

Lessons from the Past: The Work Culture of Session Musicians in Jamaica's Recording Industry from 1957-1979

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Abstract: Jamaica has had an unusual output of genre and record production relative to the size of its population. The narratives of singers reveal some aspects of the phenomenal growth of the recording industry from 1957 to 1979; however, studio musicians' narratives provide unique insight into the organization of manpower required for the large creative output that resulted in the establishment of three genres: ska, rocksteady and reggae. This paper outlines how studio musicians organized themselves as a workforce in response to the constraints of society at that time, and to the needs of the emergent recording industry in Jamaica.

Résumé: La Jamaïque a produit un nombre exceptionnel de genres de musique et d'enregistrements comparativement à la taille de sa population. Les récits des chanteurs révèlent quelques-uns des aspects de la croissance phénoménale de l'industrie du disque de 1957 à 1979 ; cependant, les récits des musiciens de studios nous procurent un aperçu unique de l'organisation de la force de travail nécessaire à la grande créativité qui a permis l'instauration de trois genres musicaux : le ska, le rocksteady et le reggae. Cet article souligne la façon dont les musiciens de studio se sont organisés eux-mêmes en force de travail en réponse aux contraintes de la société de l'époque et aux besoins de l'industrie du disque naissante en Jamaïque.

The collaboration among various music industry personnel in Jamaica, between 1957 and the late 1960s resulted in remarkable innovation. It was during this time that ska, rocksteady and reggae—genres that have since come to define Jamaican popular music—emerged. Genre creation requires, among other things, the development of a body of work, not just a few songs, and this is why it is not only the innovation of this time period that is important to note, but also the quantity of music that was created. Bassist George “Fully” Fulwood describes the number of songs that would be recorded during a recording session:

In Jamaica those times, we might go inna [sic] the studio for about two hours, and come out with fourteen, fifteen songs! It's a challenge because you have to realize the competition that you're facing. If you don't come up with something crucial enough, that producer don't want to use you again. So you have what, three minutes, three and a half minutes, four minutes to really come up with ideas with arrangements. (Fulwood in Veal 2007: 47)

Session musicians, of various competencies, provided the basic manpower to support these high levels of production in the late 1950s and 1960s for at least three recording studios in Kingston—Federal, Studio One and Treasure Isle—and for a number of producers. (Neely 2007: 2-3). However, by 1970 many of the session musicians left the recording industry due to their frustration with aspects of the management of the industry.

In this essay, I turn to the narratives produced by and about these musicians in order to examine what I call the “work culture” of session musicians in Jamaica's recording industry during this immensely productive and generative time. My focus is on the ways that session musicians mobilized themselves as a workforce and factors that resulted in the mass attrition of this one category of workers. My interest in the occupational structure of the workforce of Jamaican session musicians stems from related research on one of Studio One's music directors, Jackie Mittoo.

To gain insight into the culture of session musicians I examined scholarly literature, popular literature, liner notes and discographies to identify main issues among instrumentalists involved in the production of Jamaican popular music (hereafter JPM) from 1957-1979. Robert Witmer (1987), Garth White (1998), Daniel Neely (2007, 2008), and Dennis Howard (2010) have written on the period before ska, rock steady and reggae. They describe the role of music in various aspects of Jamaican society in the 1940s and 1950s. Norman Stolzoff (2000), Clinton Hutton (2007) and Michael Veal (2007) focus on the genesis of sound systems, DJs, dub and dancehall culture. The *Jamaica Journal*, *The Caribbean Quarterly* and *Oxford Music Online* provide short biographies of most of the instrumentalists from the ska, rocksteady and reggae eras. There are also a number of biographic dictionaries such as those by Colin Larkin (1998), Dave Thompson (2002) and David Moscovitz (2006) that provide details on various personnel in the JPM industry. There are interviews with musicians on their experiences in the Jamaican recording industry in popular literature by Kevin Chang and Wayne Chen (1998), Brian Jahn and Tom Weber (1998), Chuck Foster (1999), Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton (2001), Lloyd Bradley (2001) among others. *The*

Gleaner, a major Jamaican newspaper in circulation since 1834, also offers a wealth of interviews, memorial tributes and public commentaries that address the contribution and public reception of Jamaican musicians. The Internet also has information on the instrumentalists, including personal web pages and amateur documentaries that provide insight into the training and professional lives of Jamaican musicians. There are also a number of published documentaries on DVD in which a number of JPM musicians have been interviewed, such as *The Studio One Story* that features Clement “Coxsone” Dodd speaking at length about the history of his recording studio. This four-hour documentary is significant, as Dodd introduces all the persons who worked in and around his studio; the viewer is also treated to anecdotes from a number of his workers and associates. The documentary reveals the community effort that made this studio an icon of JPM.

To frame my discussion of this discourse, I will rely on Howard Becker’s and Peter Martin’s concept of “art worlds,” which provides insight into the formation of work cultures. Second, I will discuss the social context in which Jamaican popular music was produced in Kingston until the 1950s. After a brief description of JPM session musicians, I will discuss three occupational problems that seemed to influence the work arrangement of session musicians. My main purpose is to add to our knowledge and understanding of how JPM musicians organized themselves as a workforce within a developing nation.

Art Worlds

This investigation of the work culture of JPM session musicians is informed by Howard Becker’s and Peter Martin’s theoretical stance on the sociology of work as applied to the arts and musicians respectively (Becker 1982, 1990; Martin 2006). In a recent clarification of the theory developed in his acclaimed book *Art Worlds* (1982), Becker highlights the dynamics of relationships between persons in an art world:

The metaphor of world ... [refers to] people, all sorts of people, who are in the middle of doing something that requires them to pay attention to each other, to consciously take account of the existence of others and to shape what they do in the light of what others do. In such a world, people do not respond automatically to mysterious external forces surrounding them. Instead, they develop their lines of activity gradually, seeing how others

respond to what they do and adjusting what they do next in a way that meshes with what others have done and will probably do next. (Becker and Pessin 2006: 277-278)

In this definition of art worlds, Becker alludes to the tensions that will occur when people work together. The source of tension may be internal or external, requiring resolution in the form of gradual adjustments for the preservation and posterity of the art world. Based on the definition of a “world,” it is my conjecture that internal tensions may include situations as diverse as the delivery of lunch at a time that disrupts a recording session, and conflicts between participants of an art world that disrupt the productivity of that world. External tensions may include negative public opinion of an art world, which could lead to the reduction of funding, or public support, for the art world. Resolutions in these situations may involve what sociologist Peter Blau calls “adjustments” that may be major or minor (Blau 2003: 222). More importantly, each of these adjustments helps to shape the culture of the art world.

