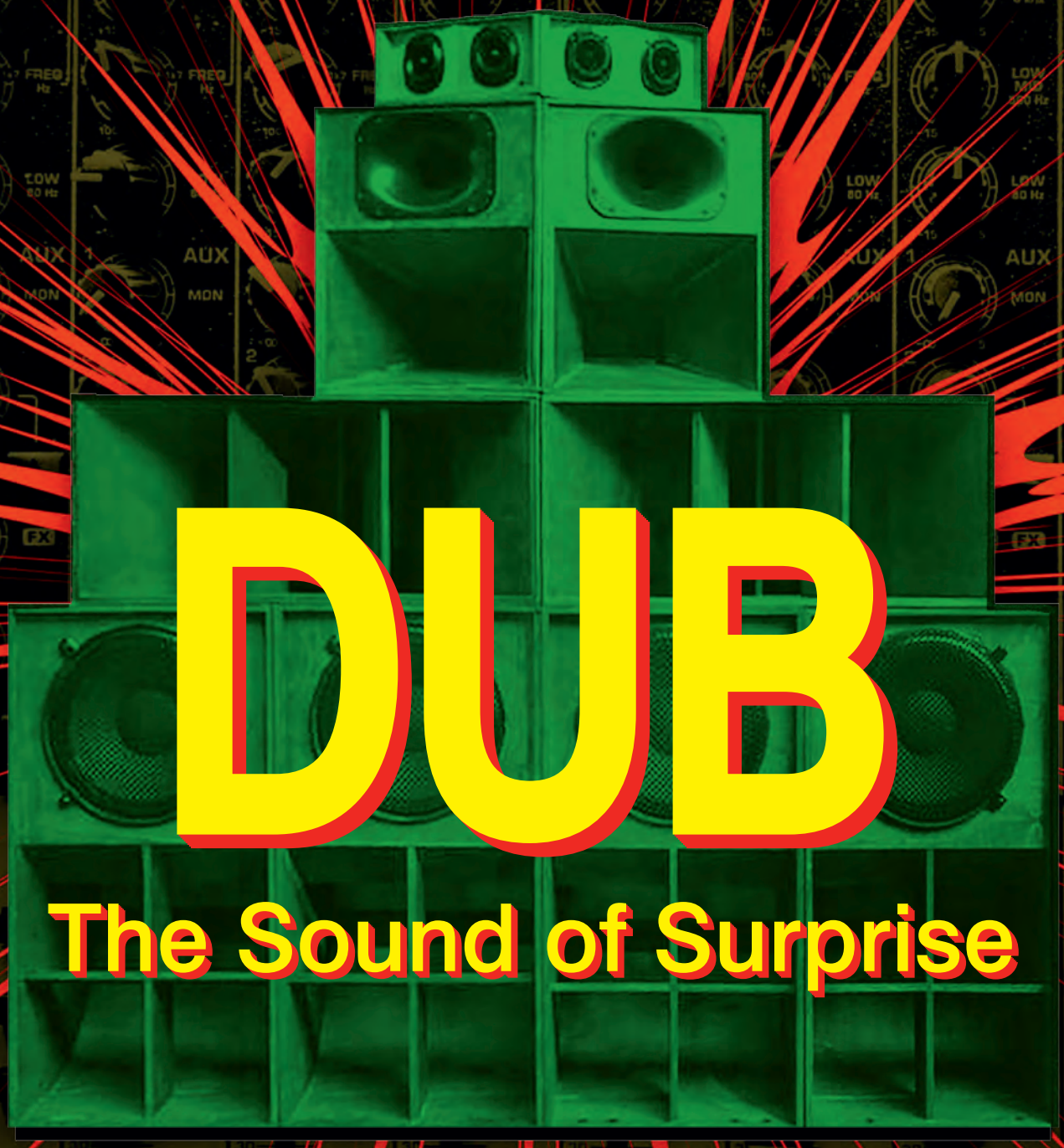
HISTORY – INTERVIEWS – SOUND SYSTEMS – ENGINEERS & STUDIOS – DISCOGRAPHY



DUB

The Sound of Surprise

Helmut Philipps

Reunion, 13 years after our interview for this book. Errol Brown, now 74 years old, is a live and studio engineer, and a legendary dub mixer for artists such as Bob Marley, Ziggy Marley, Marcia Griffiths, Culture, Busy Signal, Rebelution, Buju Banton, Steel Pulse, and many others. Germany 2024.

