on globalisation and open markets, Manley clearly states that to implement the recommended policies was akin to political suicide and a grave betrayal to the nation and his people.

Yet Jamaica (as a developing country) had no choice, but to accept the terms and conditions. The aid requirements forced Jamaica to establish free trade zones and eliminate import tariffs on basically all goods entering Jamaica. Many businesses and small industries were forced to close, while the agricultural and horticultural industries had no option but to compete with cheap, and in some cases rotten and expired imports (Black, 2003).<sup>3</sup> Ordinary people from all walks of life were experiencing varying degrees of financial and social hardship. The feelings of discontent were beginning to be expressed loudly on the street, throughout the media, in recorded music and most significantly in the lower class space of the dancehall. Manley’s reluctant application of the IMF and World Bank obligations resulted in him and the PNP losing grass roots support in many political constituencies. Nonetheless, Manley still yielded charisma and immense popularity with the Jamaican people and this collective sentiment alongside his exemplary communication skills ensured that social unrest and protest was almost non-existent in some areas (Panton, 1993).<sup>4</sup> After a period of long illness and a prolonged absence from politics (due to overseas meetings and hospital stays), Manley resigned from office on March 15, 1992.

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<sup>3</sup> Life and Debt (2003) details the importation of commodities such as milk powder and the effects they have on the local dairying industry. Additionally, Jamaica also had to accept a large shipment of expired and rotten chicken meat.

<sup>4</sup> Veteran Rastafarian deejay Mutabaruka sang about Manley as ‘Senator change my mind’ in the 1991 recording ‘The Peoples Court’, which mockingly sentences both Manley and Seaga to 1000 years imprisonment. As a result it was banned from the airwaves by the PNP.

### **The Rasta Renaissance**

By the early-mid nineties a healthy number of cultural singers had re-emerged and began to make a name for themselves in the dancehall confines and more importantly on record. An ideological shift had occurred, whereby material that was deemed conscious, and to a degree spiritual was once again being recorded on a grand scale and was undertaken by both aspiring entertainers and more established cultural artists. This poses the question were dancehall patrons tiring of the talk associated with fashions, firearms, gangs and girls? Possibly so, as these new cultural commentators sang over the top of more established traditional sounding rhythms, that employed 'real' musicians. This coincided with the rise of 'recycled' rhythms that were popular in reggae's golden age of the seventies and early eighties. Fresh adaptations and interpretations of these classic rhythms regularly caught the ear of dancehall followers and reggae connoisseurs alike, many of whom were tired and weary of the contemporary minimalist and hard computer produced rhythms (Barrow & Dalton, 2004).

The rise of consciousness that swept through the Jamaican music industry during the mid nineties and continues to the present day also coincided with the uptake and popularity of Rastafarian religious sects, such as the Bobo Dreads. The Bobos became synonymous with an array of dreadlocked, turbaned male performers who sang, chatted and preached cultural proclamations and 'fire and brimstone' lyrics aimed squarely at capitalism, the government and the established hegemony. What is more, a number of dancehall entertainers who were aligned with the hardcore dancehall element 'saw the light' and grew dreadlocks, changed their ways and followed 'conscious' Rastafarian teachings.

Notable converts include dancehall sensations Buju Banton and Capleton, both of whom recorded earlier controversial and degrading slack material.<sup>5</sup> These public ideological conversions are celebrated in the dancehall space and are seen as positive cultural representations which also highlight the artists own awareness, spirituality, maturity and intelligence (Hope, 2009). These performers are then complimented as being bearers of the cultural and spiritual flame that espouses black pride, peace and unity.

This cultural re-discovery and transformation allowed for the return of the singers who had been neglected (though not entirely ignored) in the previous decades. In turn a large number of cultural singers and bands who struggled for survival during the tumultuous eighties and nineties made impassioned returns to stage shows and recordings, where they were well received and respected. New recordings and the well attended 'revival' concerts featuring these entertainers, meant the capturing and re-discovering of both old and new foreign markets.

The late Garnet Silk was heralded as 'the next Bob Marley' by many connoisseurs due to his charisma and ability to sing a wide range of material and lyrical styles. Sound system experience and exposure allowed Silk to master his microphone skills and crowd pleasing repertoire. The success of Silk empowered and enlightened many other youth singers, who felt confident enough to discuss social and cultural concerns, as well as the obvious inclusion of boy/girl love ballads.<sup>6</sup> More recently this flame is flown by Tarrus Riley whose new album "continues to uphold the legacy of conscious lyrics, bass-heavy shuffling rhythms and Rasta influence" (Pinckney, 2009, p.47). This marks a welcome return for many to the reggae of old, as

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<sup>5</sup> As discussed, the point must be made, that some of the more acclaimed 'new' Rastafarian super stars who mostly preach 'fire and brimstone' lyrics are not immune from occasionally recording sexually explicit or suggestive tunes to keep themselves 'entertaining' both markets. Sadly before Silk could reach global acclaim and stardom, he died in a home gas cylinder explosion in 1994.

<sup>6</sup> New cultural singers who have made big impacts on the reggae discourse include Luciano, Queen Ifrica, Collie Budz and more recently Taurus Riley and Alborosie.

contemporary dancehall trends and out pourings are far removed from the past. Globalisation and cross cultural flows are continually absorbed and re-produced in dancehall music and many commentators question whether the music emanating from Jamaica can still be called dancehall. Elements from a wide range of genres result in a creative blend of textures and rhythms that according to Pinckney (2009) could be referred to as “autotune, and frighteningly fast trancehall or hip-hop derivative beats” (p.47).

