



**Reggae Futures Day 1:
Reggae Research Network Symposium**
Senate House, London
2 November 2017

Speaker Abstracts and Biographies

Keynote

Researching Reggae: Festivals, Pilgrimage and the Movement of Jah People

Sonjah Stanley Niaah (Senior Lecturer & Head, Institute of Caribbean Studies, University of the West Indies, Mona, Kingston Jamaica)

Abstract

From the 1978 inception of Reggae Sunsplash in Montego Bay Jamaica, to its culmination in the largest European reggae festival – Rototom Sunsplash, the bridge which facilitated reggae’s international reach, was created but simultaneously broken. I use the metaphor of the bridge to analyse reggae’s contemporary place in an international arena of sonic obsessions through the lens of pilgrimage. Combining perspectives from cultural geography and cultural studies, this paper seeks to expand the available knowledge on cultural industries, specifically reggae geographies and economies, by mapping the development of Jamaica’s sound economy of consumption and production locally, regionally and globally through the phenomenon of the reggae festival. This paper therefore addresses a major gap in the research on reggae’s global movement. It defines the reggae festival and its essential elements in a transnational context while mapping the global circulation of people and resources around one of Jamaica’s most viable products.

Biography

Director of the Institute of Caribbean Studies at the University of the West Indies (UWI) at Mona, and the inaugural Rhodes Trust Rex Nettleford Fellow in Cultural Studies (2005), Sonjah Stanley Niaah is a Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies at the UWI, Mona Campus. She is a leading author, teacher and researcher on Black Atlantic performance geographies, popular music, culture and the sacred, and Caribbean Cultural Studies more broadly. Stanley Niaah is the author of *Reggae Pilgrims: Festivals and the Movement of Jah People* (forthcoming Rowman and Littlefield), *Dancehall: From Slave Ship to Ghetto* (2010, University of Ottawa Press), and editor of "I'm Broader than Broadway: Caribbean Perspectives on Producing Celebrity" (*Wadabagei*, Vol. 12: 2, 2009). She has served as Vice Chair of the international Association for Cultural Studies for which she coordinated the first conference held in the Global South at the UWI (2008). Dr Stanley Niaah currently serves on the boards and editorial collectives of numerous academic associations, institutions and journals including *Cultural Studies* and *DanceCult*. A Jamaican nationalist and Caribbean regionalist at heart, she is involved in efforts to promote national and regional development specifically the cultural and creative industries through her current / past work on the Culture Advisory Committee of the Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO, Jamaica Reggae Industry Association, Jamaica Association of Composers, Authors, and Publishers, as Assistant Chief Examiner

for the Caribbean Examination Council Advanced Proficiency Examination in Caribbean Studies, secondments to JAMPRO and the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture, the Entertainment Advisory Board, Museums Division of the Institute of Jamaica and Monitoring & Content Committee of the Broadcasting Commission. She is also a member of the selection committee of the Rhodes Trust Rex Nettleford Fellowship in Cultural Studies. Having developed a keen interest in popular music and education as a tool for social transformation, Stanley Niaah gives occasional talks on the Jamaican music sector, and building communities using education around which she has developed projects on incarcerated persons and capacity building for the cultural industries including the State of the Music Initiative. A heavily sought after speaker, Stanley Niaah has addressed various audiences, including via local and international media, among them Rototom Sunsplash TV <http://www.rototom.tv/videos/culture/reggae-university/> Television Jamaica <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9tpTNVha6o> Jamaica Gleaner <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20170303/uwi-lecturer-calls-change-noise-abatement-act#.Wdk2GNjnwWZ.twitter> and VICELAND https://www.viceland.com/en_us/video/jamaica-with-popcaan-chronixx/56f2f5f86ad75d767e3a39a7 among others <http://nextcity.org/daily/entry/a-war-on-jamaican-dancehall-is-threatening-kingstons-street-life>

(Future) Sounds of Reggae

“The Most Forward Music Around”: Reggae Aesthetics in Jungle Music

Rowan Oliver, University of Hull

Abstract

Whilst jungle emerged in the UK during the early 1990s, its origins are considered to be rooted in both African-American and Jamaican music, and, more specifically, in the way that these influences were experienced and reinterpreted in the UK. In addition to the superficial association with Jamaica that is evident in its frequent use of samples from well-known reggae songs, jungle also inherited a set of textural priorities from the island’s music and a dub-inflected attitude towards the use of existing recordings as sonic raw material. Consequently, whilst aspects of hip hop production inform the practicalities of sampling in jungle, the genre’s extensive breakbeat manipulation and fundamental bass pressure owe more to dub — and its core aesthetic of sonic deconstruction and reconstruction — than to hip hop.