Helmut Philipps

DUB

The Sound of Surprise

Translated by Ursula “Munchy” Münch

EDITION OLMS ZÜRICH

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Brother Sound, France + Blackwood Sound System, Germany.

About this book

> "I want to study the musicians before me. But I want to study what they thought, what they felt, and why they did what they did – not the notes they played."
>
> (Makaya McCraven[1])

In the early 1970s, something began in Jamaica's recording studios that would wield significant influence over the handling of music recordings. The catalyst was purely pragmatic, and the outcome was a fusion of technology and music. Jamaica's invention conquered the world. It has revolutionized international charts and club music, influenced contemporary music in all its facets, even classical. 50 years later, the innovation is established as a global genre under the name "dub". However, the actual meaning, purpose and origin seem to have been lost along the way.

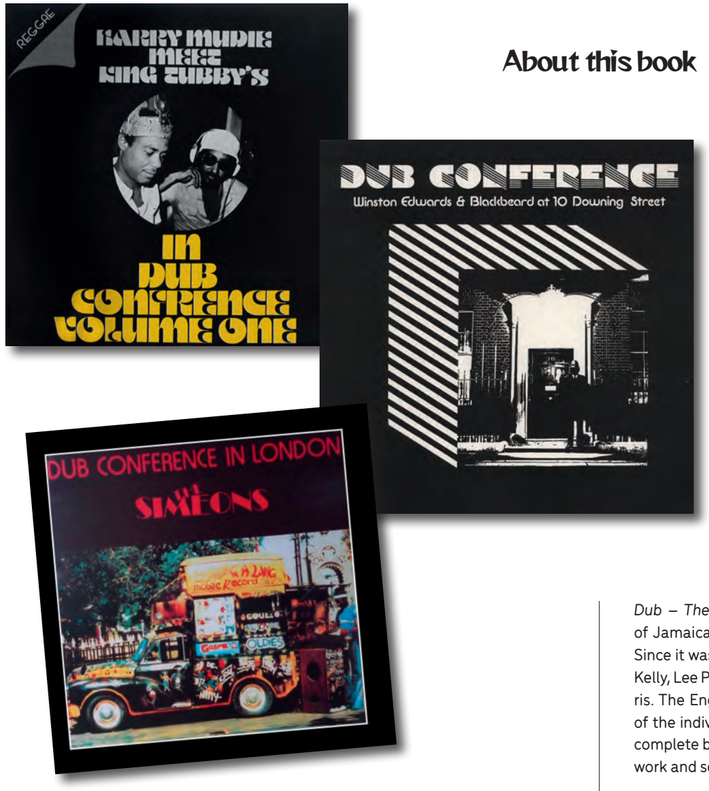
"Dub is drum and bass," said Pat Kelly. "No," countered Lloyd James, dub was more than that. "Dub music is a creation of an engineer." To this Sylvan Morris added "dub has a cultural significance." Those expressing themselves here are among the initiators. As sound engineers, they were significantly involved in the genesis of a style that emerged in Kingston as a reggae derivative and was to develop independently under the name "dub". Today, a broad majority of people believe that dub means echo.

This book chronicles the history of Jamaican dub. It questions the myths and legends that surround the genre, shows how it came about, and what it has become. It also clarifies how, of all people, an elderly, white reggae lover and sound engineer from Germany took on the role of the dub-wise with a few imported records many years ago. The albums *Super Ape* and *Heart Of The Congos* suggested to me that there was another, unimagined level in music between the sounds and instruments, to which a then little-known individual named Lee Perry opened wide the door. Over the years, several hundred Upsetter records have accumulated on my shelves. They were joined by recordings by a youth named Scientist, who revealed the new and expressive possibilities of a mixing console with his works.

1 In: Universal Being Documentary, International Anthem 2020. Translated quote from „Organische Musik" ("Organic music"), German newspaper FAZ.net August 19, 2020 (last accessed February 12, 2024).

Ever since I heard the first dub albums, this Jamaican style has fascinated me. Later I mixed dubs myself at concerts and in the studio[2], and was always of the opinion that dub belongs to reggae like Blue Mountain coffee to Jamaica. I wanted to ascertain whether this still holds true.

