

TRANSCRIPT:

Bambii

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

Nino

For me, as someone who is half-Trini, half-Pakistani and I grew up with a lot of Jamaican people and you tend to stick and be attracted to certain groups that have the same sensibility.

I was lucky enough to experience so many different cultures by being a product of living here, being mixed, having all types of friends, I have a real respect for sound cultures throughout genres and you know, you get to see the similarities and you get to see especially how Jamaican Sound System culture has influenced and impacted drum and bass, jungle music, ragga jungle, all those genres.

Tasha

You swear you're like this real Jamaican when you're up here because you have Jamaican parentage and so forth, and then when you get down there, you're like, and your cousins will tell you "you don't know nothing – ye an idiot – you don't know nothing about – “, because you don't.

You're not from there.

And you start to realize, wow, like there's some real serious culture down here.

And the music is just different.

The versions of the songs were different.

The swear words were different.

Yeah, I mean, everything was just different and better, right?

Nino

A lot of the traditional sound culture influences are more obvious in parties and bashments and sets that happen predominantly outside of Toronto or outside of the inner city. You know, like if you think about how even the diaspora lives, we live in the outside of the city, that's where our families were able to afford houses.

They don't have neighbours that are complaining about noise.

They don't have city bylaws getting in the way, or maybe they just are going against it, rebelling against that, which is a little more part of the culture also, y'know?
So for me, the traditional sense does exist a little bit in the outside of the inner city, but it's hard thing to produce downtown when you're met with so much red tape all the time.

Heather

Selecting at a party in Jamaica, you know it was Jamaican music, right?
We could play till 2:00, 3:00 in the morning– nobody trouble you, right?
Here, by 12:00, you had to tone down the music that kind of thing.
Even New Year's Eves, so when you bring in the New Year and 1:00 is shut off.
In Jamaica, you could play till sunrise.
You could play till the cows come home.
The cow dem would dance too.

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.
We can talk all day long about the influence of Caribbean, namely Jamaican culture in Toronto.
As much as people celebrate those influences, there's also terrible stereotypes attached to being Jamaican about crime rate, education, interpersonal stereotypes.

Nino

I mean, I've had to grapple with my own complacency with white supremacy and my own complacency with anti-blackness.
As a non-black person who has played dancehall and realizing the privilege that comes with why it may have been easier for me to book a venue than it would be for Bambii

Bambii

– 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 is – it's a fight every single time because I think that we don't live in a city that wants to see like

Ace

- black joy,

Bambii

yeah, we don't live in a city that is okay with having like event spaces filled with black people.

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.

Nino

To like have people like Bambii and Ace in my corner and to learn from, to spar with, to have these conversations with on a daily basis, but sometimes I think if I wasn't in this position and if I just happened to be a brown person playing this music, with no understanding like, that's a problem.

In a city like Toronto that obviously should put Jamaican music, Caribbean music on a pedestal because it is one of our most major influences.

Alanna

Like imagine Toronto without Jamaican music or Jamaican music culture.

Tasha

There'd be like no Eglinton West, there'd be no Kensington Market, there would be none of that organic vibe.