Peter Martin also stresses that an examination of tensions, which he calls “problems and constraints,” is the key to gaining insights into the culture of musicians’ world in his essay titled “Musician’s Worlds: Music Making as a Collaborative Activity.” Martin, who draws on Becker extensively, says that musicians’ work culture develops from a “patterned and collective response to the specific set of problems and contingencies that affect the musicians’ occupational situation” (Martin 2006: 97, 106). Martin uses this principle as an analytical resource for the investigation of musicians’ work culture. His approach involves the identification and examination of occupational problems, which “can generate explanation of salient aspects of the musicians’ cultures” (Martin 2006: 95). He also recommends the arts world perspective as a useful “orienting framework” for popular music studies:

This approach not only provides a systematic basis for investigating “popular music” activities in all their heterogeneity but offers a sociologically satisfactory means of explaining cultural patterns—that is, it will go beyond the description of what groups of people typically do and provide an understanding of why specific norms, values, and beliefs come to be adopted. (Martin 2006: 96)

My interest is in the gradual adjustments that influenced the occupational structure of session musicians in the emergent JPM recording industry, and factors that led to mass exodus of session musicians from that art world.

I will use the problem-adjustment framework to discuss the collective responses of session musicians to three external and internal occupational problems: social rejection, low wages and inconsistent synergy in a session band. The first of these problems, social rejection, had its genesis in the social conditions prior to and during the era that the JPM recording industry was developed.

Social Conditions

The historical and social conditions that gave rise to this period are well documented by Witmer (1987), White (1998), Moore and Johnson (2004), and Neely (2007, 2008) among others. They consistently identify issues of class as a significant factor in many aspects of Jamaican life including the consumption and production of music. In their monograph on British cultural imperialism in Jamaica from 1865-1920, Moore and Johnson assert that social mobility was achieved through the adoption of British culture, including speech, dress, Christian beliefs, sports, music, etc. (2004: 12, 245). “British-derived cultural attributes and those who came closest to emulating them were accorded the highest social status. Culture, therefore, supplemented race and color in determining one’s social position by the late nineteenth century” (Moore and Johnson 2004: 12, 245). The importance of “high culture” is evident in the names of musical bands in the 1940s and 1950s: titles that include “orchestra” and “society,” such as the Eric Dean Orchestra and the Glanville Orchestra, distinguished bands that played for the upper classes from community mento bands (White 1998:12; Chang and Chen 1998:16). The community mento bands included Miller’s Group from Manchester, which was later renamed Lititz Mento Band (Neely 2008: 191-192).

Locally produced music in the mid-1950s was censured to maintain an atmosphere of ‘civilized’ taste. Neely reports that in 1956 the Mother’s Union Council called for a ban of calypso recordings that were deemed risqué. Journalist Hartley Neita, who subsequently became press officer for the first Jamaican prime minister then press secretary for the next four successive prime ministers, admonished the content of these recordings in a newspaper article in 1956:

It is unfortunate that in recent times obscenity has crept into these songs ... The attention which has been focused on calypsos, recently, has resulted with it being regarded as a dirty word. Anyone who identifies himself with [calypso] runs the risk of

being regarded as a public plague, to be shunned by polite society.
(Neita qtd. in Neely 2007:13 f.n. 21)

The censoring of calypso was supported by political leaders who called for a ban on stores that sold a list of offending calypso records (Neely 2007: 10; 2008: 170-172).

Two outcomes of the public shunning of local calypso in the late 1950s was “a momentary loss of public confidence in the local calypso music” and “an increased interest in American popular genres” (Neely 2007: 10, 11). Access to American popular genres was gained through sound systems, which became increasingly popular as an alternative source of musical entertainment for the masses (Hutton 2007:18). A sound system was a set of turntables with large speaker boxes that was used for outdoor community dances (for a description of 1950s sound systems and sound system dances, see Hutton 2007: 18-20). These sound system dances gave poor people access to popular music, specifically Rhythm and Blues (R&B) from the U.S.A.

Competition among two leading sound system operators in the 1950s—Clement Dodd and Duke Reid initiated the earnest local recording of Jamaican covers of R&B recordings to fulfill the demand for new music at community dances (White 1998: 16). Dodd started recording local singers as early as 1956, while Reid followed suit in 1958, and then Vincent “King” Edwards (White 1998: 16).¹ The initial focus of these “sound system” producers was to record local covers of R&B songs. The accompaniments for songs were further “Jamaicanized” through rhythmic innovations that eventually led to the emergence of ska (Chang and Chen 1998: 30). Recordings would be “pre-released” at a sound system dance; the number of requests for repetitions of a recording from the audience would indicate the future success of a song (Stolzoff 2008, 62). Rhythmic innovations that were used in well-received songs would be quickly reproduced in other songs.

During this period, a host of “entrepreneurial” producers entered the industry; this was anyone with the interest and the cash to record a song at a recording studio (Neely 2008: 2). Record producers would rehearse off-site and then bring singers to one of three recording studios—WIRL, Federal Records, and the JBC—to record (White 1998:16). Studio time was expensive, so being able to record in one take was valued. Barrow and Dalton assert that “Dodd gathered musicians who could quickly adapt to the changes in the air and managed to follow trends” (Barrow and Dalton 2001: 95; see also Manuel and Marshall 2006: 191).