2 Under the name H.P. Setter.



Inspired by the custom that has been practiced since the 70s, when a music producer met a studio engineer for a dub session, to call the resulting albums a "dub conference"[3], I set out to be the "producer" of a book, to confer with the fathers, thought leaders, and inventors of dub technology. Straight from the lion's mouth I wanted to hear what motivated them to break reggae down into its individual parts in order to reassemble them with reverb, echo and deeper bass. I wanted to learn the origins of the process, including where it happened, and spoke to its veterans and pioneers. Among them are some who are scarcely recognized today, despite their decisive influence on development. Others would also have fitted well into this context but were not available for discussion for various reasons. There is also a sad list of legends who have passed away, such as Sid Bucknor, Ruddy Thomas, Osbourne Ruddock, Errol Thompson, Ossie Hibbert and Philip Smart, for whom contemporary witnesses and companions tried to fill the gap.

Dub – The Sound of Surprise is the extended version of my book *Dub Conference. 50 years Dub from Jamaica*[4], published in Germany in 2022. The readers of the German reggae magazine Riddim voted it the best book of the year twice in a row, and it served as the basis for a month-long exhibition on "50 Years of Dub from Jamaica". The expanded English version has been updated to include more facts, more interviews, more sources, more dub, additional chapters and 350 illustrations.

Dub – The Sound of Surprise preserves the memory of a bygone era of Jamaican music culture whose firsthand witnesses are fading away. Since it was first published, other dub pioneers have died, including Pat Kelly, Lee Perry, Bunny Lee, Style Scott, Soljie Hamilton, and Sylvan Morris. The English version is dedicated to their memory. The descriptions of the individuals focus on their relationship to dub and do not provide complete biographies, which would have exceeded the thematic framework and scope of the book.

Historical reflections on reggae can easily be compared to reaching into a lottery drum. Even in Jamaica, today's memories are often quite different by tomorrow. Oscillating between self-centered and vague, they are full of contradictions and relative when it comes to information about time and people. Artists in particular often get confused about their own biographies. "Memory is not a reliable quantity in life." says the Norwegian writer Karl-Ove Knausgård, because it "doesn't prioritize the truth."[5] The reggae documentary maker David Katz also admits "every book ever written about reggae has caveats (including those I wrote myself)"[6] and this horribile dictu must also apply to some of the data in this book. Despite my best efforts, 100% accuracy is not guaranteed.

Helmut Philipps, spring 2024

Author's notes

The book contains quotations from people who speak in a Jamaican language known as Patwa. The author has retained the use of Patwa expressions and phrases to convey their statements authentically.

Album and book titles as well as names of journals or magazines are italicized, and individual songs, titles, essays, and quotations are in "quotation marks". Quotations without attribution come from conversations or correspondence between the author and those quoted.

Additions in (round) brackets act as explanations, additions in [square] brackets are by the author and complete half-sentences.

Details about record releases can be found in the footnotes.

Since the history of dub music goes hand in hand with the development of studio technology, excursions into the field of electrical engineering are unavoidable. However, they are limited to what is necessary; without them, the progression of events would not be understandable.

3 For example *Harry Mudie meets King Tubby in Dub Conference Vol. 1–3* (Jamaica 1976), *Winston Edwards & Blackbeard – Dub Conference At 10 Downing Street* (UK 1980) or *The Simeons – Dub Conference in London* (1978).

4 Original title: *Dub Konferenz. 50 Jahre Dub aus Jamaika* Strzelecki Books Cologne.

5 Karl-Ove Knausgård: *My Struggle: Book 3 – Boyhood Island*, novel 2014. Quoted from "Abschied von den Eltern" ("Farewell to Parents"), Swiss newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* July 22, 2014.

6 David Katz: Book review *Reggae Going International 1967–1976: The Bunny 'Striker' Lee Story*, in German reggae print magazine RIDDIM 03/2012.

Kokoteni HiFi, Germany.


