

Jamaica, Jamaica! - an exhibition conceived by the Cité de la Musique - Philharmonie de Paris, produced and executed by Sesc São Paulo

The show comes to Brazil to occupy the exhibition space at Sesc 24 de Maio



© Nitty Gritty, Jammy Studio, 1985. Picture by Beth Lesser

From **March 15th**, **Sesc 24 de Maio**, located in the centre of São Paulo, features an exhibition conceived by the **Cité de la Musique - Philharmonie de Paris**, produced and executed by **Sesc São Paulo, Jamaica, Jamaica!**, comes directly from the french institution, where it was shown last year. The exhibition is curated by french journalist and film director Sébastien Carayol and can be visited **until August 26th**.

A chronological and historical panorama on Jamaican music is shown in eight cores, contemplating a political, social and cultural view, considering the island's musical production as a guiding line of that history as well as the findings of the researches about the expansion of Jamaican music in Brazil - mainly in Maranhão, Bahia and São Paulo.

The exhibition takes up the fifth floor of **Sesc 24 de Maio**, equivalent to 1,300m², and intends to show the Caribbean country, which is the birthplace one of the main musical and cultural styles of the second half of the twentieth century, beyond reggae and its major icon, Bob Marley. In this context, **Jamaica, Jamaica!** seeks to recollect part of history by means of looking at conflicts and postcolonial encounters which led to a unique and universal musical movement. To illustrate diversity and heritage, the show brings together photographs, album covers, musical instruments, leaflets, graphic material from street parties, documents, audios and images from private collections and institutions.

In addition to the findings gathered by Carayol, taken from collections and institutions from Jamaica, Great Britain and France, the exhibition at SESC São Paulo presents pieces that were

specially selected for this assembly during the research of a guest curatorial group, which presents the unfolding and impact of Jamaican culture in Brazil.

Objects, documents and images from Maranhão, Bahia and São Paulo are part of the Brazilian history. São Luís, known as "The Brazilian Jamaica", the region known as *Recôncavo Baiano*, where the traditional Jamaican roots of the Rastafari were maintained, and Salvador, where there was strong influence of reggae in local music - particularly in samba reggae and afro groups - and São Paulo, with the dancehall and reggae balls from the periphery to the city center, strengthening the local sound system culture.

The exhibition will also offer a wide integrated program, which includes courses, lectures, meetings and workshops as well as an educational project that will provide guided visits and workshops within in the exhibition space.

THE EXHIBITION

Jamaican music may go further than what is popularly known - such as reggae, dub and dancehall. The musical identity of this country is intimately linked to social and political facts and this aspect is made evident at the exhibition. The branches ramifications of Jamaican music, as broad as those of jazz or blues, and influences that refer to the days of enslavement, such as the traditional singing and dancing from colonization period between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are depicted at **Jamaica, Jamaica!**

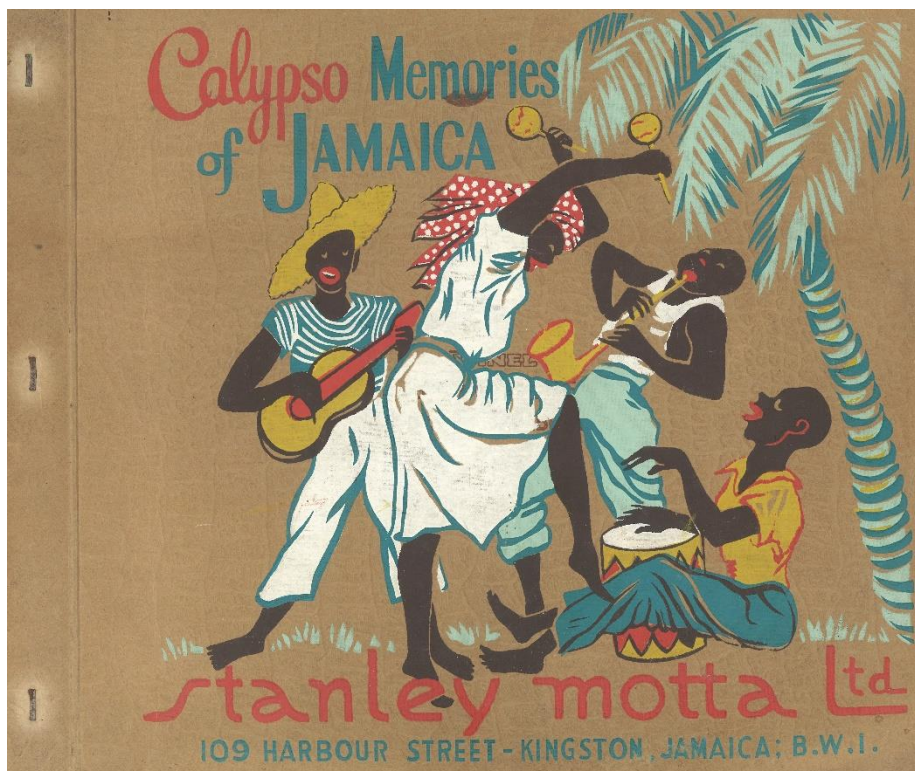
During the 1950s, sound innovations coming from the Kingston ghettos influenced this universe, paving the way for some of the modern urban musical genres and other features such as "DJ", "sound system", "remix" and "dub", for example.