Description of the Workforce of Session Musicians

The surge of creativity that resulted in the emergence of ska, rocksteady and reggae was due to the collaboration of trained musicians, novice musicians, singers, producers, studio engineers and an audience that valued novelty and innovation. Among the musicians some were innovators, creating new rhythms, for example, while others followed trends which helped to establish genres. The innovations were not necessarily introduced by trained musicians; some innovations occurred because of limitations in skill; nonetheless trained musicians were able to imitate and incorporate novel ideas into existing musical frameworks. This is illustrated in an anecdote about the recording of the hit song “Bangarang” (1969), which demonstrates how novice and trained musicians worked together. Glen Adams, at that time a novice keyboard player, explains his debut as an organist on the song:

I tried to play piano on “Bangarang” but it didn’t work out, so Lester Sterling asked us to switch, make Lester Sterling play the piano and let me play the organ. I’d never played the organ before (Katz 2003: 107).

Adams’s style of playing eventually became known as the “bubble,” an organ shuffle that is a defining element of reggae (Bradley 2001: 201). Similar anecdotes, that describe innovations that occurred because of limitations in skill, have been written about other significant songs such as “Easy Snappin” (c.1958) and “Take It Easy” (1966) (Chang and Chen 1995:65; White 1998:18; and Hutton and White 2007: 88). The collaboration of trained and novice musicians was crucial in the JPM recording industry: the trained musicians had the skills to formalize and reproduce rhythmic innovations of novice musicians.

My research shows there were at least 150 instrumentalists that worked both occasionally and fulltime in the JPM recording industry from 1957-1979. I ascertained this by enumerating the names of instrumentalists—all men (no women)—listed in credits for a number of recordings from 1957 to 1979 in Jamaica. The names of additional session musicians are also mentioned by musicians, singers and other industry personnel in popular literature. This number contests a commonly held notion that there were only a handful of instrumentalists involved in the JPM recording industry. The earliest mention of “a handful of men” is found in Clarke (1980) who names only 15 instrumentalists as session musicians (see also Veal 2007: 47). However the liner notes for *Studio One Story* states there was a mix of regular and occasional musicians who played at a number of studios. The mix of regular and occasional musicians is confirmed

by other musicians, who mention the men present at recording sessions (such as Lynn Taitt in Schoenfeld). I would like to assert that the sum of the occasional musicians was much greater than the regulars. Furthermore, the emergent recording industry drew on talent from an established music industry, which had a large cadre of musicians who were performing in big bands and at other venues. The existing workforce of instrumentalists in the island's music industry had the capacity for providing much more than a dozen men for the recording industry.

The typical session band had up to eight types of instruments: brass and woodwind, bass, guitar, drums, hand drum, percussion and keyboards. Men who played brass and woodwind instruments are collectively called "hornsmen." Bass may refer to double bassists or electric bass guitarists after 1966. Guitar refers to acoustic and electric guitarists. The hand drum is usually a conga or a Rasta drum played in the style of Rasta drumming, which is also called *nyabinghi*. Keyboards include musicians who played the piano, organ, synthesizer and the melodica.

Within the 1957-1979 period we can speak of two generations of session musicians involved in the recording industry. The first generation was more active before and during the *emergence* and establishment of ska (1957-1965); these musicians were born during the 1920s through mid-1940s (Bradley 2001:193, 230). The second generation, born after 1945, became active during the emergence of rocksteady (1966 to 1967) and early reggae (1968 to mid-1970s). The exceptions to this were musicians who started working when they were minors, such as organist Jackie Mittoo who was born in 1948, but became active in the recording industry in 1962 at age 15.

The distinction between first-generation and second-generation musicians is important as attitudes and influences changed from one generation to the next. A number of first-generation musicians, such as Ranglin and Jones, were initially timid about associating with the recording industry because it was considered deviant (Bradley 2001: 54-55; Stolzoff 2000: 20-25, 37). On the other hand, second-generation musicians held the profession and participants in the recording industry in high esteem. For example, in *Reggae, Rasta, Revolution: Jamaican Music from Ska to Dub*, Chris Potash quotes Sly Dunbar's unabashed admiration for Studio One session musicians:

I was really a Studio One fanatic—like everything I owned ... Jackie Mittoo and Lloyd Knibbs were the ones who really inspired me, because when me [*sic*] listen to Studio One records, I listen to the way Jackie play piano or Lloyd Knibbs play drums. When you see them live, you could see the soul. (Potash 1997: 101-102)

Dunbar's comments are similar to other second-generation musicians such as Steely (Wycliffe Johnson) and Clevie (Cleveland Browne) (Potash 1997: 197). The esteem of these musicians for the profession stands in stark contrast to the trepidation of some first-generation musicians, such as Jones and Ranglin. Another difference between first- and second-generation session musicians was the prevalence of siblings among second-generation musicians; there were a number of brothers who were dispersed among various bands (see Larkin 1998: 60, 285).

Session musicians who worked in the recording industry were connected in a number of ways through personal networks formed prior to the start of the recording industry, in places and spaces where the musicians were trained, worked and socialized among themselves. The training of musicians occurred in a variety of places dependent on their instrument. The hornsmen and double bass players usually started lessons on their instruments at one of the two residential schools for boys that were operated by Catholic nuns in Kingston. One institution was the Stony Hill Industrial School, and the more famous was the Alpha Boys School, which opened in 1892. The bands of the Jamaica Defence Force, The Jamaica Military Band and The Jamaica Regiment Band, offered work and further training (Larkin 1998: 131). Trained musicians also tutored and guided the emerging talent in the recording sessions (Stolzoff 2000: 62). It is for this reason that Studio One is affectionately referred to as "The Studio One University" and "The Studio One Music School" by those who benefited from the training there (Bradley 2001b: 222).

