

TRANSCRIPT: ACE DILLINGER AUDIO SHORT

[sound: tape being rewound and forwarded]

Ace: I would love to be able to have like a massive party in a park with dancehall being played, reggae being played, and everybody's there: all the queer aunties and uncles, all the straight ones, all the questioning ones are there—all the youth are there and everyone feels comfortable and it is safe... I guess you could say it like a queer Caribana. I would love that. That would be the sickest thing in the world.

[sound: MC introduces Ace, 'We've got our resident DJ here, Ace Dillinger'; Ace plays music and it fades under her talking]

Ace: Hey everyone, my name is Ace Dillinger and I am the resident DJ for a Black queer party in Toronto. My family's background is Jamaican and I was born in Toronto, Canada in the '80s.

[music: track cuts out abruptly]

Oh my God. I'm so old. (Laughter). Fuck.

[music: Leikeli47's 'Post That' starts; she sings, 'My bitch will get on the ground, just to make sure the light is found. The way she make them angles hit, she like Bill Cunningham with that shit...', and continues under Ace speaking]]

Ace: It started as a space for Black queer people to dance and enjoy each other's company. When you walk in, you are seeing a literally—a multicultural, diverse group of people. Everyone is queer, and on the spectrum of queerness. Meaning that you will see transmasculine people, you will see transfeminine people, you will see butch lesbians, you will see studs, you will see femmes, super femmes...

[music: Leikeli47's 'Post That' comes up and fades under Ace speaking]

Ace: We encourage people to feel comfortable and come as you are. So, there are people that come very, scantily dressed: lots of leather, lots of pasties, lots of mesh... I like to hear that people came and said, 'Oh my God, I danced. I had so much fun!' or, 'Oh, I met this person, we were making out in the bathroom!', like that's where we're promoting.

[music: Leikeli47's 'Post That' cuts out]

Ace: Baby me was just a very quiet nerdy person who... stuck to themselves. I was Steve Urkel but the femme version, with bubbles in my hair... I was very dressed like a tomboy because I also developed early and I was like, 'oh, this is crazy—people wanna talk to me, and I'm not into that!' Growing up in Toronto, uh, we lived downtown—like, Wellesley and Sherbourne area. I had Tamil friends that would bring me into, like, their Bollywood world, I had Southeast Asian friends and like East Asian friends. So, I was immersed in like a lot of different cultures and communities, which I really loved.

[music: soft instrumental comes in and fades under Ace speaking]

Ace: I was 14 years-old when I moved to Scarborough, and I had all Black friends--mostly Jamaican actually. It was definitely a culture shock in the fact that like the friends that I was making were doing like more quote unquote "adult things."

[music: soft instrumental peters out and a more energetic, bass-heavy song comes in and fades under Ace speaking]

Ace: My friends lived in like a... a hood-esque area. So, like, I would just go over there and then the house parties would be in somebody's basement...

[music / sound: energetic beat continues; sound of speakers banging, soda cans being opened]

...with no lights on, speakers banging, loud music...

[music / sound: music continues; sound of people talking at the basement party fades in and under Ace speaking]

The whole point, I guess, was just like to talk and wine up on boys (laughter).

[music / party sound continues and plays under Ace speaking]

I didn't know what being gay meant at that time, but I knew that I didn't really--I was like, 'boys are cool, but like shorty over there is even cooler.'

[music / party sound fades out completely]

Alanna: And your family is supportive?

Ace: Yeah--I mean the ones that matter, yeah. It's not like I go up to every single aunt in my family and I'm like, 'by the way, (laughter) I love to nam cooch!' Like, it's just, I don't—that's not a conversation that we have, but my mom is the most supportive human being—my mom came down for Pride! She said, 'where are you?,' I said, 'excuse me, where am I?' She's like, 'I'm coming to see your set!'

She was on Church St. and she was, like, dancing behind me while I was DJing, like, my mom is the cutest, sweetest human being—shout out to Norma.

[music: shimmery, atmospheric beat comes in and under Ace speaking]

Alanna: How do you feel about the possibility of Jamaican aunties and uncles hearing about your queer sex positive party?

Ace: People who think that it's hedonist, good for you. Jesus was a ho. You know what I mean, no one can tell me anything different. So like, if, if you have a problem with sex positivity or queerness, that's you guys--that has nothing to do with me. The same way that you, Darrell, have seven kids and you're not taking care of them: whose business is that? Is that mine? No, you know? I mind the business that pays me. You should do the same.

I can't worry about that because then I—who would I be? But that's my mentality, like, since I've grown up. If people have a problem with it. I wouldn't know because they don't matter to me, you know? Not just in the aspect of being queer, that's not like the only thing but it's not something that I shy away from, like I'm going to be queer, regardless if you know it or not, the same way I'm gonna be Black, like, I'm Black everyday. I can't shy away from that. But it's not like my—I'm not like, 'I need to represent for all the Black queer'—like nah, that's not me. But I also, I'm not like scared to say like, 'no, I'm hella gay.'

[music: shimmery, atmospheric beat fades out completely]

Alanna: I feel like that's the most dancehall thing you could do.

Ace: Is just be yourself?

Alanna: Yeah!

Ace: Yeah, a hundred percent, which is why I say like, I feel like when we're talking about like sound culture and like ingrained in me because of who I am. Like, I'm literally a Jamaican—well of Jamaican descent—so that's just kind of ingrained in me, but it's not like... I can't separate the two. The same way I can't separate my Blackness from like me being Black, like I can't take off my skin... Although some of you white girls would love to try—anyways, that's a separate story. (Laughter).

[music: high energy house track comes in and fades under Ace speaking]

Ace: I like to try and play house music in my sets, when I know people are probably used to just wanting to hearing dancehall. Like I wanna, you know, give 'em a little something else.

[music: high energy house track comes up and fades under Ace speaking]

I think it's important to me to introduce new sounds to other people because I don't like the idea—or there was an idea, I felt, that like when you are Black, you like these things and you have to like these things only...

[music: cuts out abruptly]

...or else you're not Black, you know? If you don't talk with a random accent, then you're not Black. If you're not saying 'fam' then, like, are you really Black? If you're not listening to dancehall, are you really Black? These were things that I was like, I was like, 'uh, no,' I don't really believe that, and I don't think being Black is a monolith and means that you have to fucking like only this particular sound.

[music: track comes back in and blends into a different song and fades under Ace speaking]

Ace: When I think of soundsystem culture, my visual is: outside, massive ass speakers, somebody cooking somethin' on that drum and dancehall and reggae are being played—

like those are the sounds. And it's loud as hell! You can't talk to nobody. You need to walk seven miles east in order to have a conversation.

[music comes back in and fades out completely]