One recent musical phenomenon is the ‘gangsta ras’ that are gaining popularity among some dancehall artistes. These young entertainers sport dreadlocks and actively discuss common dancehall themes and sexually explicit material, alongside occasional cultural ideas (Hope, 2009). Moreover, their appearance is modelled on the Western style of dress focusing on fashion labels, expensive brand name footwear, and numerous accessories including conspicuous jewellery. The two mediums of ‘gangsta’ and Rastafari are polar opposites, yet some of these adherents view the existence of the gangsta ras as being another consequence of globalisation and the continuing limitless boundaries ever present in today’s world.

As Jamaica endured another change of government, the stipulations of the IMF and World Bank meant adhering to a framework that recognised open markets, imports and trade deals. Local agricultural producers and manufacturers were faced with the nightmarish challenge of competing with tariff free goods-which affectively tightened the standard of living for all. During this period, music became more orientated toward more enlightening and cultural topics and this was marked by a return of the cultural singers and by a number of dancehall deejays converting to Rastafarian inspired philosophies. New markets were developed and old ones rejuvenated as consumers once again explored the cultural and social messages found in reggae music. The next chapter considers the impacts that reggae has made on Aotearoa/New Zealand and questions the direction and influence on some of the

bands currently making a name for themselves while performing under the 'roots' banner.

## CHAPTER 12: FUTURE IS NOW

### **Aotearoa/New Zealand Identity**

By the time Bob Marley had toured these shores in 1979; reggae had made its mark in many homes and was having an impact on our ever growing diverse and multi-ethnic culture, as Aotearoa/New Zealand embraced Rastafarian lyrics imploring love, unity and pride. During the late seventies and into the eighties the birth of the Aotearoa/New Zealand reggae scene emerged amongst a number of significant political, social and cultural issues that brought focus and attention onto marginalised groups in society. Significantly reggae has played an integral part in mobilising this indigenous social movement and facilitating indigenous identity (Alvarez, 2008). Amongst this backdrop, local reggae prospered and developed as both Maori and Pacific peoples unified together, and sang about their struggles, trials and tribulations. Issues surrounding colonisation, dawn raids, land marches and the Treaty of Waitangi were at the forefront of many of the musician's minds.

For example, Herbs 1981 album 'Whats Be Happen' featured an aerial photograph of the confrontation between protestors and the police at Auckland's Bastion Point. Cattermole (2004) details the origins of this early scene and examines the lyrics of a generation of artists who rose to prominence during the mid eighties, such as Dread Beat and Blood, Sticks and Shanty, Aotearoa, Upper Hutt Posse and others.<sup>1</sup> Further she illustrates the links between Maori and Pacific traditional cultural music and how these aspects are incorporated into contemporary reggae.

Nonetheless, in comparison the political and social content for the most part seems to be neglected in a fair amount of contemporary reggae originating from this

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<sup>1</sup> Some examples from Dread Beat and Blood (1985) include: 'Colonial Law', 'Waitangi', 'Rainbow Warrior', 'I Unity'.

country.<sup>2</sup> By all accounts the 'roots reggae' genre is still very popular and active and this is displayed by the success (both here and overseas) of bands such as Katchafire, Salmonella Dub, Black Seeds and Fat Freddy's Drop to name a few<sup>3</sup>. Indigenous reggae bands over the years are synonymous with making music that reflects a continual Aotearoa/New Zealand identity, that amalgamates local influences, geographic underpinnings, and the music of Bob Marley fused with their own experiences (Shuker, 2008). The importance of these traits is also valued by David Allan who was partly responsible for the successful Conscious Roots compilations, which over the years showcased numerous roots artists.<sup>4</sup> Allan views that the strength of kiwi reggae lies in our own experience and unique worldview, and this should be explored rather than adhering to overseas musical trends.

### **Cornerstone Roots**

One band that has been on the forefront of the burgeoning roots scene since early 2000 and paradoxically remains largely 'under the radar' is Raglan based Cornerstone Roots, who advocate human rights, unity, strength, consciousness, and the Green movement and have expressed this philosophy on their album releases and numerous local and overseas tours. Brian Ruawai lead singer, guitarist and song writer from Cornerstone Roots (personal communication, October 11, 2009) argues:

I think some of the bands might touch on certain subjects, but they are not as political and that is not their main motivation for writing music. I think the music has moved on. People are still talking about their personal experiences, but it doesn't seem to be coming from that struggle, that is let's get together and unify. It's just different now.

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<sup>2</sup> The political content being played on the mainstream broadcast mediums is largely non-existent. Some recent mainstream examples are from Kora 'Politician' and recently Fat Freddy's Drop with 'The Raft' which is a call for Pacific peoples to unite.

<sup>3</sup> Additionally, one has to mention Auckland bands Unity Pacific, Three Houses Down and up and coming Whanganui based group Roots Provider.

<sup>4</sup> The 'Conscious Roots' compilations began in 2004 and reached five volumes, showcasing roots reggae talent nationwide.

Yet the point must be made that a large number of these successful bands though largely classified as reggae, diversify and play a musical blend or 'mash-up' comprising of soul, funk, drum and bass, r&b and a sprinkling of hip-hop. Is this a reflection of what the mainstream market likes (and demands), or what the crowds respond to?