Prior to the emergence of the recording industry, first-generation musicians were employed in variety of places. There was regular employment in society bands, orchestras and in hotels (Hutton 2007: 29 fn.3; Neely 2008: 277; Witmer 1987: 16). Musicians would also be hired for gigs, which included theatre concerts and stage shows held at cinemas (Bradley 2001:19). Pianists were employed for singing contests, the National Festival competitions and variety shows (Bradley 2001: 18, 25-6, 207; Katz 2003: 73, 107).

There was also an active musician's trade union at that time. The Jamaica Federation of Musicians (Jafed) was formed in 1955 and registered under the trade union act in 1958. There is an indication in the discourse on JPM that society bands and orchestras adhered to union guidelines (see Jafedmusic.tripod.com for details). There is a frequently repeated anecdote that musicians were usurped by sound systems because the musicians took long breaks and ate too much from the food that was prepared for paying guests (Barrow and Dalton 2001: 11). Rather than acts of indiscretion, these "dinner breaks" were in fact a requirement based on trade union rules. However, there is no indication in popular or scholarly literature on JPM that session musicians were unionized.

Musicians would participate in jam sessions at various Rasta communes such as Count Ossie's campsites from as early as the 1940s (Williams 2007: 10; Bilby 2010). Producer Clement "Coxsone" Dodd recalls that Count Ossie's band was first located at Homestead Road, and then relocated to Warieka Hill (Chang and Chen 1998: 96). These jam sessions were useful for musicians who wanted to learn indigenous Jamaican rhythms and styles of drumming. Kenneth Bilby's research on *buru*, *nyabinghi* and *Kumina* drumming in JPM recognizes these jam session or "grounations" as being a significant influence on studio musicians. Bilby reports on the significance of this scene:

Certain important trap drummers, for example, ranging from Lloyd Knibb to Horsemouth Wallace and Santa Davis, have explained to me specific ways in which they consciously inserted rhythms from traditional African-Jamaican drumming genres such as *Buru* or *Nyabinghi* into their playing. Many other Jamaican session musicians, including guitarists, bass players, and keyboardists, speak of their ongoing exposure to various kinds of traditional drum-based African-Jamaican music, and the ways, both conscious and unconscious, in which this informal rhythmic education has affected their playing ... More importantly, according to several of the musicians I have interviewed—among them Seeco Patterson, Ras Michael, and Family Man Barrett—Bob, Peter, and Bunny all used to sit in on the drums from time to time at Mortimo Planno's yard. (Bilby 2010: 6-8)

Trumpeter Tommy McCook, who was a prominent musician in the early 1960s and the band leader of the Skatalites, mentions that he made regular visits to Ossie's camp beginning in the late 1940s, where he would practice with the drummers (Chang and Chen 1998: 27). Although these musicians had fellowship with the Rastafarians, many first-generation musicians did not grow dreadlocks because they would have been fired from their society band jobs. For example, John "Dizzy" Moore was fired from Eric Dean's Orchestra when he began growing his dreadlocks because of his Rastafarian beliefs (Perrone 2008: 34). Also, producer Duke Reid, who was a former police, refused to work with Rastafarians (Chang and Chen 1998: 111; Bradley 2001b: 223). Associating with Rastafarians in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s was risky because they had reputation of being anti-government, they were persecuted by the police and they were situated at the bottom of the social ladder (Moore and Johnson 2004: 321). Bradley asserts that ties to the Rastafarian community persisted possibly because the Rastafarian

environment was also a very musical one, and musicians had easy access to it (Bradley 2001b: 83).

There were different work environments among recording studios, which may have directly and indirectly affected the session musician. The most significant difference among recording studios was whether the smoking of marijuana was allowed. Singer Horace Andy describes the scene at Studio One:

You could smoke weed there. By now, Rasta was getting big in reggae and musicians want to build a spliff while they're working; Studio One was the only place where could do that. You couldn't do it in Dynamic, or Federal or Duke Reid. (Bradley 2001b: 223)

For some musicians this option was positive; Lynn Taitt states that it influenced his decision to work with the Skatalites, Studio One's in-house band:

I had fallen in love with the Skatalites band. I had just done my first sessions with them before Byron asked me. That was spring 1964. I wanted to play music with Skatalites and be able to drink and cuss as much as I wanted to and smoke a big spliff as long as your arm. (laughing) I couldn't do any of that if I played with Byron's band, so I say no thanks to Byron. (Keyo 2004)

The scene at Duke Reid's Treasure Isle was very different. Duke Reid, a former policeman and a very involved producer, did not allow smoking at his studio; however he would discharge his gun during recording sessions as a means of control (Bradley 2001: 45, 172-3; Chang and Chen 1998: 111).

A number of women participated in the recording industry as singers, and there was one female producer, Sonia Pottinger. However, there is no mention of female session musicians in recording credits, archives or in popular literature. This may be partly due to the fact that the training institutions for musicians were for males; this includes Alpha Schools for Boys and the bands of the Jamaica Defence Force. From my own experience, career choices for women instrumentalists in Jamaica are limited to teaching, playing cabaret in hotels, jazz bands, churches and choirs.

Session musicians in the emergent recording industry were initially confronted with two major problems: social rejection and low wages. Second-generation session musicians faced a third problem: inconsistent synergy. The adjustments to these problems impacted how they organized themselves as a workforce.

