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1. CARIBBEAN MUSIC

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Our Culture

When we speak of Caribbean music the thought of sweet melodious tunes to rhythmic vibes fill our minds. Caribbean music has indeed evolved over the years and is presently one of the most listened to music in the world thanks to great musicians. We would now like to examine some of our sweet Caribbean Music.

1.1. Out of Trinidad came Calypso which had its origin in West Africa

One of the main forms of music in the Caribbean, which led to the evolution of Caribbean music, is called Calypso. Calypso is a mixture of African folk songs and has its roots in a West African form of music called Kaiso. Kaiso was sung by the first enslaved Africans and was used to unite the Africans on plantation life in Trinidad & Tobago where Calypso evolved. In Guyana, Shanty, also African folk songs, was sung amongst the enslaved Africans when they wanted to talk about their masters. Early Calypso in Trinidad was sung in French Patios, a mixture of French and other languages, as there were a large number of French immigrants on the island. And later on with the British influence, Calypso was sung in English Patios, which is a mixture of English with other languages. The enslaved Africans also sung Calypso as a means of communication to mock their slave masters.

1.2. Chutney: A cultural experience

Anytime you visit Trinidad (especially during Carnival) you will eventually hear the exotic sounds of chutney music blaring from a maxi taxi, playing in a dance club, or on the street. And surprisingly enough, you might be able to hear it in other parts of the Indian diaspora.

Chutney is an up-tempo, rhythmic song, accompanied by the dholak, the harmonium and the dhantal. Originally, chutney songs made reference to deities and were offensive to religious leaders. Within recent times, the chutney has become extremely popular and new compositions are being written. Some of these contain calypso and soca rhythms. There is also some extemporaneous composition and accompaniment (especially in the growing number of competitions) may be provided by bands which include Indian, Western and African instruments (TIDCO 1996, 16).

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1.3. Soca

According to many, Soul and Calypso, were combined in Trinidad to form a new style of music called Soca which quickly became very popular.

Calypso and East Indian rhythms hybrid as two cultures joined in Music

According to one source, Soca is actually a combination of Calypso hybrid with East Indian rhythms which originated in Trinidad and was created in 1973 by Garfield Blackman when he fused Indian rhythms with Calypso. Blackman was born on Oct 6, 1941 in Lengua, Trinidad. As Calypso was dying and Reggae was becoming popular, Garfield was experimenting with music and created Soca when he fused traditional calypso music with East Indian rhythms. He added the dholak, tabla and dhantal, combining the music of the two largest ethnic groups in Trinidad, the Africans and East Indians, bringing a new "energetic musical hybrid called Soca." The intoxicating rhythms of Soca became popular amongst the younger generations with this new up beat tempo which was added to Calypso.

Afro Caribbeans dominated Soca

In the early days of Soca, between 1980 and 1987, this new form of music was dominated by Afro-Caribbeans, where most of the words were in Creole Patois and fewer words in Hindi. There were many hit songs such as Boron's "Raja Rani", Mighty Trini's "Curry Tabanca," Sugar Aloe's "Roti & Dhalpourie" and Sparrow's "Marajin."

1.4. Rock steady and Ska

Ska, which the Jamaicans played in the 60's, was an upbeat, rhythmic variation from the early 60's based on New Orleans R & B. As dance hall crowds wanted a change as Ska had played itself out, Rock Steady was born in Jamaica in the 1960's. A guitarist named Lynn Taitt was credited for starting the Rock Steady style of music by slowing down Ska.

1.5. Reggae

When people started to complain that Rock Steady was too slow, the artists and producers in Jamaica realized that the only way to go was faster, giving birth to Jamaica's own Reggae with a jerkier and faster tempo than Rock Steady and using electric instruments.

Reggae reached its heights in Jamaica

While music was evolving to new heights in Trinidad, Jamaica was also caught up in the evolution of music as Reggae becomes Jamaican unique style of music in the 1960's.

The origin of the word Reggae is hard to determine. Bob Marley who wore dreadlocks took reggae to new heights. He said the word Reggae is Spanish meaning "the king's music." Soon reggae crossed into mainstream as musicians like Bob Marley and Scratch Perry influenced "countless reggae, folk, rock and dance artists."

Bob Marley writing hit songs like "I Shot The Sheriff"

A hit song written by Bob Marley called "I Shot The Sheriff" was re done by Eric Clapton which became a big hit for the British musician. Marley continued writing many hit songs, like "One Love", "No Woman No Cry" and became a huge success worldwide. After Bob Marley died in 1981, reggae never recovered and Jamaicans were looking for a change when a new style of music, dance hall reggae called dub emerged.

Dub evolved from Reggae as a result of Jamaican deejays rapping over the instrumental 'B' sides of Reggae singles and soon after American record companies got on the bandwagon where American rap / hip-hop originated from Jamaican Reggae.

For more info. Visit: <http://www.sbgmusic.com>