Either way a noticeable downturn in material being produced that encourages people to think critically and be consciously aware of social, cultural and political events is evident in the Aotearoa/New Zealand scene. Numerous local reggae bands cite the importance of the work Bob Marley undertook and how much of an impact and influence his work has had on their own creative output. What is of a concern, is that many of these bands are diluting their 'real' messages with the intention of playing it safe and keeping everyone happy (producers, distributors, promoters, managers, radio stations, publicists), without inciting political or social upheaval. Naomi Tuao long time bass player from Cornerstone Roots (personal communication, October 11, 2009) commenting on whether a lot of the local content was too manufactured remarked that:

I wonder where the passion comes from. I wonder sometimes when I watch and listen to the bands that that seems to be actually missing-Its coming from a different energy, I mean its still passionate, but its safe. For me its not coming from a space where I walk away going far out I'm going to go off and I'm going put energy into this cause or I'm going to change my life in this way, or I'm going to walk this path...I go there dance, and go home-there's a big difference. And when I think back and I look at live concerts from Bob Marley or Peter Tosh the passion they drove on stage was from a place that they really believed, they walked their path and I just don't see that as strong as today.

## **R&B Reggae**

In Jamaica currently you have a seamless blend of transnational global beats and rhythms that are difficult to be classified as belonging to one genre. Recently Kiwi bands such as House of Shem and 1814, both of which originated as underground 'roots' bands have incorporated and fused elements of r&b and pop reggae into their repertoire, thus making them more appealing to a widespread audience. These directional changes have also meant increasing crowd numbers at the live gigs, justifying that the blend of rhythmic styles works, is commercially viable and is easy on the ear. Further, it could be suggested that this approach is merely watering down the roots genre to suit more commercial aspirations, as bands are able to adapt to the mainstream radio playlists more freely and are thus more accessible to a wider market and audience.<sup>5</sup> Ruawai (personal communication, October 11, 2009) stresses:

I've noticed that quite a few of the top bands at the moment in reggae are very r&b reggae-it's found its voice here, it's found its audience. I think it could be in danger of just being a period in time from this date to that date. I think you will find that there might be a 10 year period, where a lot of the prolific writing will be r&b reggae. That's what I believe, and then you will move over into another phase. Anything that falls outside the mainstream format is not important. Herbs and Ardiyah were very much r&b reggae, it was a period of time [late eighties, early nineties] and now it's hit it again. Well look Aridijah are playing again, Herbs are playing again, they're back there again and they're wicked. They have got that whole r&b flavour going on and so it's just repeated itself. It's just a cycle, so yeah that cycle will go down, and the reggae might go back underground again then pop back up on the other side. I think it will be interesting to see where the r&b bands will be in 10 years time. I know where I'll be and what I'll be doing.

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<sup>5</sup> A recent example can be shown where ex-Salmonella Dub front person Tiki Taane has one of his own compositions supporting a frequently aired television advertisement for the BNZ bank.

Shuker (2008) suggests that “local inflections of imported musical styles have created international interest-and sales-while maintaining a New Zealand flavour to the music” (p.282). In comparison to music produced in the preceding decades, indigenous reggae still features content that brings attention to political, social, and cultural issues that are affecting this society, though one could argue it is not as prevalent as it once was. Some commentators suggest that the main reason that this content is not portrayed as it once was is due to the fact that the Aotearoa/New Zealand market and audience share is under intense competition, and that there is only a limited amount of money amongst concert goers or the music buying public to go around. Therefore to express sentiments not felt or understood by the mainstream effectively limits ones audiences to those who are more selective, aware and more open to concepts such as social change, group consciousness and freedom.

### **Mainstream and Consciousness**

A possible by-product could be where bands are manufacturing music with the sole aims of making it big and securing a hit release or album that reaches the top of the charts, wins awards, followed by overseas exposure, live festival dates and lucrative concerts. It could be suggested that the nature of this music (possibly all types of music) and the competitive local market means that entertainers have to literally ‘make hay while the sun shines’, as your position in the (mainstream) market will be quickly filled by the next up and coming group. Particularly in Aotearoa/New Zealand the concert goer/band follower is often spoilt for choice on who they can go and see on a night out. Each summer a multiplicity of large outdoor music festivals offer ‘unique’ experiences, vibes, and of course live bands to compliment the aesthetic surroundings. Within the local ‘roots’ line-up there is intense competition and pressure to play on the festival circuit, which is seen as well paid and offering bands wide exposure from marketing, and potential sales of music and merchandise.

Yet putting all this into perspective Ruawai reflects (personal communication, October 11, 2009):

Musicians in general have a responsibility to the general public to be careful what they sing about, what they write about. Its just like intellectuals at some stage in your career whether a musician or intellectual the further you get up there you got to draw a line, at that stage you should be aware what is really going on, what the world is made up of how the world is constructed and who controls it, so you need to draw a line and figure out what side you are on. The music ought to reflect that. If you are in that position where you can have an influence on young people or whoever, you have to be careful what you sing about. If you want to write pop songs, you write pop songs... Conscious all that means, is that you're awake, you're conscious of yourself, of others and the environment and you're conscious of your inner self and that means that you are aware that you're aware. As long as you come from the right space, sing about what you want to sing about then that's cool and if you can reach other people and touch other people that's cool.