Problem No.1: Social Rejection

Class issues in the production of JPM reflected colonial values; musicians who entertained the upper classes occupied a place of servitude. Hedley Jones, a guitarist and guitar maker, explains that among the middle and upper class the musicians held low status (Stolzoff 2000: 20-25). Hedley Jones describes the stigma of being a musician in Jamaican society during his generation:

They [musicians] were seen as dropouts and treated as such, because it is only when you are a no good in the eyes of the Jamaican middle class that you become a musician. Musicians without formal training were seen as an even lower breed. Although appreciated as entertainers, members of the musical fraternity were unable to rise in the rigid social structure. (Jones, qtd. in Stolzoff 2000: 37)

Deeply entrenched social constraints of class and culture affected some musicians when opportunities for recording locally produced music became available in the early years of the recording industry. First-generation musicians, who were also employed in “orchestras” and “society” bands, report that they had to hide their association with recording studios to keep their regular jobs. For example, guitarist Ernest Ranglin, who would have witnessed the public admonishment of the calypso musicians, consistently expresses that he had to hide his association with the recording industry for fear of reprisal. In the documentary, *Reggae: The Story of Jamaican Music*, he says “it would really hurt my career to go uptown to play ska.” Ranglin is persistent in mentioning this whenever he stakes his claim as the arranger of “Easy Snappin”:

I didn't want to front it ... It was ghetto music and in Jamaica they used to put that music down ... This music was rebel music even then, the way society looked at it and at themselves; they treated it like it was against the idea of society. It was like we were the outcast who played that music ... there were so many tunes I was responsible for but I didn't go in front of them because I also had to be playing up at the society functions and the hotel dances, and there they would be looking down on me. Maybe I wouldn't get enough work. You had to walk the line. (Bradley 2001: 54-55)

An article in a regular column in the entertainment section of Jamaica's major newspaper, the *Daily Gleaner*, provides an example of the social indignation that Ranglin feared. The name of the column is "Merry Go Round"; the purpose of the column is to inform readers of events and trends at clubs and various places of entertainment. The column is placed among advertisements for movies, local shows and community fundraisers in the corporate and rural areas; this is the page that readers are most likely to consult as they make plans for the weekend. It is here that the writer, Stanley Moss, presents his opinion of ska and the men who play it:

Time was, of course, not so long ago, when a select group of jazzmen under Billy Cooke's leadership were to be heard nightly at the now defunct nightspot, "the End"; but alas, the band dispersed when the club folded. Some of its members, like Billy himself formed small combos; others, like Tommy McCook and Ernie Ranglin, regrettably sold themselves to the Ska [*sic*]. Inevitably, it will be the small groups, having retained their names and individuality, which will survive the demise of Ska. But the others, having become identified with an ephemeral craze, might well come to regret their readiness to jump on the ska-wagon. (What, for example, will the word "Skatalite" [*sic*] mean to the average Jamaican in a few years' time)? (Moss 1965: 6, 21)

The article was published in April 1965, seven years after the release of the first ska single, "Easy Snapping," and two years after the genre was chosen by the government to represent Jamaican culture at the World Trade Fair in 1963. Moss's position demonstrates that government endorsement does not guarantee acceptance from "high" society. Moss tries to shame McCook and Ranglin for playing ska by demonizing the music in a number of ways. For example, Moss uses the definite article with the name of the genre—the Ska—which looks odd; however, there is no error in grammar here. The phrase "sold themselves to *the* Ska" evokes another saying: "selling your soul to *the* devil." His use of other negative words such as "demise," "craze," and "regret" in the article offer no glimmer of hope for men who identified with *the* Ska. Indeed, this public labelling of Ranglin and McCook as deviants also seems to warn other musicians against identifying themselves with ska and, by extension, the recording industry from which the genre emerged. The practical implications of this type of social judgements was that some musicians did not believe that they could openly participate in the industry or claim credit for work on recordings, and get or maintain their regular jobs.

Moss's article bears witness to the type of pressure that musicians endured; nonetheless, his position is not a unique response to a new genre. Richard Peterson outlines the process involved in the creation and stasis of culture in his examination of American country music. He identifies generational dialectics as one of the responses to the creation of a new genre:

Innovative young artists, that is, those who fabricate a contemporary way of expressing authenticity, commonly feel that they are doing so in opposition to the music they have grown up with ... rebellious innovators later in life become stout defenders of the [new genre] and are eventually hailed as paragons of roots authenticity for the rising generation of their musical grandchildren. (Peterson 1997: 230)

The moral outrage in the tone of Moss's article is a typical response to a new musical genre that challenges cultural hegemonies, which Moore and Johnson describe as "the process of contestation and negotiation among ... cultural forces" (Moore and Johnson 2004: xv).

The musicians in this art world had to decide how they would participate in what was a most exciting and innovative time in Jamaica's music history and still retain their social standing and regular jobs in society bands. The solution for many was remaining anonymous. There were two methods that allowed musicians to participate in the recording industry: hiding their identity by using aliases, and participating in all-star bands.

Adjustment No. 1: The Anonymity of Aliases and All-Star Session Bands

An all-star band consisted of musicians who were hired as casual workers for recording sessions. The all-star band was given the name of the producer, studio or other aliases, such as Prince Buster's All Stars, Brentford All Stars and the Upsetters. When an all-star band was used for a recording, the names of the musicians were usually not listed in the credits. This system enabled musicians to access extra work in the industry without putting their regular jobs, or reputations, at risk. During the 1960s through to the mid-1970s, there were a significant number of all-star session bands in the Jamaican recording industry. Chart 1 shows a few of the all-star bands that were formed in the 1960s and 1970s. This is not an exhaustive list; there are large numbers of all-stars listed in online discographies of JPM. All-star

bands named after musicians are marked with an asterisk.

Another way of remaining anonymous was implemented by producer Herman Chin-Loy of the Aquarius label. The keyboard players in his session bands would all be given the same name (Thompson 2002: 200). This practice is elaborated in Chin-Loy's biography on *AllMusic.com*:

Chin-Loy had been releasing instrumentals, mainly organ-led affairs by Upsetter acolyte Glen Adams, and crediting them to an invented name, Augustus Pablo. When the young Horace Swaby (Pablo's real name) arrived on the scene, Chin-Loy saw no reason to change the credit, and so Horace Swaby became Augustus Pablo. (*Allmusic.com*)

Participating in all-star session bands and the use of aliases was the collective response to a problem that these musicians faced. Unfortunately, the lack of credits and the use of aliases in all-star bands resulted in the omission of many musicians from the documented history of JPM.

