

Reggae, Funk, Disco

MUSC-21600: The Art of Rock Music

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Reggae's Origins

- Fusion of rock and world music (cf. Santana)
- 1950s: ska
 - = Jamaican folk music (mento) + American R&B, jazz
 - Instrumental dance music with jump blues instrumentation (rock + horns)
 - Steady, fast beat with accented offbeat ("hesitation beat")
 - *"Man in the Street" (Don Drummond and the Skatalites, 1964)*
- Mid 1960s: rock steady
 - Rastafarian movement + African-derived drumming (burru) + Rude Boys culture
 - Slower tempo, heavier bass, socio-political stance
 - *"Tougher than Tough" (Derrick Morgan, 1967)*
- Late 1960s: reggae
 - Laid-back tempo (even more than rock steady)
 - Scratchy guitar hesitation offbeat (often "rebound")
 - Prominent bass and drum groove (often doubled in guitar)
 - Less prominent horns, greater production values
 - Rasta-inspired subject matter

Reggae Goes International

- “Stir It Up” (Bob Marley and the Wailers, 1967)
 - Quintessential reggae traits, but also
 - “Rebound” backbeat
 - Bass, drum, rhythm guitar in lockstep
 - Beach-Boys-esque backing vocals
 - Vocal quality in guitar (wah-wah pedal) Jimmy Cliff: Caribbean music = “ghetto’s newspaper”
- **“(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais” (*The Clash*, 1978) [Colin Martin, 2015]**
 - Reggae influences (Hesitation beat, heavy bass groove)
 - Punk influences- (vocal quality, heavy bass groove, gritty guitar)
 - Echo, reverb on vocals
 - Politically charged lyrics
- Provided partial origin of rap
 - Toasting: rhythmic patter over ska or rock steady records
 - Dubbing: record speed/length manipulated by DJ
 - Dubs: studio-recorded, all-instrumental remix of the A side of a reggae single

Black Pop to Funk

- Rock in the 1970s: overwhelmingly white
- Black pop: a separate market, but musical connections to rock
- “Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)” (Sly & the Family Stone, 1969) [Schloss et al., 166–68]
 - Deliberately integrative (band and music)
 - Built on repeating, slap-pop bass riff (Larry Graham)
 - Complex layering of rhythms
 - Bass/drum/guitar groove (James Brown)
 - Percussive vocalizations
 - Proto-funk guitar colors (choked, panned left; wah-wah, panned right)

Funk and Disco Compared

Funk

- Essential idea: danceable groove
 - Primacy of rhythm
 - Interlocking rhythmic layers create dense texture
 - Sixteenth-note foundation
 - Downbeat emphasized (other beats even)
 - Catchy melody, often percussive vocal effects
 - Static harmony
 - Timbre: rock core + horns
 - Characteristic heavy bass (slap-pop) and guitar (choked; wah-wah)
- “Tear the Roof Off the Sucker (Give Up the Funk)” (Parliament, 1976)
 - Elaborate stage shows w/ humor, social criticism

Disco

- Discotheques: dance clubs (esp. for minorities)
 - Primacy of rhythm
 - “Four on the floor” with sixteenth-note rhythms
 - Faster tempos
 - Thinner, peppier textures
 - Catchy melodies
 - More dynamic harmonies
 - Similar timbral base, but supplemented (strings, party sounds, etc.)
- “Stayin’ Alive” (Bee Gees, 1977)
- Cf. dismissals of punk as noncreative, mindless music

The Rise of Disco

- KC and the Sunshine Band
- *Saturday Night Fever* (1977)
 - Spreads disco to mainstream audience
 - Upward mobility meets the macho dancer
- The Village People
 - Producer-assembled, Eurodisco-styled, gay-subculture channeling
- The disco backlash
 - Homophobic?
 - Threat to core rock aesthetic (rock/pop dichotomy)