As has been shown both the geographic and historical context affects and influences the recorded output of Kiwi musicians and songwriters. Both our social and cultural experiences define Aotearoa/New Zealand reggae as something similar, but nonetheless very different from reggae originating from Jamaica. Yet what is a commonality between the two locations is an acceptance and widespread adaptation of both trans-nationalism and commercialism when making music. Even though Kiwi reggae embodies these traits, elements of traditional Rastafarian modalities still exist and present themselves occasionally, yet for the most part the choruses encouraging people to either unite, come together as one, or the cry of 'get up stand up for your rights' are largely hidden and masked. It could be suggested that many of the bands once linked to a strong roots and cultural movement in this country are now much more diversified in their musical direction and cater to the wants and needs of the mainstream, while recognising, incorporating and adapting to a range of multi-national elements. The popularity

and exposure this multi genre embodies reflects the ever increasing availability of music through more technological and accessible means. It may also suggest that the reggae genre (as a whole) is becoming more diversified and thus the audience that interprets and intersects with this range of modalities, rhythms and social experiences is more cosmopolitan and accepting of this 'blend' in comparison to more traditional based adherents and followers of roots music.

## CHAPTER 13: SWEET JAMAICA

### **Social Movements and Reggae**

This thesis has shown over a historical timeline, that the production of reggae music and its focus on social change is generated through socio-historical experiences and occurrences between key actors and the majority of the population. Reggae has long been regarded as the 'voice of the people', the voice of the marginalised and dispossessed and has acted as an effective medium for the transmission and articulation of thoughts and feelings of social and topical themes.

Reggae music can be identified as being a new social movement in that it concerns the united action of people to instigate social change. The notion of cumulative action is central in the theoretical dimensions of new social movement theory, in conjunction with individual actor's political or social struggles and their social networks. These concepts are supported by a range of social movement theorists such as Tarrow (1995), Touraine (1981), Diani (2000), Melucci (2008) and Eyerman and Jamieson (1991). According to the above theorists new social movements embody the following criteria: collective action, common purpose, solidarity and sustained interaction which is grounded by a shared sense of belief and belonging that can instigate a change through various means in society. The driving force behind social movements is the unity espoused by its members who also share a common set of values and belief systems. Recognition of this interest or common goal mobilises the movement, strengthens solidarity and develops group consciousness, which is crucial in transforming a so called movement into a collective force focused on action and social change. This shared identity, interaction and mobilisation between sometimes large numbers of people can generate social

change and can challenge dominant groups, bureaucracies or elites (Tarrow, 1995; Dykstra & Law, 1994; Diani, 2000).<sup>1</sup>

The raising of consciousness through grass roots decision making processes and participation have helped distinguish new social movements from the older class-based and labour movements. What is more the use of democratic decision making processes and participatory roles for all members alongside fluid organisational structures differentiate the newer movements (Touraine, 1981; Scott, 1990). In general new social movements are more inclined to be community and locally based, yet are mindful of and influenced by a variety of global themes and perspectives which overall shape their social consciousness and awareness. Modern technology, new communication mediums and meta-narratives such as transnationalism and globalisation have also fuelled the spread, influence, mobility and power of new social movements.<sup>2</sup> These social phenomena have resulted in changes to the modes of production and the new movements are often anti-industrial and largely anti-bureaucratic compared to the older movements (Gilroy, 1987).

Adherents of the new movements are often well educated and determined to persuade the state, elite and members of the public by highlighting their cause or struggle through the use of public demonstrations, billboards, campaigns, petitions and the boycotting of global institutions with poor human rights or questionable work or environmental ethics. As a result of these highly publicised campaigns many

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<sup>1</sup> Diani (2000) likens this progress to “networks of informal interaction” whereby the collective instigate change through non-institutionalised means (p.267).

<sup>2</sup> For example see movements such as the London based ‘Reclaim the streets’ which mobilises large amounts of people through mobile phone text messaging. One can also examine the revolutionary ‘Zapatista’ movement located in the Chiapas state of Mexico, who affectively employ the use of the internet to disseminate their ideology and in turn have gained widespread support from a range of counter cultures, groups and musicians.

organisations have gone 'green' for example and have adopted a framework which pressures other organisations to do the same.<sup>3</sup>

Meluci (as cited by Gilroy, 1987) argues that new social movements are much more orientated with the relationship of the body and with the wellness of the natural world.<sup>4</sup> This marks a politics of difference, whereby as opposed to looking outwards and being concerned with the group, people look inwards and are concerned with the self. Today these sentiments are visible in our society, as people have a tendency to put themselves first, instead of considering others. As a social group the Rastafarians are concerned with the politics of the body alongside healthy eating which they view as being central in maintaining a degree of body/spiritual/mental fitness which also embodies group identity and a sense of community.

New social movements also embody overlapping social divisions due to people having a variety of identities as individual motivations and circumstances vary greatly. Income, status, gender, life histories, employment and education among participants are colourful, varied and intersect all of the new movements. Thus their make up is diverse and composed of many identities, which could prove to be problematic when working toward a common goal (Neilson, 1996). More so the fluidity and temperamental organisational nature ensures that they can be viewed as being ambiguous while their heterogeneity leads them to fragment and split quickly (Touraine, 1981; Lipsitz, 1994). Key individual actors who are crucial to the momentum and success of a social movement also experience change in their own beliefs and ways of understanding or seeing the world. Conversely, their meanings

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<sup>3</sup> For many years pressure was on fast food giant Mc Donald's to change their ways and business strategies. These days they are trying to go 'green' with a change in logo and the uptake of free range eggs to their menu. The rise in the Green/GE movement has lead to many supermarkets incorporating a variety of organic goods that were originally only available in specialist stores.

