



Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Songs in Jamaican Reggae (Music/Culture)

By Michael Veal

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Winner of the ARSC's Award for Best Research (History) in Folk, Ethnic, or World Music (2008)

When Jamaican recording engineers Osbourne “King Tubby” Ruddock, Errol Thompson, and Lee “Scratch” Perry began crafting “dub” music in the early 1970s, they were initiating a musical revolution that continues to have worldwide influence. Dub is a sub-genre of Jamaican reggae that flourished during reggae’s “golden age” of the late 1960s through the early 1980s. Dub involves remixing existing recordings—electronically improvising sound effects and altering vocal tracks—to create its unique sound. Just as hip-hop turned phonograph turntables into musical instruments, dub turned the mixing and sound processing technologies of the recording studio into instruments of composition and real-time improvisation. In addition to chronicling dub’s development and offering the first thorough analysis of the music itself, author Michael Veal examines dub’s social significance in Jamaican culture. He further explores the “dub revolution” that has crossed musical and cultural boundaries for over thirty years, influencing a wide variety of musical genres around the globe.

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Editorial Review

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Veal chronicles how dub music progressed from remixing and altering existing reggae recordings to studio-creating original songs out of music samples, noise, and found sounds. Inventing and developing techniques with effects similar to what turntable scratching and sampling later achieved, Osbourne "King Tubby" Ruddock, Lee "Scratch" Perry, and others paved the way for rap by placing the boasting of "toasters" over bass-heavy charts and fractured soundscapes. Veal traces the development of the drum-and-bass sound central to reggae and dub, noting that "sonically and aesthetically, musicians like DJ Kool Herc," often called *the* progenitor of rap, "essentially transplanted the Jamaican sound system model" to the Bronx, where it was finally distilled into rap. Drawing on interviews with dub pioneers DJ and producer-recording artist Mikey Dread, Veal posits that dub and hip-hop are "deconstructive compositional strategies" that sensitize "listeners to the microaesthetics of production." Yow! Persuasive if weighty stuff that draws a line of musical development from the studios of Kingston to the bling-encrusted world of hip-hop--and it has a killer discography. *Mike Tribby*

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Review

"Veal has written the first comprehensive overview of (dub's) development up to and including the digital music that followed dub's analog innovations... Veal does an excellent job of explaining, analyzing, and describing sounds. He also connects dub's influence to hip-hop, dance, electronica, and other modern genres, demonstrating how many dub tricks are still being used today in various incarnations. Readers will especially appreciate Veal's excellent Appendix of Recommended Listening, which includes catalog numbers that will make these recordings easier to find... (T)his is certainly the best and only book on dub music; highly recommended for all academic and public music collections where reggae music is popular."—***Library Journal***

"Veal deftly outlines the sociopolitical context in which dub arose, and explains how the cut-corner, make-do economics of the Jamaican record business led to a maximization of materials: song begat deejay version(s) beget dub(s)-at least three products for little more than the price of one... Where Veal's book steals a march on the competition is in his technical analysis of how Tubby, Perry, Thompson, Sylvan Morris, and other mixing engineers adapted (and creatively abused) the equipment in studios... He also analyzes a number of tracks by each of the principal dub engineers under discussion...to show the transformation of song to version and dub, all of which is illuminating...(H)e provides valuable information as to where these tracks may be found... (T)his is an extremely bold and interesting book."—***The Wire***

Review

"This extraordinary book, with its rich interpretation of the aesthetics and social significance of dub, constitutes a dramatically original contribution to the study of Jamaican popular music, and should be a landmark in popular music studies as a whole." (Peter Manuel, professor of ethnomusicology, John Jay College and CUNY Graduate Center)

"Veal's wise volume has rescued Reggae music at last from the tentacles of exoticism. This is a glorious affirmation of dub's rebel, Creole spirit." (Paul Gilroy, Anthony Giddens professor of social theory, London

School of Economics)

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