Despite the way that some accounts of the genre downplay the influence of Jamaican sonic and musical aesthetics, there is evidence to suggest that practitioners within jungle acknowledge, and even celebrate, this link. As a jungle producer states in a 1994 documentary on the nascent scene ‘it’s the most forward music around that’s being made, simply because it’s taken the hip hop beats and combined them with reggae culture’.

Looking beyond just the straightforward use of reggae samples within the genre, this paper will draw on seminal tracks by Bass Master Warriors, Rebel MC and The Ragga Twins, amongst others, in order to explore some of the ways that reggae’s groove and sonic aesthetic were fundamental to the development of jungle’s characteristic musical identity.

Biography

Rowan Oliver is Lecturer in Popular Music at the University of Hull. His research focuses on Black Atlantic rhythm culture and deals with groove, breakbeats, sampling, and the musician’s relationship with time and sound. He is an associate member of the Center for Black Music Research and received a CBMR grant to fund archival research for a project on reggae in 2015.

As a professional musician Rowan has worked internationally with a number of artists, including seven years as the drummer with Goldfrapp, and he continues to record, perform and produce in a range of genres alongside his academic career. A critic described his recent remix of ‘Fascination’ by Gramme (Tummy Touch Records) as “rude, low down, bassy goodness”, which is great, but doesn’t map easily onto REF criteria.

The Sonic Intimacies of the Reggae Sound System

Malcolm James, University of Sussex

Abstract

As I discussed in Liverpool, I am in the process of putting together a book on *Sonic Intimacy* which explores the transformation of sound, intimacy and alternative politics between the reggae sound system, the pirate radio and YouTube music videos in the UK. In the Liverpool presentation I sketched out some of general thematic considerations with which the project engages. In this session I would like to take the opportunity to present some initial thoughts on the sonic intimacies of the reggae sound system and how they relate to the alternative politics of 1980s Britain.

In the presentation, I will give an overview of how the reggae sound system has been discussed to date, and how an understanding of privileged relation and knowledge, wholeness, depth and intensity (that is to say intimacy) complements and takes forward these existing understandings. To do this, I will place the reggae sound system in its appropriate socio-historical context, and drawing largely on interviews with sound system personnel, explore the technological/sound/human interfaces through which the intimacies of bass, spirituality and vibe (among others) are manifested. At the end, I will try collect why these mattered for the alternative politics of the day, and signal how they might transform through pirate radio.

Biography

Malcolm James is a Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at University of Sussex, UK. His research interests are in postcolonial and critical race approaches to youth, urban culture, migration, music and sound. He is author of *Urban Multiculture: Youth, Politics and Cultural Transformation* published by Palgrave.

Sound Systems, Contemporary Art, and the Redistribution of the Sensible

Vincent Moystad, Goldsmiths

Abstract

For Sylvia Wynter, the Jamaican sound system is an assemblage of practices and ideas that make things visible, audible, and tactile which would otherwise remain obscured; challenging cultural boundaries and mobilising creative capacities otherwise excluded (Wynter, 2000).

This paper explores such practices in the work of Nadine Robinson and Tom Sachs, two artists who deploy sound systems methods and materials in their work. Nadine Robinson's *boom paintings* deploy sound systems as materials with which modernism can be reimaged and the demarcations of the gallery challenged, while Tom Sachs highlights the *version* and dub as a key point of reference for his practice of *haute bricolage*. Both artists produce art which, in different ways, continue the work of challenging boundaries and hierarchies which Sylvia Wynter identifies as central to Afro-Jamaican sonic practice. These works are read through a theoretical framework that incorporates reggae scholarship, such as the work of Carolyn Cooper, Julian Henriques, and Michael Veal, as well as theorists such as Gilles Deleuze, Louis Chude-Sokei, Jacques Ranciere, Alexander Weheliye, and Sylvia Wynter.

The paper demonstrates that sound system culture is generative of theoretical insights with ramifications beyond the immediate tradition. In response to the theme of reggae research futures, the paper proposes that Jamaican sound systems are inspiring many different kinds of practice which have often escaped close study by scholars of reggae, but which can help us appreciate its critical and aesthetic potentialities in new ways, as well as indicating wider debates in which reggae scholarship can intervene.