Jamaica, Jamaica! tries to acknowledge that history through the post-colonial encounters and conflicts that allowed the prominence of Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Lee Perry, King Tubby, Studio One, Alpha Boys School, Marcus Garvey and other artists through musical styles like burru, revival, mento, ski, rocksteady, reggae, dub and dancehall.

RADIO JAMAICA

The exhibition suggests a sound experience that praise feelings. Bearing that purpose, a radio station was designed to fill the exhibition space during the show and it can also be accessed through the SESC São Paulo internet.

In 1959, the first known local radio station, JBC - Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation, founded by one of Jamaican independence leaders, Norman Manley, was the first radio station on the island that focused on Jamaican music rather than American jazz and rhythm and blues.



© Calypso Memories of Jamaica, recorded in the 1st Jamaican studio. Stanley Motta, 1956.

In that sense, radio became a source of pride for Jamaicans as the first bond in the music industry's production chain: live radio talent shows have created the setting and helped establishing Jamaican music industry.

With that historic cut-out, Radio Jamaica integrates the exhibition and presents a series of songs, sounds and playlists that can be enjoyed through your own headset or other electronic devices.

THE CORES

The exhibition sets forth a route divided into cores, each one with a thematic cut-out which, together, form an overview of major facts in the political, social and cultural construction of Jamaica.

Beyond the Bob Marley icon, the exhibition depicts artists and music groups such as Peter Tosh, Marcus Garvey, The Skatalites and The Wailers, as well as the creation of rhythms such as ska, sound system and dancehall, and the codes used for cultural dissemination and representation. To demonstrate the complexity that surrounds the Caribbean island, the thematic cores bring together iconic objects such as posters, instruments, vinyl records, books, paintings and photographs, expanding the echoes of Jamaican influence in Brazil and the redefinitions created from this mixture.

1 | Four hundred years – Rebel Music: Slavery’s multiple heritage

The exploitation of the "wood and water land" - *Xaymaca*, in Arawak - began with the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1494. It was occupied by Spaniards from 1509 to 1655 and invaded by Englishmen after that period, becoming the hub of the colonial Caribbean economy and slave trade. The multiple peoples kidnapped in different regions of Africa until the beginning of the nineteenth century were taken to forced labour mainly in sugarcane plantations.

Throughout that time, the resistance of these peoples never ceased and new forms of religious cults emerged from a mixture of Christian and African influences, creating sounds and dances that sowed the foundations of Jamaican music.

From that cultural effervescence emerges the “mento” style, which is currently known as the oldest form of Jamaican Creole music, born in the nineteenth century as a form of rural folk music.

“Mento” is a fusion of the heritage of enslavement, drawn from the songs and dances of West Africa as well as the colonial customs of the period, like the “quadrille”, an European society dance. Its heyday was in the 1950s, paving the way to the style known as “ska”, which blew up the music scene.