Not all musicians wanted to remain anonymous. Musicians who were not afraid to associate with the recording industry would use their own names for all-star session bands, such as the Baba Brooks Band and Gladdy's All Stars. Interestingly, this practice developed into a system for the efficient use of resources by some session musicians. Lynn Taitt, who named his band "Lynn Taitt and the Jets" explains a system that he used at Federal Studio:

Whoever would have a tune would get the credit and more money. Usually Baba Brooks led the session, so a tune would be by his group ... if it's Drumbago's All Stars that means it was Drumbago's tune and so forth. (Taitt in Keyo 2004)

Therefore, if four musicians practiced and recorded six songs together in the same session, there was a possibility that each song could be issued in one of four different group names: each tune would be credited under the name of the musician that brought the tune to the session. Taitt's approach was a clever strategy to maximize the use of valuable studio time.

The use of aliases and the prevalence of all-star session bands became key elements in the work culture and organizational structure of session musicians. It was a collective action used to protect members who wanted to participate in the recording industry without being scrutinized and chastised by particular sectors of the public.

Problem No. 2: Low Wages

Chart 1: JPM All Star Session Bands 1961-1975

Name of the band	Producer	Year of first recoding
Aggrovators	Bunny Lee	c.1973
Anderson All Stars	Royale Anderson	c.1975
Baba Brooks Band	Baba Brooks*	c.1963
Beverley's All Stars	Leslie Kong	c.1962
Brentford Road All Stars	Clement Dodd	c.1970
Bullwackie's All Stars	Lloyd Barnes	c.1975
Conscious Minds	B.B. Seaton	c.1969
Crystalites	Derrick Harriott	c.1967
Daley All Stars	Lloyd Daley	c.1971
G.G. All Stars	Alvin Ranglin	c.1969
Gladdy's All Stars	Gladstone Anderson*	n/a
Herman's All Stars	Herman Chin-Loy	c.1975
Impact All Stars	Clive Chin	c.1971
Joe Gibbs All Stars	Joe Gibbs	c.1968
JJ All Stars	Carl Johnson	c.1967
King Edwards All Stars	Vincent Edwards	c.1963
Matador All Stars	Lloyd Daley	c.1969
Mudies All Stars	Harry Mudie	c.1969
Phil Pratt All Stars	Phil Pratt	c.1970
Prince Buster All Stars	Cecil Bustamente Campbell	c.1961
Observers	Winston Holness	c.1971
Randy's All Stars	Clive Chin	c.1962
Riley's All Stars	Winston Riley	c.1970
Rupie Edwards All Stars	Rupie Edwards	c.1969
Upsetters	Lee Perry	c.1969

In *The Studio One Story*, Clement Dodd states that when he opened Studio One in 1961, his intention was to have a stable in-house session band. The professional musicians were initially attracted to working in the studio because the wages from recording studios paid better than wages for performing in hotels. The musicians may have been drawn to Studio One because it paid better than the hotel industry, but they left because Dodd paid less than other producers. In another interview, Dodd remarked that although musicians were contracted to him, his main competitor, Duke Reid, offered better fees to these musicians. Dodd explains why he sympathetically overlooked the musicians' breaches of contract:

Whatever it cost, Duke would find the money. Even if I had a contracted artist, Duke would still insist and use them ... after a while you realize the man is a musician and that's the only way he could really earn, so you let him play. (Katz 2003: 60)

Adjustment No.2: Casual Work

Although an employment contract provides a regular income, musicians were not satisfied with pay from a single employer. Many musicians opted for casual work in all-star bands to optimize their earning potential. For example, Roland Alphonso admits in an interview that he worked with a number of producers, although he had signed a contract with Dodd: "We didn't sign any contract with anyone, so we were free ... we work with Duke Reid and King Edwards also. We did some for Prince Buster too, but Coxson's get the most 'cause I sign contract with him" (Katz 2003: 60-1). Alphonso refers to casual work as being "free" because it allowed instrumentalists to take jobs wherever they were offered. This status allowed the musicians to maximize the amount of money they could make. The apparent contradiction between "we didn't sign a contract" and "I sign a contract" suggests that conflicts of interest did not seem to be an issue for the musicians. With the exception of Dodd, most producers hired musicians as casual workers in all-star bands.

The way that all-star bands are described in popular literature reveals that working in an all-star band was not regular employment. Phrases such as "any gathering of musicians" or "an open-ended loose-knit group" indicate that an all-star band was formed whenever the producer needed one (see Larkin 1998: 7; Foster 1999: 63). Larkin uses similar terms to describe the Upsetters band: "[The Upsetters] was a collective tag for whatever group

reggae producer Lee Perry had in his studio at the time of recording or for his sporadic live dates” (Larkin 1998: 309). Only the name of the band, the “collective tag,” was permanent; the expressions “any gathering of musicians” and “whatever group of musicians” indicate that the musicians in the band were casual workers selected on a case-by-case basis. Casual work became the dominant work arrangement between musicians and producers.

Being “called” is the term that is most frequently used in interviews in JPM popular literature to describe how musicians were recruited for work in all-star bands; however, there was a hierarchy in recruitment. The musicians who the producer liked working with were approached first; they were “first calls.” These were probably musicians who had the ability to quickly realize the musical ideas of producers and singers and to record in one take. Ernest Ranglin, for example, gives an account of life as a musician in Kingston in the 1960s:

We just felt like we were doing a job. Back then if a man ask you to come down to the studio and here’s two shilling fi [*sic*] play a song, you did it. We were musicians and we just wanted to play the next chorus right, play the next phrase, to make the singers and the producers happy. Then they’ll use you again. The real excitement for us, as working musicians, was that a man was going to pay us. (Bradley 2001: 54-55)

Based on this account, musicians were paid per song and the work in recording studios was a gig, or day’s work; the jobs were not permanent. He also mentions getting a “call back” for “playing it right”, which may result in a future “first call.” Lynn Taitt, a significant figure in JPM, describes being called for work:

They may call me for a session at 9:00 in the morning till 12:00 noon. And another session would start at 1:00 and finish at 4:00 with another one at 5:00 till 8:00 at night. So maybe four [or] five sessions a day for different promoters, that’s how it used to be at that time. (Taitt in Keyo 2004)

Novice musicians, who were not “first calls,” found work in another way: they would go to recording studios and wait for the opportunity to substitute for first-call musicians who did not show up for a recording, which happened on a regular basis.² Hanging out at studios was therefore a good way for novice musicians to get work and prove themselves as session musicians.

