

The Hip Hop DJ:

Legend has it that turntable scratching as a musical form was discovered in the south Bronx in 1975 by "Grand Wizzard" Theodore. He was 13 years old at the time, when his mother kept telling him to turn the music down. Instead of turning it down, his smart-alec response was to spin the record back and forth by hand, creating the distinctive scratching sound. He quickly realized that his technique could be used for more than just ticking off his mother, so he started creating music with it. Soon others began trying and refining his technique, like Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaataa, forming the beginnings of the New York Hip Hop scene.

It wasn't until the early Eighties that Hip Hop achieved national fame, with the success of New York rappers Run DMC, LL Cool J, and The Beastie Boys. Within a few years, Hip Hop acts were springing up all over the country, such as Florida's notorious dirty rappers 2 Live Crew, Oakland's MC Hammer, and L.A. gangsta rappers NWA. By the early 1990's Rap and Hip-Hop had established a permanent foothold in the record charts.

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DECEMBERCHILD BENEFIT 2004!!

Well, it's that time of year again, so you know what that means, right? Christmas? Thanksgiving? New Year? Hanukkah? Yes, there's all that, but there's also Decemberchild, Still Fumin's annual birthday party for those born during the holiday season. Almost any kid born around the holidays has the same story; having to settle for a combined "birthday-Christmas" or "birthday-Hanukkah", while friends and siblings lucky enough *not* to be born around that time make out like bandits. Our very own Tom Savell is one of those unlucky kids, born on December 21st.

The Tom Savell Band will be the headlining act at the 2004 Decemberchild benefit concert, with Lisa Leuschner opening the show. Decemberchild will be held December 17th, 7:00pm at the Kuumbwa Jazz center, located at 320-2 Cedar Street, in the heart of downtown Santa Cruz.

We will be raffling off some great prizes, including an embroidered leather jacket, and an electric guitar! Be sure to buy some raffle tickets, as the proceeds will be going to the Valley Christmas Project, a charity benefitting the needy in San Lorenzo Valley and Scotts Valley.

In the works at Still Fumin' Records:



Tom Savell: Tom's new album is due out in 2005. It will feature new versions of carefully selected love songs by artists such as The Moody Blues, Neil Diamond, & Tommy Edwards. And yes, you will hear Tom play the violin on this album.

JKS: And for you deviant Fetal Pigs In Brine fans, your appetite for insanity will be satisfied in 2005, with a follow up album under a new name: JKS. Don't worry, you paranoid psychos, the name might be a little shorter, but the music still stomps like a rhino on a brush fire.



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Music from Jamaica: All the love that we've found

The Island of Jamaica

The first recorded inhabitants of Jamaica were the Arawak, who were living there when Columbus first arrived on the Island in 1494. The Arawak called their home "Xaymaca", but Columbus called it "Santiago". Although the official modern name of the island nation is "West Indies", it is commonly called Jamaica, a variation of the Arawak name. The population now consists mostly of descendants of African slaves brought in by English, Spanish, and French settlers

Ska

In the late '50s, Jamaican musicians were emulating the American Rhythm & Blues music they heard on records and radio, while adding a Caribbean twist by incorporating rhythms such as the Cuban Mambo, and the Jamaican Mento. Over the next few years, they developed a musical style from these elements that came to be known as Ska.

In 1962, Jamaica became an independent nation after decades of British rule. Suddenly, Jamaica had every reason to celebrate, and Ska became an expression of its celebration. It was something that was distinctively Jamaican, to help define the country's newly affirmed identity to the rest of the world.

The first international Ska hit was "My Boy Lollipop", sung by Jamaican Millie Small in the early sixties. Toots & the Maytals, Derrick Morgan, the Wailers (Featuring Bunny Wailer, Peter Tosh, & Bob Marley) and The Skatalites also enjoyed success during that time.