<sup>4</sup> See the women's movement, gay movement, Green/GE movement and factions of the peace movement for additional examples.

and motivations for social change are bound to alter over time, alongside the motivations and direction of the social movement as it deals with shifts in the broader political economy and the changing of societal values.

### **Manley and Music**

Chapter 2 of this thesis describes the socio-historical context in which the Rastafarians made inroads on Jamaican popular culture, combining religious and cultural narratives in a way that conveyed nationalism, pride, unity and self-determination to change the ingrained political and historical ideology. Expressed largely through music, which was easily disseminated and understood by the poor, the Rastafarians invoked a sense of belonging and pushed for social change that recognised past historical wrongdoings and suffering. These sentiments were largely embraced by the majority lower working class, who struggled for daily survival. This sense of belonging in the Jamaican people and the daily tribulations endured by many amounted in a shared identity and shared struggle to change the existing hierarchical social order. As a result reggae music “becomes a medium of transmission, which reveals the truth concerning history, determines who are the enemies, and creates a continuity between past and present” (Daynes, 2004, p.37). Therefore, music also acts as an instrument in understanding and creating social life, as local cultural forms and traditions can be employed as a means of expression in generating populist nationalism (Connell & Gibson, 2003).

Manley and the PNP could not afford to ignore the Rastafarian influence or the impact that reggae music was having on the general population. The musical bandwagon employed during the 1972 election campaign was cleverly engineered to gain the populist vote. Secondly, the adoption of the huge local hit ‘Better must come’ as the campaign theme song also placed the political party squarely in the minds of those who enjoyed reggae music and wanted social change. In gaining and

maintaining the nationalist vote Manley incorporated Rastafarian words, symbols and phrases into his rhetoric that would be welcoming to the poor and marginalised.

Central to a successful social movement are key social actors. Crossley (2008) using the work of both Becker and Martin suggests that “the production and circulation of music requires interaction between multiple actors who each make a different contribution” (p.90). In the case of the 1972 election campaign celebrated musicians were playing on the PNP band wagon. Some of these essential players (Bob Marley, Delroy Wilson, Max Romeo, Clancy Eccles, Alton Ellis) were already well established singers among the Jamaican populace, and their support of the PNP ensured large turnouts at the political rallies. Manley’s uplifting rhetoric, charisma and open support of the ‘people’s music’ lead many to believe he would be able to produce significant social change and freedom from oppression. His involvement with key actors ensured a drive for a populist nationalism through the vehicle of the music.

Key actors (movement intellectuals) combine elements of culture and politics that can potentially transform the values of the established culture and hierarchy. Nonetheless, these actors are immersed in an array of network structures within a social movement that may reduce their opportunities, the balance of power, and either constrain them or empower them (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Crossley, 2008). Throughout the seventies Manley’s political career ran alongside the musical development of reggae music. However when his socialist policies failed to generate sufficient social change for the marginalised, the musicians (who were central to him getting elected) quickly voiced their disapproval and lack of faith in both him and the PNP.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Some of the songs voicing concern and disapproval of Manley’s policies and decision making include: Johnny Clarke’s ‘None Shall Escape the Judgement’, Barry Brown’s ‘Politician’ and Max Romeo’s ‘No, Joshua No’.

## **Social and Cultural Transformation**

When social movements gain inroads and start impacting upon wider society through the public sphere there are often sacrifices made through negotiation and compromise with the authorities, state or elite. What this amounts to is a trade-off in terms of benefits for the movements' followers and supporters, in exchange for adhering to the common purpose or goal that the movement originally ascribed to, or as Scott (1990) points out that "integration is equated with incorporation" (p.151). This potentially leads to the transformation of a movement into something less threatening and powerful such as that of a party or interest group. The heterogeneity and qualitative makeup surrounding musical social movements lends them to embody a range of tastes, opinions, sounds and personalities (Tarrow, 1995).

The reggae movement in particular drew attention from the mainstream early on, as its supporters had dreadlocked hair, wore African style clothing, advocated marijuana use and denounced capitalism. Chris Blackwell of Island Records was quick to draw upon these images of social rebellion and protest and market them to gain the attention of students and the youth during the early seventies. According to Clark (2003) once a musical sub-culture is open for "social inspection" it rapidly becomes fodder for commercialisation and co-modification (p.224). Mentioned previously was Blackwell's re-working and watering down techniques of Marley's Jamaican product, so that it could be better received and interpreted by a European and British audience. This resulted in the cultural form being commercially altered and culturally diluted as mainstream (in particular rock acts) incorporated and adapted reggae rhythms into their repertoire and performance (Alleyne, 2000).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of how pop entertainers such as Paul Simon, the Eagles, Paul McCartney, Eric Clapton and the Police for example adapted the rhythmic patterns found in reggae and largely left out the socio-political content see Alleyne (2000).

