

What is sound art? The art of sound. Simple right? Well not quite. When I think of the start of this class I didn't know what to expect, when I mention to others that I am taking a "sound class" they think it is a music class. I have learned that sound does not equal music. In Carmen Pardo's article "The Emergence of Sound Art: Opening the Cages of Sound" she makes that very clear. Do you remember in math class learning every square is a rectangle but not every rectangle is a square? Sound and music have this relationship. Every sound can be music or become music but music itself is not the same as sound art. She explains how sounds have been locked in cages, three to be exact. If you take the time release sound (by paying attention and taking time to listen to sound itself) you will then not hide sound behind the technicalities that is music. When in class we never once learned about the melody, scale or definitions of the sounds we heard. When one feels the need to label sound into letters or definitions that is when it is turned into music. Carmen Pardo mentions that John Cage defines music as "a world that makes a note from a sound, a melody from the processing of sounds, and from this, the listener tends to feel the process and not the sound itself." (Pardo, Carmen) This is an interesting way of labeling music, and one I had never thought about prior to taking this class. Music is how the artist or the composer wants us to feel or hear the sounds they put together. That would mean sounds themselves are something we tend to hide behind melodies or notes but when we stop and pay attention to them then it becomes the art behind the sound that is being made. Maybe it is easier to see it visually. If this were visual arts the visuals could be drawings, paintings, sculptures etc. In sound art the sound can be anything from "experimental music, sound poems, sound design, radio art, soundscape and sound installations...Max Neuhaus wrote 'sound art seems to be a category which can include anything which has sound and even in some cases which don't.'" (Pardo, Carmen) I suppose as artist, learning sound art is unfreezing the sound we hear and letting it be. Which would allow us to incorporate sound in any future projects as something that is equally as important to pay attention to as any other visual concept in which we are trying to express. It is important to share the definition of sound art to show how King Tubby was a sound artist, not necessarily someone who needs to be labeled as a musician. When we later go into his work or take a listen to it; we will see how he isn't telling us what we should listen to. He as John Cage said "let sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments." (Pardo, Carmen)

Prior to reaching the story of King Tubby (who was born in 1941 in Kingston Jamaica- a place known for reggae music) it is important to mention the history of reggae music. Since much of King Tubby's influence is tied to reggae in Jamaica. In Christopher Partridge's book *Dub in Babylon* there is a small history of Jamaica and how it led to using sounds as a way to express freedom. "Jamaica was up until 1962 a British Colony and until August 1838 a slave colony...it is little surprise, therefore that numerous indigenous Jamaican folk songs particularly reggae songs are in-effect liberation theologies which real the days of slavery." (Partridge Christopher 2) Jamaica being a colony of Britain where many African slaves were brought, created a movement known as Rastafarianism. Rastas maintained the hope that they would one day relocate to Africa (this mindset later changed to not physically being back in Africa but a

“mental decolonization”). Rastas “mental decolonization came from a process of turning away from the ethos, values of a colonial society and leaving their corrupt, oppressive societies for a better life.” (Partridge Christopher 2) They tried to connect themselves back to their African roots and many times did while incorporating drumming and chants known as Nyabingi. In the early stages of the rasta movement with the duty to challenge their colonial government in Jamaica they turned to artists and musicians to help promote their message and even after becoming their own independent country many reggae artist continued to mention the message of being free and remembering their colonized past so that it doesn’t happen again.