Biography

Vincent Moystad is a PhD candidate at the Department of Media and Communications at Goldsmiths, University of London, and has been active in the research network Sound System Outernational since 2016. Moystad's research and practice centres cultural studies and social history, with an emphasis on social movements, radical politics, and vernacular cosmopolitanisms. In addition to academic work, Moystad has a background in activism and sound systems.

Gender, Race, Politics

“Where’s the DJ?” – The Women’s Voice in Reggae Sound System Culture

Lynda Rosenior-Patten & June Reid

Abstract

DJ Ade (Lynda Rosenior-Patten) and Junie Rankin (June Reid), Co-Owners of Nzinga Soundz have worked within the Creative Industries for almost four decades. In this presentation entitled "Where's the DJ?" they map their journey as one of the UK's longest running female sound systems, explore a range of gender issues in terms of their contribution and impact on the UK Reggae Sound System movement and in the process, make the 'invisible' world of female sound system culture visible.

DJ Ade's and Junie Rankin's experience is at once multi-layered and multi-faceted. Having both started out in their first (post university) paid jobs working at Virgin Mega store, been heavily involved in community activism, the black arts and culture sector, and the community radio movement whilst consistently securing paid work as DJs solely from word of mouth.

Their story provides a unique insider's lens on the experience of female sound system operators during a period of significant political activism within the Black community in the UK, covering:

- Who we are (background, influences)
- Why we play, how we play, where we play, (values, audience, style, approach, enablers/supporters)
- The challenges (strategies / skill sets)
- Our Impact (as influencers - experimental, different musical genres e.g. African reggae, pioneers - developed and promoted new record suppliers, selling / playing new music at Virgin, influencing the record buying public)
- New technology - (the new music playing experience, staying relevant)
- Next steps (documenting, researching, inspiring, mentoring, supporting, influencing a new generation of female practitioners)

Biographies

Nzinga Soundz was established in the early '80's by DJ Ade (Lynda Rosenior- Patten) and Junie Rankin (June Reid) and has become one of the UK's longest running, all women sound systems.

Lynda and June met aged of 11 years when they started secondary school at Norwood Girls, in south London and their personal, academic and professional lives criss-crossed

over the ensuing decades. Having worked in the music industry, voluntary and public sectors and creative industries, they have built up a network of clients, diverse audiences and a strong following which is reflected in their wide ranging musical knowledge which spans reggae, soul, calypso, African, Latin and Jazz.

In addition to private dances, concerts, weddings, corporate events, community based events and blues parties, Nzinga Soundz has played at various London venues including the Astoria, Charing Cross (supporting The Mighty Diamonds), Kentish Town Forum (supporting Burning Spear), Four Aces Night Club, Seventy- Seven Social Club, the Africa Centre and the Mambo Inn, to name a few.

For several years during the 1980s DJ Ade and Junie Rankin hosted a popular Sunday afternoon community radio show on SLR Radio which featured many of their interviews with legendary Reggae and Soul artists including Ziggy Marley, Augustus Pablo, Betty Wright and the Mighty Diamonds.

In April 2016 DJ Ade and Junie Rankin were featured in the major exhibition entitled; "Rockers, Soulheads & Lovers, Sound Systems Back In Da Day" at the 198 Contemporary Art Gallery, based in Herne Hill, Brixton where they contributed to a panel discussion, a supporting exhibition event on the theme of women's contribution to the sound system movement.

In October 2016 Nzinga Soundz contributed to a round-table discussion for BBC Radio London, hosted by Dotun Adebayo on the "Impact of Reggae music on Black British music and culture". Other contributors included Professor Paul Gilroy, Professor Paul Goodwin, Dr Michael McMillan, Dr Joy White, Mykaell Riley and Lloyd Bradley.

Co-production as a way to research UK Reggae Culture

Tim Wall, Sarah Raine, Mandy Samra, Les Johnson
Birmingham City University

Abstract

This paper explores how we could use practices of co-production to establish and conduct research projects within popular music culture, and apply these to the challenges of researching reggae and its associated musics, sound systems and, what could be called, reggae culture. In using the notion of co-production we draw on ideas that an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals and wider communities will result in more relevant and richer work, than those that would have been achieved in more traditional approaches. For research, this means working with those people and within the cultures we seek to understand and record. In studies of popular music culture, such approaches push us to rethink what it is to be an insider or an outsider, what the purpose of research can be, and what it is to be an academic and a project participant.