The untimely passing of Bob Marley left a great void in the cultural and social philosophy of reggae music and Rastafarianism. Marley's death signified a change in musical styles and direction of Jamaican reggae music that began to reflect the meta-narrative of capitalism and became concerned with the individual as opposed to the group<sup>7</sup>. Marley was not immune to the forces of commercialism as he was determined to break into the U.S market and his later style of reggae incorporated elements of funk and disco to reach the black urban audience (Stephens, 1998).<sup>8</sup> Some commentators also suggest that musically, Marley (even though very popular in Jamaica) was too far removed from Kingston's inner dancehall space and its pre-occupation with local trends, fashions and internal happenings at the time of his passing.

### **Punk Music and Co-modification**

Even though worlds apart in taste, sound and aesthetic the reggae movement shared a number of ideological similarities with the punk movement during the late seventies.<sup>9</sup> Some characteristics include alienation, rejection, and dissatisfaction with a society that was too controlling, conforming and intent on preserving the individual's status, wealth and prestige. Therefore, both movements emphasised an anti-establishment and anti-authoritarian stance (Hebdige, 2006; Crossley, 2008).<sup>10</sup> As musical social movements gain popularity and exposure, it becomes easy for the

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<sup>7</sup> The elected right wing ideology of the JLP in 1980 endorsed both individualism and materialism while welcoming entrepreneurial opportunities as a result of the increasing cultural flow between Jamaica and the U.S.

<sup>8</sup> As discussed earlier Marley was open to Chris Blackwell's suggestions and recommendations that the Jamaican recorded material needed to be 'cleaned up' and made more acceptable to foreign ears by the incorporation of rock guitars, synthesizers and string instruments. Additionally as early as the mid seventies roots singer and Marley accomplice Jacob Miller was singing 'Too much commercialisation of Rastafari' and noteworthy PNP supporter Max Romeo had also recorded 'Rasta Bandwagon'.

<sup>9</sup> During his exiled eighteen month stay in London during the mid seventies Bob Marley recognised the similarity between the two groups and recorded 'Punky Reggae Party' which contains the line 'rejected by society'.

<sup>10</sup> The Rastafarians commonly referred to the system, government and police as 'Babylon'.

focus and direction to be stalled, lost or sanitised. In expressing ones ideals, you become open for misappropriation and misunderstanding and this is enhanced by the means of technology, communication and the media as they are quick to grasp and identify the latest fashion or the 'next big thing'. The punk movement relied too heavily on music and fashion as its main modes of expression and as a result it became co-opted easily by corporate culture (Clark, 2003). One of the founders of militant punk band Crass, Penny Rimbaud (as cited by Clark, 2003, p.226) bitterly details the movement's co-optation:

Within six months the movement had been brought out. The capitalist counter-revolutionaries had killed with cash. Punk degenerated from being a force for change, to becoming just another element in the grand media circus. Sold out, sanitised and strangled, punk had become just another social commodity, a burnt-out memory of how it might have been.

Musicians the world over and their way of seeing the world, ideologies and any particular movement they adhere to become subject to interpretation, analysis and judgement once they reach mainstream exposure and attention. Money, fame and recognition are powerful dilution tools for musical social movements. Furthermore, the culture industry is very successful in both de-politicising and the commodification of 'deviant' musical sub-cultures. Part of this problem lies with the mainstream (who are much more diversified) and therefore are quick to normalise deviant musical styles and sub-cultures (Crossley, 2008).

### **Jamaican Tourism**

As has been shown, the turn about by the elite, Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB), local entrepreneurs and government in regards to their views regarding reggae and Rastafari has been a crucial and significant instrument in watering down the social and political content found in the discourse. The determined and planned 'acceptance' and co-option of reggae and Rastafari as 'national cultural' symbols, as

opposed to being dissemination methods for the benefit, improvement and well being of the people has in some ways weakened the global projection and effectiveness of reggae music. As a form of mainstream tourism and thus valuable income for many Jamaican residents, reggae is used to lure tourists to the relaxed and friendly island. Even though many tourists are aware of Bob Marley's religion and music, the socio-historical concerns and protests embodied in reggae music remain overlooked and disregarded. The JTB has cleverly marketed and sanitised the 'rebel' image found in reggae and Rastafari, while additionally overlooking and bypassing the social movement struggles displayed in the music. Consequently according to King and Foster (2001) the JTB has "consciously marketed Rastafarian symbols and reggae music" which over time "has led, in part, to the decline of the Rastafarian movement" (p.13).

The acceptance and widespread crossover use of both reggae and hip-hop, has in part, diffused and undermined the strong political and social aspirations embedded within reggae music. This crossover feature, ensures more mainstream exposure and leads itself to more singers and bands trying their hand at playing reggae (which is not necessary a bad thing), however reggae music was originally composed as a medium expressing social protest, with the intention of generating social change and improved livelihoods. These days a fair portion of Jamaican entertainers are more interested in material possessions, consumption and earning money from endorsements and sponsorship and are less likely to express sentiments aligned to dispossessed peoples.

Parallels exist between new social movements and the idea of praxis that was discussed in chapter two, as praxis embodies social action and social activity with the intention of changing society. This idea is continually being refined and developed consciously by actors engaged in practical human activity that reaches an end stage or process with the implementation of social change, or at its extreme

form the creation of a new society. New social movements are influenced and powered by new forms of technology and communication which make them diverse, colourful, and widespread. Yet this may also lead to their fragmentation. The focus on individual well being as opposed to the group is more commonplace and a perspective that is inwards, rather than outwards also differentiates new movements from the older ones. Additionally once the demands of the social movement get met, often they lose power, direction and splinter as individual actors lose motivation and their own inspiration changes over time. In due course, a musical social movement's success is ultimately its undoing as it enters mainstream banality, adoption and incorporation into the public sphere of consumption through no course or choice of its own accord.