BARRY MURE MEETS KING TUBBY'S
IN DUB CONFERENCE VOLUME ONE
Reggae Workshop
Randy's
IMPACT!
JAVA
You name it — we have it
CLIVE CHIN Presents
RANDY'S DUB
KING TUBBY
MAJESTIC DUB
SCIENTIST WINS THE WORLD CUP
AFRICAN ANTHEM
THE MIGHTY DREADLOCKS OVERDUB
KUNG FU
WARRIOR
COMMANDMENTS OF DUB
CHAPTER 7 JAH SHAKA
HORACE ANDY
DANCE HALL STYLE
SCIENCE IN DUB
MORWELL ESQ.
DUB ME
ISRAEL VIBRATION
UNCONQUERED PEOPLE
an event
DUB
side 1
side 2
KING'S DUB
HOT LAVA
INTRODUCING
Scientist
The best Dub album in the World...
ROCK A DUB
DUB STORE SPECIAL
This is
AUGUSTUS PABLO
SLY & ROBBIE
A dub experience
Negrea LoveDub
KING TUBBY PRINCE JAMMY
AND SCIENTIST
Prince Jammy Presents
STRICTLY DUB
TROJAN
Augustus Pablo presents...
ITAL DUB
King Tubby MEETS The Upsetter
At the Grass Roots of Dub
IS IT WAR OR IS IT PEACE
A DUB DUBATAK
DUB MERCHANT
DUB WAR
VOL 1
VITAL DUB
Well Charged
WAYNE JARRETT
Showcase
VOL 1
Cookin'
Tommy McCook and the Agrovators
ALLIED
DUB SELECTION
10-13½ S.F DUB SELECTION
HANDLE WITH CARE
ITAL
SOUNDS
& System
HEAVY METAL DUB
STAR WARS DUB
SCIENTIST RIDS THE WORLD OF THE EVIL CURSE OF THE VAMPIRES
KING JAMMY
WATERHOUSE DUB
LEE PERRY
DUBSTRUMENTALS
KUNG FU MEETS THE DRAGON
RETURN OF THE WAX
MUSICAL BONES
JAVA
DUBWISE
BURNING SPEAR
GARVEY'S GHOST
UNLEASHED DUB
FROM KING TUBBY'S STUDIO
FAT MAN RIDDIM SECTION
THE PROPHETS
KING TUBBY'S
PROPHECIES OF
DENNIS BOVELL
The 4th Street Albums Collection
RAMA
DUB ENCOUNTER
PRINCE FAHI AND THE ARABS
FREE FOR ALL
BULLWACKIE
BOBBY ELLIS & the PROFESSIONALS
meet the REVOLUTIONARIES
SCIENTIST HIGH PRIEST OF DUB
GREATEST HITS
SUPER
DUBB-WISE
HATCHET
100
RASTA DUB '76
Treasure Isle Dub
DUB
IN
BLOOD
UNIVERSAL DUB
BLACK UHURU
SLUM
gregory isaac
IN DUB
DUBSCO
Vol 1
BUNNY WAILER
Majestic Dub
Augustus Pablo
KING TUBBY meets the ROCKERS UPTOWN
KING TUBBY
CHANNEL ONE
STUDIO
Orthodox Dub

Streetdance in Kingston, ca. 2000.

Prologue: Counteraction, Dub-Wise

"See dem a dubwise
and dem no dub wise

see dem a dub school
and dem a dub fool

see dem a dub club
and dem a dub scrub.

Dem need fi do the history check
weh it a come from."

(France Nooks & Prince Alla[1])

"Counteraction!" they call it in Jamaica. The term comes from the sound system culture of a country in which competing for the audience's favour is one of the nation's preferred pastimes. You slam this word in the face of your opponent, shout it at them or use it to smugly announce impending devastation. It happens when sound systems – or just "sounds" – compete against each other in a so-called "clash". Their weapons are records, so it's about sophistication in musical selection and brilliance in presentation. A sound presents a music track; the competitor has to react. When he's confident, he replies with a counteraction. He might use a recording that relates to the previous hit or even top it, and use a text specifically aimed at the opponent, or a counterstatement called "speech" in sound system slang. The competition lasts several rounds; the audience decides the winner. It's an all-night event and in the end the winner takes home a trophy in the form of a cup. The British radio DJ and clash veteran David Rodigan calls the procedure "the musical equivalent of a chess game"[2] and a great pleasure.