Reggae and sound system culture has now reached a point of maturity, and there is a pressing need to capture what happened over the last decades. At the same time the traditions of reggae culture live on in new forms, and these need open and thoughtful ways to explore how they relate to the past, and how they have their own vital distinctiveness. When popular music cultures are based upon specificities of ethnicity and racial politics there is a particular need to build research through co-production, especially as the universities which employ researchers have been dominated by very different groups in terms of class and ethnicity. Likewise, co-production can push researchers to produce a rich inclusive understanding of the role of women, of ethnic diversity, and the place of specialist and mainstream media economies.

The paper will look at models of co-production research from other areas of popular music culture research and apply them to ways they could be realised within reggae and sound system culture.

'This is our Reggae Music' Lovers' rock and the gendered politics of decolonial Reggae

Lisa Palmer, Birmingham City University

Abstract

This paper will argue that popular reggae love songs are essential to debates concerning the everyday cultural practice and gendered experiences of decolonial politics in Caribbean communities. Here, I am arguing that the cultural politics of decoloniality in Britain can be contextualised at the postcolonial/neoliberal conjuncture (Hall 2007) by linking lovers' rock to debates and discourses within black feminism that address loving blackness and the power of the erotic. This juncture is a crucial point for future knowledge production and epistemologies that take seriously the creative ingenuity of second generation Caribbean people that had begun to ask critical questions about the pluralistic meanings of being Black in Britain through lovers' rock music. The paper will develop and expand upon these questions and their significance in relation to the nuanced and distinctive development of lover's rock as a black transnational diasporic space. The paper will begin to establish what is at stake in terms of delineating the gendered and feminist dimensions of black decolonial cultural politics in Britain.

Biography

Dr Lisa Amanda Palmer is Senior Lecturer in Sociology and the Programme Leader for Black Studies at Birmingham City University. She is the co-editor of the book [Blackness in Britain](#). Her chapter, 'Men Cry Too – Black Masculinities and the Feminisation of Lover's Rock' is published in [Black Popular Music in Britain Since 1945](#). She has also published ["LADIES A YOUR TIME NOW!" Erotic politics, lovers' rock and resistance in the UK](#).

Inter/Outernational

Echoes of the underground. Dub and reggae music in the Polish press in the 1980s

Dariusz Brzostek, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Torun

Abstract

The Polish reggae culture emerged in the early 1980's alongside the punk subculture (a compilation album: *Fala*, Polton 1985, produced by Dr Avane/Sławomir Gołaszewski/ – including first Polish reggae bands: Izrael, Kryzys, Kultura) and the second circulation publishing after the martial law in Poland (December 13, 1981 to July 22, 1983). It was a part of the underground counter-culture, including many DIY practices: zines, concerts, small festivals (Róbrege – 1983-1990; Reggae nad Wartą – 1986-1991; Muzyczny Camping – 1982-1993) and private press cassette tapes. The paper is case study of music monthly magazine “Non Stop” (1972-1990), which was in the 1980's one and only mainstream medium spreading the ideas of reggae culture in Poland. The point is that “Non Stop” wasn't the counter-culture fanzine but an official newspaper of the Alliance of Democrats party and one of its main propaganda outlets dedicated to the young workers and the vocational school's students. In the early 1980's the magazine was “hijacked” by the young editorial board (i.a. Sławomir Gołaszewski and Włodzimierz Kleszcz) and spread the ideas of reggae culture among young people in the process of excorporation of the mainstream medium. In this way reggae music and the underground counter-culture ideas became part of a working-class life as well as a mass political movement and a vernacular culture in Poland.

Biography

Dariusz Brzostek is associate Professor of Cultural Studies at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. His main research interests are sound, science fiction and horror studies, social memory, psychoanalysis, popular music and media studies, sound art, field recording, somatic sounds, sound poetry and psychoanalysis of voice.

What's Britain's Contribution to the Development of Reggae?

Kwaku

Abstract

This proposal broadly covers two Conference areas: reggae heritage and oral histories, and reggae and place. Whereas much of reggae analysis and history tends to be located in Jamaica, this “paper” aims to highlight Britain’s contribution to the development of reggae music and the industry that supports the music, by giving voice to a wide constituency of contributors from within and out of academia and the music industry.