In the 4 decades since then, Ska has remained an important musical style, every so often re-emerging in the popular music charts as a "new" Ska movement. In the late 1970's, British bands like The Specials and Madness were mixing punk and ska. The combination seemed natural, as the 2 genre's have similar tempo and energy, have a heavy emphasis on the back beat, and are both strongly influenced by 1950's Rhythm and Blues. British Ska found its way to American alternative radio in the 1980's which planted the seeds for the American Ska craze of the 1990's, when dozens of acts, including the Mighty Mighty Bosstones, Rancid, and No Doubt offered their interpretations of the Ska-Punk connection.

Roots, Rock, Reggae

In the late 1960's, some of the early Ska bands (including the Wailers & the Maytals) began slowing the tempo of the music down. Though originally called "Rock Steady", this new style would evolve into Reggae, featuring a funky rhythm section, syncopated guitar, and soulful vocals. Over the next few years, Reggae lyrics became more and more political, fueled by the volatile international climate of the late '60s/early '70s. Like the psychedelic Rock movement in The U.S. and England at the time, Reggae became a voice of rebellion, rejecting the established Anglo American norms, and advocating political and social freedom. As part of this development, Reggae grew to be associated with Rastafarianism, an African based religion celebrating, among other things, equal rights and the ceremonial use of marijuana.

Dub

Legendary reggae producer Lee "Scratch" Perry is credited with inventing Dub, a form of Reggae music featuring electronic drums, strong reverb & echo effects on the syncopated rhythm guitar, and long, spaced-out instrumental jams.

Early in his career, the volatile Perry was an important figure in the traditional "roots" Reggae sound, making his own recordings as well as producing others through the sixties. He worked with the Wailers in the late sixties/early seventies, helping to launch their legendary career. His own band, The Upsetters" has existed on and off through the decades.

In 1974, inspired by a dream, Perry built his "Black Ark" studio in his back yard in Kingston, Jamaica. There he declared the "10 Commandments of Reggae" (Black Ark was a reference to the Ark of the Covenant in the Bible) and developed Dub, using everything from telephone calls to gunshots as sound effects for his recordings. Many of his ideas and recording techniques have carried over into other musical genres, such as Hip-Hop, Alternative, Industrial, and Techno.

Dancehall Reggae

Dancehall Reggae developed in Jamaica during the 80s & 90s, in conjunction with Hip Hop music in the U.S. It is centered around the vocal style known as "toasting"; performed by a "dancehall deejay". Toasting is basically an improvisational rap, but with more melodic emphasis than most American rap styles. Often the toasting is done over hip-hop style instrumental tracks, and sometimes classic Reggae & R&B hits are used as backing music. The Dancehall style has successfully crossed over into the U.S. R&B/Hip Hop scene with acts like Busta Rimes and Shaggy.

Miscellaneous

Some musicians have combined Reggae with other music styles, making it into something not exactly Reggae, but uniquely their own. The Police from England were probably the first mainstream band to fuse Reggae with Rock. Originally touted as a Punk band in the late 1970's, singer/songwriter Sting led Police through an evolution of Reggae, Rock, and Jazz over the next few years, before moving on to a long successful solo career.

Bad Brains, out of Washington, D.C. became notorious in the 1980's for their bipolar marriage of Reggae and hardcore Punk. These outspoken Rastafarians would never mix the 2 styles during any one song, but would switch back and forth from song to song, using the soothing Reggae beat as a change-up to the heart-palpitating Punk (and also give the moshers in the audience a chance to cool off and drink their beers).

In recent years, no popular band has used the full spectrum of Jamaican music more extensively than Sublime. Hailing from Long Beach, CA, these surf punks regularly used elements of Reggae, Ska, Dub, and Dancehall along with Rock, Punk, and Hip Hop to make a style that defies classification. Unfortunately, singer/songwriter Brad Nowell tragically died just weeks before the breakout success of their self-titled third LP in 1996. The surviving members continue to tour as the Long Beach Dub All Stars.