

TRANSCRIPT: BAMBII AUDIO SHORT

[sound clip from Bambii's JERK soundsystem comes up and continues underneath Bambii speaking]

Bambii: Toronto would really be nothing without the influx of Jamaican immigrants. Caribbean culture, Jamaican culture, slang, aesthetic, music—it influences everything from the way that we talk, the music we play at parties...

[music: Bambii's "NITEVISION" (feat. Pamputtae) comes in and fades under]

Bambii: My name is Bambii and I am a DJ-producer based in Toronto. Born in Etobicoke, technically from Toronto born and raised. The name of my party is JERK. I've been throwing it for technically nine years, minus the pandemic. JERK is an event that's sort of an ode to my Caribbean heritage, it's a dancehall party at its core.

[sound clip from Bambii's JERK comes up and fades out completely]

Bambii: Dancehall is a really powerful art form and it's mine to sift through and take what's good from it, and leave the bad. Like someone like Vybz Kartel is like a ridiculous, iconic figure (laughter) in Jamaican music, but like we love him (laughter) but he's crazy!

[music: Vybz Kartel's "Fever" comes in; he sings "Xoxo, my love is very special..." and fades under Bambii speaking]

Bambii: Like from the bleaching, to the homophobia, to the violence—

[music: Vybz Kartel's "Fever" comes up; he sings "...but don't take me for granted, so much, so much..." and fades under Bambii speaking]

Bambii: I don't think that's Caribbeaness, like people from all over the world who have traditional aspects of their culture that are problematic, have to make those reconciliations.

[music: Vybz Kartel "Fever" ends]

And I think we all on some level do that so we can communicate the nostalgia, the power, the dance—all these amazing things about it.

[music: Bambii's mix comes in and fades under Bambii speaking]

Bambii: I think that when people look at Caribbean music, it's always through a very, like, nostalgic lens and JERK is trying to sort of, like, break the, like, oversimplification of the Caribbean and kind of reach into the future... so it reaches into electronic music, jungle, garage, house, dance, everything. The core audience is obviously queer Caribbean people, but it's a pretty diverse crowd.

[music: Bambii's mix comes up and becomes more upbeat and high energy; fades under Bambii speaking]

Bambii: As much as we boast diversity, I think that people live in their sort of ethnic pockets and they don't very much interact with people that are different from them in class and race.

[music: Bambii's mix comes up again and fades out completely]

Bambii: Jamaican culture, weirdly, is high in terms of the consumption, but Jamaican people—and how people interact with Jamaican people—is low, and people want to compartmentalize the culture from the people.

Ace: Mm-hmm.

Bambii: We can talk all day long about the influence of Caribbean, namely Jamaican culture, in Toronto. But I think that also there are so many—as, as much as people celebrate those influencers, there's also terrible stereotypes attached to being Jamaican of a crime rate Education, interpersonal stereotypes

[sound: rain]

Bambii: I know and I'm sure that the UK is problematic in a number of ways, but I'm saying this specific area, I think that Caribbean people have had a certain agency around their culture that I don't think that they've had in North America, and specifically in Toronto. I think this is governmental, what we're talking about, and I think that there's two things that are different in London: they've had more time to evolve, there is more of a reverence though for Caribbean culture, more of an understanding about how it's shaped pop culture in the UK, where I think here there's more of an erasure, which I say is racist.

[sound: rain comes up and fades under Bambii speaking]

Like, I've been throwing JERK for nine years, every time it's time for me to get a venue and I have to interact with a primarily white male cis venue owner? It's a fight every single time, because I think that we don't live in a city that is okay with having like event spaces filled with Black people.

[Pyne's "Karma Police (Radiohead cover)" comes in and fades under Bambii speaking]

Bambii: Like, if you think about the history of the Caribbean and how policed, you know, these spaces are in the Caribbean and the historical—the colonization, all this shit. I think it was very important for Caribbean people to reclaim space because they had very little. You know, music is cathartic, right? And I think that people really, in the Caribbean, it's this very violent place—Jamaica, specifically, like twice colonized—people needed a catharsis. And they accessed it largely through music and through dance.

[Pyne's "Karma Police (Radiohead cover)" fades out completely]

Bambii: Soundsystem culture was about, like, politics. It was about individual people communicating with their community, and people are still doing that it just looks a bit different.

Bambii: So many things are informally soundsystems. I think JERK is a soundsystem, I think, YES YES Y'ALL is a soundsystem, I think that any sort of collective of people that are like pushing a sound, pushing a culture, pushing a sort of like ethos around music—that's a soundsystem.

[Pyne's "Johnny Riddim" comes in and fades under Bambii speaking]

Bambii: When we look back people focus on the physical, but I'm not focused on this sort of aesthetic element of the stacked speakers, nor am I focused on the clash element. For me I'm more focused on the like reclamation of space and community.

[Pyne's "Johnny Riddim" fades out completely]

DJing is a participatory medium that takes everybody else. Like, I need the crowd to DJ, I need to be communicating with people.

[sound: Bass music party sounds; MC interacting with the crowd on the mic]

Bambii: I think that the best DJs are people that know how to, like, relate to people around them. They know how to sort of anticipate how people are feeling and, like, talk to people without actually speaking to them. People try to have, like, a very purist approach to DJing: some people prefer CJs, sometimes people prefer vinyls... I don't think it matters, it's a tool at the end of the day.

[sound: clip of someone asking, 'what are the rules? Another person responds, 'there's only one rule, are you ready?']

There's no rules, like a Britney Spears vocal and putting it with some other shit and putting it with that, or taking some kind of Tik Tok song, a show song, like it cuts the seriousness. It's like, all of this is relevant and cool, and we're gonna fuck with it.

[sound: Remixed/sampled version of Britney Spears's "Toxic" over a UK Garage remix of "Gimme Some More"; MC interacting with the crowd on the mic]