Problem No. 3: Inconsistent Synergy

Casual work was a way for first-generation session musicians to escape social judgement and to maximize earning potential. Second-generation session musicians inherited this prevalent occupational structure, which was not without its problems. When a producer gathered a number of available musicians to play a session, the group would be, to an extent, random. Some of the musicians would be “first calls,” that is, they were the first choice of the producer. However, there would be no guarantee that the musicians gathered together were of the same competency, or that they would get along. The synergy of musicians in a band affected how they performed, and the number of songs that they would be able to complete in a recording session. The number of songs recorded by the end of the session impacted the amount of pay the group received. At the end of the day, a lack of synergy among musicians affected their wages.

Adjustment No. 3: Cores and Cliques

A number of musicians seemed to have responded to this internal problem in their work environment by forming cores or cliques. A core consisted of two or more musicians who usually worked together, as a team. Moskowitz’s description of The Revolutionaries, an all-star band, includes an example of how cores are represented in JPM discourse:

In the mid-1970s the Revolutionaires was the group that Hookim used when he needed a backing band in the studio ... in addition to Sly and Robbie the band consisted of a host of other players ... these members came and went and were not employed unless specifically called for. (Moskowitz 2006: 256)

Based on this description, Sly and Robbie were the “first calls” and the core of The Revolutionaires; the “host of other players” were not consistent.

Teams of session musicians who formed cores usually played different, but complementary, instruments. In his exposition on dub, Michael Veal identifies prolific drum and bass teams during the 1970s, such as Sly and Robbie, and the Barrett brothers (Veal 2007: 58-59). However, cores could include other instrumental combinations, such as bass and lead guitarists, or keyboard and bass players; these instruments formed the rhythm section, or groove, in rocksteady and reggae arrangements. Cores were probably able to improve the number of successful recordings per session.

Chart 2 and 3: Cores in Jamaica's Recording Industry

Kinship:		
<i>Family Name</i>	<i>First Names</i>	<i>Band</i>
Barrett	Aston "Family Man" and Carlton	The Wailers
Browne	Glen, Dalton, Noel, Cleveland, and Danny	The Browne Bunch
Chung	Geoffrey and Mikey	The Now Generation
Grant	Norman and Ralston	The Twinkle Brothers
Lewis	Ian and Roger	Inner Circle / Third World

Camaraderie:	
<i>Names</i>	<i>First and subsequent bands/ enterprise</i>
Tony Chin and George "Fully" Fullwood	The Rhythm Raiders
Donald Kinsey and Al Anderson	Word, Sound and Power; The Wailers
Wayne Armond and Richard Daley	Hell's Angels; Chalice
Wycliffe "Steely" Johnson and Cleveland "Clevie" Browne	<i>various</i>
Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare	Revolutionaires; Taxi Gang
Michael "Ibo" Cooper and Stephen "Cat" Coore	Inner Circle; Third World
Errol "Flabba" Holt, Eric "Bingi Bunny" Lamont	The Morwells; Roots Radics
Ansell Collins, Lloyd Parkes and Radcliffe "Dougie" Bryan	Skin, Flesh and Bones The Professionals
Robbie Shakespeare, Sly Dunbar, and Earl "Chinna" Smith	

Cores were either based on kinship or camaraderie. The Barrett brothers' core was based on kinship; Sly and Robbie's core was based on camaraderie. Musicians who formed cores would move from one band to another together. Many cores eventually formed "stable" show bands or became producers together, such as Steely and Cleve, and Sly and Robbie. Charts 1 and 2 above list some of the cores mentioned in JPM discourse.

Based on the names listed on the chart, cores were more prevalent among second-generation musicians, during the rocksteady and reggae periods.

Things Fall Apart

Casual work in all-star session bands might have remained the dominant type of work arrangement if the men were treated fairly; however, musicians invariably mentioned in interviews in popular literature that they were oppressed (see Reggae-vibes.com). Ironically, many of the abuses were facilitated by the work culture that the musicians had once preferred.

First, all-star bands and aliases provided anonymity that shielded session musicians from the external problem of social judgements. The disadvantage was that remaining anonymous stripped musicians of their intellectual property and rights; it also excluded them from pivotal moments in the documented history of the JPM. Anonymity would make proving one's participation on recordings difficult, especially for the purpose of royalties and similar fees that should have benefited these session musicians. Additionally, there were no copyright laws in place at that time in Jamaica to protect the rights of session musicians. Second, session musicians did not want to limit their income by working with one producer; casual work with several producers increased their earning potential. The disadvantage was that the casual work status, coupled with anonymity, precluded unionization, leaving the session musicians without protection from unfair practices at the workplace. Mistreatment and abuses would go unchecked because the session musicians were not unionized; if they complained, they were simply not "called" again.

Musicians who were able to get visas, and those who were afforded the opportunity to tour with singers, looked for opportunities on the international market. A number of skilled and trained musicians went on international tours with Jamaican superstars such as Alton Ellis, Desmond Dekker, Jimmy Cliff and Bob Marley. Musicians who toured internationally reported enthusiastic receptions abroad, which contrasted with their reception back home, where they were treated as indigent (Bradley 2001: 250-1). Some of these musicians did not return to Jamaica. For example, in 1968 Lynn Taitt was sent to Toronto

by the Jamaican government on a one-year contract to arrange music for the *West Indies Federation* in Toronto. At the end of the year Taitt decided to migrate to Canada (Keyo 2004). Other musicians such as Jackie Mittoo and Leroy Sibbles migrated to find work among the Jamaican diaspora in Canada, the UK and the USA (Bradley 2001: 13). A number of musicians in cores formed show bands or production companies, and others went back to work in the hotel circuit.