2 | Independence Ska! – The soundtrack of independence

With the end of World War II, a worldwide process of decolonization began and Jamaica gained independence in 1962, which contaminated the population with euphoria. In this climate, ska - a blend of local traditions with rhythm and blues and jazz with a distinctive beat - escalated and became Jamaica's first musical phenomenon to reach international audiences. The Skatalites lead this movement and achieved great success.

In a certain way, the boarding school called Alpha Boys School was responsible for that phenomenon because all members of The Skatalites were educated by the Catholic nuns who provided rigorous musical training. In addition, other alumni as well as members of Israel Vibration, Cedric Brooks, Vin Gordon, Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace, Leroy Smart, Yellowman and Leslie Thompson (the first black conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra) are also linked to that school.

3 | Hey Mr. Music! - Studio One, The Black Ark and King Tubby's studio: A production circle like no other

In the late 1950s, small street discotheques emerged, increasing the popularity of the "sound systems" and the need to play unique tracks. In this context, studios and music itself began to play a major political, social and economic role in Jamaican society. During the decades that followed, musical techniques practiced at Kingston studios were adopted, simulated and reinvented around the world.

Studio One, founded by Clement Seymour "Coxsone" Dodd (1932-2004) is claimed to be the first black owned music studio in the island and responsible for launching the career of singers like Bob Marley and The Wailers, Burning Spear, Ras Michael, Alton Ellis, Ken Boothe, Horace Andy and The Skatalites. Memorabilia from Dodd's studios can be seen at the exhibition, including some musical instruments like Jackie Mittoo's organ and sound system speakers together with personal photographs.

At the same time, sound engineer and producer Lee "Scratch" Perry (born in 1936) equipped with a four-track recorder and some drum machines, invented production techniques that spread beyond reggae circuits and are still used today.

On the other hand, the console of music producer King Tubby (1941-1989) is one of the exhibition highlights. He is a pioneer of musical reinterpretation and showed the world the importance of sound engineering. Also known as the "dub master", he invented the remix, a popular music technique used nowadays.

The movie *The Harder They Come* (1971) took reggae to Europe through its soundtrack. Jimmy Cliff plays Vincent "Ivanhoe" Martin, an aspirant singer inspired by a real-life crook known as "Rhygin" who was famous in the 1940s. Rare memorabilia related to this film is also on display.

4 | Sound The System! – The true musical instrument of Jamaica

Radio became popular in the 1950s, so young entrepreneurs began organizing outdoor dance events where any record could be played at. The sound system is born: street partying with loudspeakers introduced mobile disco and dancehall dancing in island's routine.

This new trend was turned into an industry with the investments of Tom The Great Sebastian and V Rocket, giving birth to the first sound systems: *The Trojan* (Duke Reid), *Coxson's Downbeat* (Clement Dodd) and *Voice of the People* (Prince Buster). This movement was characterized by technical, stylistic and musical innovations such as remixing and is considered to be the foundation the DJs culture as we know it today.

These celebrations were advertised through hand-painted posters that announce the dancehalls and sound systems but they were considered illegal by local authorities who used to seize and destroy them. This rich material represents visual and linguistic heritage and has been collected by Jamaican producer Maxine in the last 15 years.



© Maxine Walters

5 | Black Man Time – The meshed destinies of “Jah, Rastafari” and Marcus Garvey

“Black Man Time” is a tribute to I-Roy's music which illustrates the fate of two important and intertwined historical figures often cherished in Jamaican music, particularly in reggae: Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie and activist Marcus Garvey.

Between 1680 and 1786, the United Kingdom deported nearly two million Africans to its colonies. The resistance of the enslaved thus establishes the basis for a working-class consciousness, which is shaped by figures of black pride, such as Marcus Garvey (1887-1940). Known for black nationalism, born in Jamaica but active in the United States, Marcus Garvey becomes one of the advocates of pan-Africanism. The other figure is Haile Selassie (1892-1975), Emperor of Ethiopia, who embodies resistance against oppression and colonialism. After his coronation in 1930, Selassie is proclaimed the incarnation of God by the Rastafari - Jamaican spiritual and philosophical movement.

In the late 1960s, fuelled by determination to overthrow the system of enslavement and colonialism, the Rastafarians transformed reggae into a cry of militant, seditious and mystical pride to re-establish their ties with Africa and its ancestors.