Back to sound. In 1977 V. Reckford published “Rastafarian Music: An Introductory Study” in the Jamaican journal where he wrote “ it is true that many popular Jamaican artist are untrained musicians... but many practitioners of Jamaican pop music, especially in the area of ‘dub’ music do not refer to their works as music or song but as ‘sound’ they would say they released a ‘great sound’ not a song.” (Partridge, Christopher 3) This is where the connection between sound art and dub come together. Dub-music is a genre that grew out of reggae in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s some would say it is a sub-genre but it can also be known as it’s own genre. Before getting into dub and how King Tubby comes into play with this it is important to mention sound systems in Jamaica. **Sound Systems** play a big role in the development of dub. Sound systems in Jamaica began with class division in the the upper class who could afford to go to the events where bands played and left poorer communities wanting something too. Which entrepreneurs were ready to exploit and a business began. Sound systems started off as “Mobile audio units which consisted of a turntable, a radio and large speakers in order to bring music to the public.” (Partridge Christopher 3) Sound systems in Jamaica were brought to “**dance-halls**” which were not actual halls, they were open areas so in order for the public to dance the systems became bigger and louder so they can hear the base to dance to in an open area. These dancehall’s became place of gatherings and events were created where local foods were sold as well as for “entertainers performance artist with larger than life personas” to come to the events and be “**disc jockeys**” (think the M.C or club promoter or DJ’s) for the events.(Partridge Christopher 3) This new business created a rivalry between the sound systems there was a need to constantly be with the latest newest sound so that people would attend your events rather than another one. Sound system event also became a large business with a positive shift in Jamaica as it allowed them to have a home-grown music industry that meant they no longer needed to rely on imported sound from jazz music in the U.S it shifted the attention to local sound and producers one of them being, King Tubby.

Osbourne Ruddock aka King Tubby was someone who changed the way the sound system business went on. In Michael Veal’s book *DUB Soundscapes and Shattered Songs in Jamaican Reggae* he quotes Phillip Smart that says “Tubbs changed the business in that time with the dub thing. Because the other studios weren’t really into that. They were more into balancing the songs and gettin’ it a certain way. But Tubbs changed that, people start to look at the business from the sound. This starts a whole different era. ”(Veal, Michael E.) King Tubby, began working around systems as an electronics repairman and sound system operator. Being around the sound systems is what turned him from an electrician to a sound engineer and sound artist. He made large impacts in sound art when it comes to dub. The technical side of **dubbing** has been long used it was known as “ the process of transferring the music on to the vinyl-coated

metal plate- just as adding sound to a film is also known as dubbing” and also the technical side for recorded music when it would be pressed on to the dub plate to produce vinyl records. (Partridge, Christopher 3) The term dub got a new definition when the sound systems in Jamaica were looking for new sound and ideas. It comes from the remixing technique- a way to reuse rhythm tracks. “Essentially recording engineers produced track on which their efforts were often more evident than those of the original musicians... Remixing is receding the reanimation of familiar music by the creating of new sonic textures for different sonic contexts.” The shift of the focus being on how a track was produced rather than how a song was sang or the technicals behind the music was new and King Tubby is credited for starting this. As mentioned before when looking for new music for the sound systems and dance-halls some studios and producers decided to stay with their focus on musicians themselves. King Tubby’s small **home studio** was used not for recording musicians but rather a place where “tapes that had been *musically* crafted by other producers, and deposited for him to remix” he did so by adding vocals (“voicing”) to basic rhythm tracks. (Veal, Michael E.) ([insert examples of original vs what he did here](#)) His impact is undoubtable as mentioned in the *DUB* book “Nevertheless, its expansion into a full-fledge remixing facility was *the* pivotal moment in the development of dub music.” Other things that should be mentioned on his impact in music are that King Tubby was “the first sound-man to employ separate amplifiers to boost the various frequency ranges of music.. he is also said to have been the first to employ customized sound processing (such as reverb and echo effects) in the sound system to intensify the experience for the audience.” (Veal, Michael E.) I mention his long list of credits to get to why I chose King Tubby. He as well as reggae and dub without a doubt has influenced my favorite genres of music and the sound art I like to listen to can all be credited back to Jamaica.