The migration of musicians removed an important support for novice musicians that helped formalize their innovations, a significant element that was needed in this system. The mass attrition from JPM illustrates Becker's point that all participating workers are necessary to the production of an artwork; the loss of any of them can jeopardize the art world (Becker and Pessin 2006: 284). The evolution of JPM continued, but the session musicians were no longer the creative force nor were they the only option for the accompaniment of singers. Dennis Howard describes the sonic aspect of the genres that followed:

[Reggae] employed arrangements with horns, guitars, percussion and harmonies: the new dancehall music had none of these embellishments ... Early dancehall beats were created by recycling backing tracks derived from previously recorded songs to create what was referred to in the Kingston music scene as "riddims." Riddims are identified by name and a given riddim may be used as the backing track in numerous songs, resulting in an entire compilation album of recordings that utilize the same backing track or accompaniment. (Howard 2014: 253)

Innovations continued in JPM, but the focus was on vocals and acoustic technology, which led to what Bradley calls the reggae "karaoke phase" (Bradley 2001: 498 -501).

Summary and Conclusion

The quantity of music required to create a genre is either generated by a small number of bands over a long period of time, or a by large number of bands in a short period of time. The emergence of ska, rocksteady and reggae occurred in a relatively short time in a period that witnessed the participation and collaboration of instrumentalists from diverse musical backgrounds. The instrumentalists included trained musicians who worked in society bands and

orchestras. Musicians from Buru and Rastafarian traditions also participated, as evident from the drummers who played on “O Carolina” in 1960. There were also mento musicians; these were mainly guitarists such as Lynford “Hux” Brown, Alva “Reggie” Lewis and “Ronnie Bop” Williams (Neely 2008). Musicians from other Caribbean countries also became involved in the JPM industry, such as Trinidadian Lynn Taitt. The collaboration of this diverse group of musicians, as well as producers, singers, studio engineers and other industry personnel, resulted in the emergence of ska, rocksteady and reggae.

The short time in which these genres emerged was facilitated by the preference for casual work in all-star session bands, which was the dominant work arrangement in the recording industry. The prevalence of all-star session bands resulted in a larger workforce than would have occurred in a situation where musicians only played with a single band. Casual work created a loose framework that distributed skilled labour among a number of producers, which enabled new investors—entrepreneurial producers—to enter the industry. This is evidenced by a large number of all-star bands in existence from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. The influx of new producers resulted in the recording of more songs and additional work for session musicians.

The exodus of session musicians from this seemingly lucrative situation was caused in part by the occupational structures in the recording industry, coupled with the absence of unions and government policies to protect the session musicians and other record industry workers. The occupational structures were also the “adjustments” used to resolve earlier internal and external problems faced by the session musicians. However, each occupational structure had its disadvantage, which eventually resulted in the frustration and attrition of many session men. The third major change in the occupational structure of session musicians occurred when second-generation musicians formed a number of cores or cliques. Consistent working partners in cores enabled more efficient and productive recording sessions, which ultimately resulted in more pay. This seemed to reflect a desire to return to a more stable working environment, with regular band members, that existed prior to the “mushrooming” of all-star session bands. However, the formation of cores contracted the large and loose framework of diverse musicians that promoted creativity in the industry in the first place. The final and most decisive blow to session musicians was the automation of their jobs. Technology allowed producers to reuse backing tracks from their archives, rather than hire musicians to play for recording sessions. The response or “adjustment” to this problem for many session musicians was to look for work where “live musicians” were needed: outside of the JPM recording industry.

The narratives of and about session musicians in popular and scholarly

literature on JPM reveals that an occupational structure based on all-star session bands could advance productivity and creativity. However, the following conditions are needed:

1. A workforce of musicians from diverse backgrounds.
2. A ready supply of trained and skilled musicians to supply music of a sufficiently high quality, to standardize musical innovations and to satisfy the demands of a growing local recording industry.
3. Fair remuneration to encourage musicians to enter and stay in the recording industry.
4. Access to training, both formal and informal, that allows those interested to enter the industry, thereby ensuring a steady supply of manpower and creative energy.
5. Easy access to recording studios to accommodate an increasing number of producers.
6. A regulatory body to protect the rights of all categories of workers in the industry.

I am not suggesting that these conditions alone will guarantee creativity and productivity, as this list does not take into account the very important role of the JPM audience. Musicians and producers received immediate feedback on their rhythmic innovations from audiences at sound system dances. The system of immediate feedback for pre-releases at sound system dances was crucial, and as far as I know, unique to JPM. Rather, the conditions listed above outline some of the community infrastructure and human resources needed to encourage and support the participation and productivity of trained and novice instrumentalists in the recording industry. 🌿

Notes

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1. The first available sound recording service was in May 1947; it was owned by Ken Khouri and his first commercial release was August 1951 (Neely 2007: 2-3). Stanley Motta opened his recording studio in November 1950 at 93 Hanover Street; he made “38 records between 1953 and 1955; 18 of these records were exclusively for the hotel” (Neely 2007: 8). Khouri and Motta are predecessors to what Neely call the “entrepreneurial producers”: Dodd, Reid and King Edwards, as well as Prince Buster (Neely 2007: 2-3). However, I would prefer to use the term “sound

system” producers for Dodd, Reid and King; the other producers who did not have a sound system, but cash to fund a recording project, would be the “entrepreneurial” producers.

2. Leroy “Horsemouth”Wallace names Orange Street (Duke Reid’s Treasure Isle) as the place to find work as a musician. See YouTube video “Interview: Leroy “Horsemouth”Wallace @ SummerJam 7/2/2011” (5:46), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5d8xkyyzB3M&feature=youtube_gdata_player

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