Because of violent repression in colonial Jamaica, the first Rastafarians took refuge in the hills around Kingston, where they develop a type of music called “Nyabinghi” under the influence of percussionist Count Ossie (1926-1976).

Rastafarian percussionists created their studio in 1960 and promoted encounters named “grounddations”, led by a trio of drums - bass, fusion and repeater - whose rhythms seem to follow heartbeats

6 | We came from Trenchtown - Bob Marley, The Wailers and the political violence in Jamaica

Legendary Jamaican musician Bob Marley was born in the rural town of Nine Mile and spent most of his youth in the West Kingston ghetto of Trenchtown. He met Peter Tosh (1944-1987) and Bunny Livingston (born 1947) to form The Wailers. In 1964, “Simmer Down” becomes a hit in Jamaica and The Wailers continue to sing about Trenchtown throughout their career, always surrounded by street violence.

In 1972, the band signed a contract with Chris Blackwell’s record label called Island but the group split up because the label only used to promote the singer Bob Marley, who introduced Kingston to the world before his death in 1981.

The marks of violence end up transforming the guitar shaped into the form of a machine gun in

one of the symbols of reggae music at the time as well as an icon of rebellion and militancy. Originally created and used by California-based guitarist Bruno Coon from the Prairie Fire rock group, it becomes notorious in the hands of Peter Tosh, who bought it for USD 550 after a show in Los Angeles in 1983. This instrument is one of the flagship pieces of the exhibition.

7 | Dancehall style – Jamaican music after Bob Marley

With the death of Bob Marley in 1981, Jamaican music lost one of its greatest international representatives. At the same time, a new strand of reggae begins to take hold in the ghettos of the island: the dancehall. Far from the Rastafari spirituality of the past, this new sound narrates life in the culture of the sound system, focused on beauty and body.

Impaired by foreign debt since the first loan from the IMF in 1977, Jamaica was becoming even more impoverished and, with a provocative tone and lyrics about guns and sex, the new genre became one of the symbols of relaxation for people oppressed by everyday pressures. With dancehall, new codes are created, a musical and corporal movement, born on dance floors to the rhythm of sound systems.

The English record label Greensleeves, founded in 1977, reflects the climate of the early 1980s, when dub comes to an end and the dancehall phase begins. When it released albums from several Jamaican producers, Greensleeves forged part of the visual identification of this new kind of sound with the support of comic book-influenced illustrator Tony McDermott.

8 | There should always be some mystery around: Taking a glance at the path of reggae in Brazil

In addition to the exhibition material shown in Paris, on a floor totally dedicated to the chronological and thematic tour, there will be objects, documents and images especially gathered during the research made by a Brazilian team.

From 1970, the influence of the Jamaican culture is established and recreated in Maranhão, with discotheques in popular parties and in Bahia, with Gilberto Gil and Lazzo Matumbi, besides the birth of the Olodum in 1979 and the Muzenza in 1981, which gave rise to samba reggae. Between the 1980s and 1990s, bands such as the Jah Tribe are formed as well as social protest movements linked to reggae, mainly in the Recôncavo Baiano, what gave rise to the artists Edson Gomes, Nengo Vieira and Sine Calmon. From the alternative to pop scene, with an aesthetic popularly consolidated the same way as in the cultural industry, dub and dancehall parties became part of the nightlife of São Paulo in 2000. Soon after, “Dubversão” sound system takes the streets of the center and the outskirts of the city.

“JAMAICA, JAMAICA!” EXHIBITION

CURATOR: Sébastien Carayol

BRAZILIAN CONTENT: Caio Csermak, Camila Miranda, Dj Magrão, Lys Ventura, Rodrigo Brandão and Stranjah

OPENING: March 14th, 2018

VISITING PERIOD: from March 15th, to August 26th, 2018

VISITING HOURS: Tuesdays through Saturdays from 9:00am to 9:00pm; Sundays and Holidays from 9:00am to 6:00pm

LOCAL: 5th floor exhibition space

MINIMUM AGE: 12 years old

ADMISSION: Free

PRESS INFO

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