Influence today. “The influence of dub permeates much contemporary electronica, dance, and urban music, Indeed, the phrase ‘drum and bass’, now the name of a particular genre of dance music, was originally coined by Kind Tubby... Mixing, sampling and rapping in truth all owe their origins to dub reggae” (Partridge, Christopher 3) Dub was a sound that created a new sound from an older sound and this creation allowed for music to be created differently moving forward. King Tubby remixing system in the 1970’s where he stripped-down dub plate semi-instrumentals that allowed for people like DJ U-Roy to toast over (toasting is talking over pre-recorded music). Which in many ways the striped down remixing was like a form of what later on became scrubbing in hip-hop and toasting like rapping over beats. This is **seen** in the early stages of hip-hop in 1973 with DJ Kool Herc who is “widely regarded as the founding father of hip-hop.. has commented, ‘ever since U Roy began his thing, it was just a matter of time before it got the international respect it deserved.’” (Partridge, Christopher). In the documentary series on Netflix titled *Hip-Hop Evolution* you can also see how credited DJ Kool Herc is when it comes to being one of the founding players in creating hip-hop in an underground scene in NYC similar to how Tubby used sampling to create dub the early stages of hip-hop used popular disco and jazz to sample from and create sounds to rap over by scratching vinyl discs. (Wheeler, Darby)

When the sound system business needed new music, King Tubby created something that everyone could dance to and a new sound. He became a sound artist without even trying and his impact with dub influenced many other genres besides reggae such as hip-hop, post-punk, rap and eventually reggaeton. In Hawkins 1996 “ The secret history of dub: Reggae Historians

Delve into the Dub Chamber” he says “Everything from hip-hop to techno and every other form of music right now has stolen ideas off dub or incorporated those ideas” (Partridge, Christopher) It is clear hip-hop/rap got influences from dub but how does my favorite genre reggaeton get it’s influence from dub? Well reggaeton has a long history that we can trace back even if it is a genre that has mostly been around since the 1990’s. In the documentary series *Reggaeton: The Sound that Conquered the World*. on Peacock I couldn’t help to notice how many similarities and influences the creating of Reggaeton have to Reggae. Whether it be how it is mostly known from coming from the island of Puerto Rico, which just like Jamaica was an island with enslaved people who just like how Rastas had a drumming to connect to their roots, people in Puerto Rico had La Bomba. “When enslaved people were forbidden to express themselves they were able to do so through rhythms and were able to express their oppositions of their rulers.” (Omar, Acosta) Plena was a way to spread word and communicate with one another it had African influences with drums and eventually influenced salsa. Similar to how Jamaica had a connection to the U.S so did Puerto Rico in terms of culture and music being intertwined. Many Puerto Ricans in the 1950’s had moved or had relative in N.Y.C so when rap and hip-hop became big in N.Y.C it did too in Puerto Rico (Many break-dancers Rock steady crew were Puerto Ricans in NYC). Reggae influenced hip-hop and by doing so influenced rap to come to Puerto-Rico and so did scratching, beat-boxing and turntables. It was only a matter of time before rapping in Spanish (Vico C) began. Similar to how disc Jockeys were important in dub music in dance-halls this is similar to how it influenced M.C’s in hip-hop (like Big Daddy Kane) who later in the creation of Reggaeton influenced DJ’s like DJ Playero who would play at Marquesinas (out-door parties in Puerto Rico where people would go to dance and listen to new music similar to dance-halls). Seeing all these similarities my favorite genre’s have with how dub music was created left it clear in my mind that Reggaeton was influenced and later on verified in Marshall, Wayne’s scholars article where he links Reggaeton music directly to Jamaica. (Marshall Wayne) King Tubby who impacted Dub-music changed the industry of music internationally. Reggae music is not just in Jamaica and there is no question that it is international. From Britain to Brazil to even Belarus yes Belarus! (Hope, Donna) Reggae, Dub and eventually rap, hip-hop and reggaeton have become sounds and music all around the world. Like in many examples that were mentioned (ex: Rasta movement and bomba) the role in which their historical oppressed backgrounds were finally freed when people expressed themselves with sound and rhythm emphasizes the power art has. I hope that un-caging sound (Pardon, Carmen) can continue on today to have more free, decolonized, and liberated people all around the world.

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