The “paper” is based on the screening of an excerpt from the presenter’s work in progress vox pops documentary video ‘Britain’s Contribution To The Development Of Reggae’. Contributors ranging from those in academia such as Prof Paul Gilroy and Mykaell Riley, performers Akala and King Sounds, journalists Mikey Massive and David Katz, producers like Neil ‘Mad Professor’ Fraser, trade unionist Zita Holbourne, community activist Toyin Agbetu, and industry personnel such as Root Jackson and Kennedy Mensah, give their personal take answering the same question: ‘In what way do you think Britain has contributed to the development of reggae music?’

Whilst lovers rock and Britain’s unique place as the colonial “motherland” are much repeated themes, issues of authenticity, and displacement from the Caribbean and from Britain’s mainstream society are also highlighted for their impact on the creativity that comes out of Britain.

The presentation can end with either the presenter’s conclusion to the posed question, or the audience’s response to the views expressed in the video.

Biography

Kwaku is a music industry and history consultant. A former music industry lecturer at University Of Westminster and City University of London, he’s been a columnist on numerous music publications, including Billboard and DJ. He’s the founder of BritishBlackMusic.com/Black Music Congress and International Reggae Day London organiser.

Forward Ever!

A Look Back on the *Jamaica Jamaica!* Exhibition that Closed its Doors in Paris, France—and its Possible Futures

Thomas Vendryes, ENS Paris-Saclay & Sebastien Carayol

Abstract

After seventeen weeks of constant success, *Jamaica Jamaica!*, the exhibition about Jamaican music set at la Philharmonie de Paris (France), closed its doors on August 13th, 2017.

From the get-go, it was an adventure: why would the Philharmonie de Paris, which hosts the largest exhibition area dedicated to music in France, organize *Jamaica Jamaica!*, the most important exhibition to date – not only in France, but in the world – about Jamaican popular music, in a country that has had, historically, a merely distant link with Jamaica?

The exhibition was accompanied by an ambitious catalog, and a dedicated issue of *Volume!*, the French academic review of popular music studies.

These three related projects have entailed complex discussions and difficult curatorial and editorial decisions - the challenge being to present, within the limited spaces and budgets of the exhibition, its catalog and a parallel issue of *Volume!*, the width and diversity of Jamaican popular music as well as its context and significance.

With the exhibition now travelling to Sao Paulo (Brazil) in March 2018, what are the potential leads to explore in order to keep the momentum instigated by *Jamaica Jamaica!* going? This presentation is also aiming at exploring cooperatively the possibilities to mount the exhibition in places meaningful to the Jamaican diaspora - including, but of course not limited to, Jamaica, Great Britain, Africa, and The United States.

This will be presented by Sébastien Carayol, the exhibition curator and co-editor of the catalog, and Thomas Vendryes, co-editor of the catalog, and guest editor of the special issue of *Volume!*.

Biographies

Sébastien Carayol was the curator of the *Jamaica, Jamaica!* exhibition that recently took place at La Philharmonie de Paris (April-August 2017), Sébastien Carayol is a French documentary director/journalist/curator based between Marseille, France, and Los Angeles.

He fell in love with Jamaican music in the mid-1990s while discovering and following a number of London-based sound systems, including Jah Shaka, Jah Observer, and Roots Ting - before travelling to Jamaica several times in quest of musical history and artefacts. He also runs a reggae reissue label called Reel-Heavy Music.

As a curator, Carayol has put together exhibitions Paris (*Say Watt? Le Culte du Sound System*, La Gaîté Lyrique, 2013) and Los Angeles (*Hometown Hifi*, Sonos Studio, Los Angeles ; *Agents Provocateurs*, Subliminal Projects, Los Angeles).

As a journalist and documentary director, he has written about reggae music for numerous music outlets (*Wax Poetics*, *Natty Dread*, *United Reggae*, *Riddim*, *Vibrations*, *RBMA's Daily*) and directed several TV pieces and documentaries relevant to the culture (about Scientist, Brinsley Forde, etc. as well as a 10-episode documentary series for ARTE called "Sound System" that examines various formal practices of sound system culture in different countries).

Thomas Vendryes is an associate professor at the Department of Social Sciences of the ENS Paris-Saclay (France). His research focuses on the dynamics of social and economic changes in developing countries, including the evolution of the modalities of music production in Jamaica. He participated in the scientific committee of the *Jamaica Jamaica!* exhibition that took place at the Philharmonie de Paris (France, 2017), and coordinated, with Sébastien Carayol, the exhibition catalogue. In parallel with the exhibition, he's been acting as guest editor for *Volume!*, the French journal of popular music studies, for an issue dedicated to Jamaican music (*Volume!* 13:2, 2017).