## CHAPTER 14: CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the emergence of reggae music and how it became a new social movement aimed at drawing attention to the plight and circumstances of the Jamaican people throughout the 1970s-1990s. Materialising out of a complex and colourful blend of traditional and cultural musical forms alongside ideas emanating from the U.S Civil Rights movement, reggae became militantly associated with expressing truth, rights, political advocacy and the need for social change. By and large the majority of the Jamaican population were restrained and suppressed due to an ingrained hegemony and power structure that was rigorously held in place through political and economical control.

Social change was the focal point of the thesis and it was embodied in the lives of the artists and musicians who represented the aspirations of the people. Ignited and inflamed by an indigenous nationalist movement that recognised black cultural heritage, reggae music openly challenged and confronted the obstacles that lay in the path of people seeking and acquiring freedom from 'mental slavery'. Nonetheless despite the best intentions of both political parties they continually failed to provide assistance, security, piece of mind and well being to the politically disenfranchised and as a result 'better did not come'. Compounded by economic forces that proved to be too strong to ignore and challenge, the ideal utopia and political representation envisaged by the Rastafarians did not come to fruition and the social movement effectively weakened and fragmented as the seventies drew to a close. This came as no surprise as new social movements in general, the criteria they espouse, their makeup and the community they represent change and disperse over the course of time.

Due to its populist attitude and nature, the music in establishing group consciousness became like many other new social movements; easy fodder to those with other intentions. Even during the ska phase, Jamaican music was prone to influence and co-option by the elite and upper class, as the people who owned the recording studios had the final say in which songs would eventually be recorded. Firstly at the 1966 World Fair held at New York, the conservative Jamaican government sent a group of musicians that were more civilised and presentable and posed less of a threat to the establishment. In contrast the preeminent musicians and legitimate cultural representatives resided in downtown ghetto areas, practised Rastafarian beliefs and were viewed as being inappropriate choices.

The second major historical co-option of reggae music and its cultural symbols was undertaken during the early seventies. Jamaica was undergoing a number of socio-political transformations as the independence expectations wore off and the nation struggled as a new entrant in the realms of the global marketplace. Opposition leader Michael Manley tapped into the mood of the music's power and popular support to successfully construct a musical bandwagon of travelling artists and musicians, whom alongside Manley traversed the island during the course of the 1972 election campaign. Not only was Manley using the stars to attract audiences, he was co-opting reggae songs, lyrical content and slogans to reinforce his socialist perspective. This marked a significant moment in Jamaican politics as the politicians became conscious of the power of the music, and thus integrated it into subsequent dialogue and political repertoire. The expression 'better must come' utilised by Manley proposed hope, determination and belief that the prevailing social conditions could be alleviated by those who were suffering under the constraints of a conservative government. The immense popularity of the Rastafarian entertainers guaranteed plentiful turnouts for the political rallies and became synonymous with Manley winning the election, as he employed a number of significant cultural symbols and Rasta rhetoric to his advantage, including the dubious 'rod of correction'.

However Manley's charismatic demeanour failed to live up to expectations and his hopes of an egalitarian society that was fair, equal and prosperous did not eventuate. Even though reggae music received widespread global acclaim and recognition during his tenure, it had little impact on Jamaica's standard of living. The global economic crisis and Manley's poor financial decisions based around democratic socialism resulted in the government being powerless to manage the economy and preserve social order.

Reggae's global prominence intensified during the mid seventies principally due to the interest and work surrounding Bob Marley. The development of the music revolved around a cultural identity and awareness as reggae music embodied and pursued equality, justice, truth and rights. Much can be said about the marketing procedures and widespread attention applied to Marley's image and music by Island Records, who helped transform him into a Third World icon, while conversely increasing his earnings and profile with western consumers. Many questioned the motivations behind Chris Blackwell's support and interest in the genre. The proficient use of techniques to weaken the Jamaican recorded material and to present Marley as the leader of the group resulted in frustrations and tension between the original members. Despite this 'cultural dilution' the lyrics were still forthright, militant and inspiring for those interpreting the messages imbedded within the music. Marley and Blackwell successfully launched reggae into the mainstream, and Marley became renowned as being the voice for the marginalised and disenfranchised while advocating human rights, consciousness and global unity.

Coinciding with Marley's recognition and highlighting the impact he was having on popular culture during the seventies, a large number of prominent pop artists also tried their hand at performing and adopting reggae rhythms. These attempts may have gleaned further financial success for these artists, but for the most part were decidedly lacking in socio-political content and creativity. In general they were

viewed by many as disempowering and co-opting reggae for the purpose of commercial gain at the expense of those 'authentic' struggling Jamaican roots artists. Despite this global adoption and appreciation of Jamaican reggae, economic constraints only ignited the local musicians and their music was steeped in social critique while evoking a sense of collective consciousness.

Michael Manley's use of reggae music and friendship of reggae artists for political gain was documented throughout the thesis. In particular the co-option of the Smile Jamaica concert to bring the 1976 election forward was a shrewd and extremely unpopular move, as the general consensus was that Manley's government were sponsoring the concert which was not the case. This calculated action was suggested by many as the main reason why Manley was re-elected to serve another term, as the state of the country was at an all time low, due to poor policy decisions and mismanagement of the economy. Manley's vision to instigate and pursue largely socialist (and later more conservative) policies resulted in prolonged hardships for the Jamaican populace throughout the course of his political career, despite his best intentions and strong rhetoric that suggested otherwise.

It has been presented throughout this thesis that during the course of the eighties and nineties a remarkable shift occurred in the social and cultural content emanating from reggae music. The change of government in 1980 which implemented a neo-liberal approach only exacerbated the hardships being endured despite favourable lending arrangements with the IMF and World Bank. The loss of Bob Marley in 1981 and shift in political ideology led to the music endorsing individual aspirations and capitalist values. Dancehall music related to the lives and experiences of its inner city residents and recurring themes in the music were light hearted and humorous in contrast to most people's financial situation and state of mind. This proved an ideal platform for the deejays to market themselves, and re-

direct reggae music into another phase and accordingly they became entrenched as icons and authorities of Jamaican popular culture.

As the local dancehall scene flourished key deejays such as Yellowman and Lady Saw gained large followings and significantly improved their social status. However their lower class background and sexual lyrical content ensured they received attention from the media and criticism from the wealthy middle class who tried their utmost at preserving their social space and culture from ghetto new comers. As time has advanced these moral and upstanding citizens have grudgingly accepted the dancehall artists and the space that they frequent. Reggae and dancehall are accepted forms of income and the former a viable tourist commodity which attracts many to the island to experience 'Bob Marley's' beautiful and lush tropical island. In being co-opted as national cultural symbols, reggae and Rastafarianism have been globally projected and disseminated, yet this has amounted to a weakening of the overall effectiveness of reggae as a new social movement. The tenets layered in the music are now often overlooked, misinterpreted or disregarded.

Widespread and prevailing poverty for the majority of the population has been documented in Jamaica throughout the work of this thesis. Assistance and intervention from the IMF and World Bank did little to change most peoples' situations, and both political parties struggled to meet the demands and terms of their financial assistance. The SAP's and loan requirements insisted on free trade zones and the relaxing of tariffs on imported goods which effectively prevent developing countries from 'developing'. Extensive unemployment meant many youths were on the streets hustling to earn money. Therefore they were easy recruitment targets for political and drug gangs. The politicians employed party supporters and gangs for public work contracts and to maintain and protect their constituency. As the party patronage handouts dried up at the beginning of the eighties, many of the youths turned to earning income from the informal economy.

Residents of these inner city communities sought solace from the 'don' or area leader who replaced the politician as bearer of food, clothing, employment and financial support.

Social phenomena including migration, globalisation, communication, labour market movements and technology have ensured reggae and dancehall music is widely available throughout the world. These have opened up a number of ways to access and listen to music and listeners that are exposed to modern interpretations of dancehall and hip-hop beats may hopefully discover the Jamaican roots.

Reggae music initially aimed to mobilise and develop group consciousness with the hope of instigating social change, but due to a variety of events failed to make considerable headway on both the local and the global stage. Yet it must be noted, that this shortcoming even though it primarily affected poor Jamaica, ensured that the internal messages found in roots reggae were interpreted and accepted in many countries located far beyond the West Indies. What is also interesting is that even though reggae has spawned numerous offshoots and identities such as dancehall, reggaeton and hip-hop mash-ups to name a few; traditional roots reggae is still highly regarded and well received in Jamaica and beyond. Globalisation has meant the uptake and dissemination of these social messages in countries as diverse as Germany, Japan, South Korea, Italy, France and Brazil. These nations have their own unique reggae scenes, complete with nightclubs, sound systems, record labels and a diverse array of singers, deejays and musicians. It has been argued that the mediums of globalisation and trans-nationalism have resulted in some of the new artists watering down the social and political content with the long term aim of making money and appealing to the mainstream. In particular the relationship and fusion between Jamaican 'reggae' and the U.S hip-hop and r&b communities is profound and overarching. Numerous collaborations between contemporary pop artists and reggae performers only strengthen this viewpoint. In the Aotearoa/New Zealand

context and much the same in Jamaica, traditional reggae music is much more diverse and complex today and embodies a range of global styles and influences. One could argue that as the music is multifaceted this makes it hard to describe what reggae music sounds like, or what it should sound like for that matter.

Further research could be undertaken on the degree of influence that reggae music has had on Aotearoa/New Zealand society. For example Cattermole (2004) details the rise of the Kiwi reggae movement through the mid eighties and more research could further explain reggae's continued popularity and uptake by a host of bands scattered across the country. Research could also be attempted to explore the influence and attractiveness of Jamaican dub music on Kiwi bands and musicians. Another topic of exploration could be documentation of the effect that reggae as a social movement has had in Aotearoa/New Zealand, with particular focus on the impact and continuing local and overseas success of indigenous Maori and Pacific bands.

This thesis has examined the social conditions which have prevailed throughout Jamaica, regardless of which political party was in power. As a result 'better did not come' and reggae as a new social movement failed to deliver and meet the expectations of those needing a change in circumstances, wealth and opportunities. Nonetheless, the current interest and rejuvenation of the cultural/roots genre, alongside the questionable and tiresome antics of some of the dancehall entertainers has made it possible for one to suggest that all is not lost and one day 'better may come' for those in need and who require social assistance and change.

## Discography

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