The clash is a special form of reggae entertainment. Its energy is fueled by the fascination for musical exclusivity and the fun of competition; its roots lie in the mobile open-air discotheques that emerged in downtown Kingston in the 1950s as an alternative to the leisure activities of uptown society. According to U-Roy, the pioneer of Jamaican toasting, "the poor people's enjoyment in Jamaica, because we nah have a whole heap a money to go up inna big club. The ghetto people enjoy themselves by coming to the dance and have a lot of fun."[3] It started with small speaker systems and record players at street corners and in open spaces. As technology advanced, the systems grew and became "huge like 20, 30 something inches steel horns and we sometimes have two or three of those in the tree top. So people from miles away could hear the sound system."[4] Each sound is eager to have something others cannot offer. Be it the greater range, the more sophisticated sound, the more virtuoso disc jockeys (called "selector" in Jamaica), or the most dazzling entertainers (called "MCs" or master of ceremonies). But above all it's the choice of music. It has to stand out from the others and, if possible, include recordings no one else possesses.

The craving for exclusivity dates back from the time before ska and reggae. In the early days, sounds operated with imported records from the United States, and scraped off the labels so rival spies couldn't identify which tracks the audience enjoyed. In 1949, Ken Khouri (1917–2003), son of a Lebanese immigrant father and Cuban mother born in Jamaica, bought a disc recording machine for wedding or birthday greetings in Miami for $350 and brought it to the island. It was the start of Jamaica's own music and recording production. Khouri began recording mento music with it and started to organize the sale of his own records in his home and a club in St. Andrew, west of Kingston.[5] Two years later, Kingston businessman Stanley Motta (1915–1993) purchased a similar device that he could connect a microphone to and adjust the volume of, enough to record mento bands in a back room of a lumber mill on Hanover Street. Even though both equipment and location were still far from what would later be understood as a proper audio studio, this was the first recording facility in Jamaica. The medium on which recordings were stored were so-called acetates, thin metal discs coated with a lay-

1 "Dubwise", album *Havana Meets Kingston*, Baco Records 2017.
2 David Rodigan: "My name was adopted by a Kingston gangster. He's dead now" in: *The Guardian* February 23, 2017.
3 DVD Documentary "Return Of The Rub-A-Dub Style", Walking Road Films USA 2009.
4 Scientist ibid.
5 In 1961, in the start-up boom of the impending independence, Khouri set up the company "Federal Records Ltd." in Kingston at No. 220 Foreshore Drive, later Marcus Garvey Drive, with the help of Australian engineer Graeme Goodall (also spelled Graham in some publications), an all-inclusive empire with recording and mastering studio, record pressing plant and distribution. In 1981, the studio and pressing plant were sold to the Tuff Gong company, which still owns them today.

er of lacquer into which recordings were scratched. These discs could be played on a gramophone immediately, but because of their soft surface they did not last very long, as the needle made the groove deeper with each use. The fact that the acetates were playable set the foundation for reggae's passion for dubplates. From the very beginning, Khouri also cut recordings for sound systems on his machine that were colloquially known as "soft wax". Normally, however, Khouri and Motta shipped their discs to London, where the Decca company used an electroplating process to create a stamp from them and then press 10-inch shellac 78s. They were delivered to Jamaica and mostly bought by tourists or the Jamaican upper class, while the sound systems downtown had already turned to rhythm & blues and jazz, and viewed mento as the music of the colonial era coming to an end. This was not without good reason, because mento, often declared as the origin of Jamaican music, came from the desire of European slave masters for entertainment, right down to its instrumentation. In the early stages, it was rather common for singers to become crowd pullers through soft wax recordings without their records being available for the public to buy. When mono became stereo and the multi-track recording process found its way into Jamaica's post-independence studios at the end of the 1960s, the sounds changed their exclusivity policy. They now preferred to invest in special versions of successful hit singles, which had not been possible before technically. They changed the lyrics of the songs to include the name of their sound and requested an alternative mix. Soon people were talking about "dubplates" or "specials".

At the same time, interest in instrumental versions of well-known songs increased, because sounds were no longer just playing records. Their entertainment programme now also included performances by musicians and singers. They needed playbacks, which usually came from proper hits. Through the possibilities of multi-track technology, these originally pure instrumental versions developed into idiosyncratic rhythm reductions, characterized by naked beats of bass and drums, enriched with reverb or echo effects, infused with vocals fading in, or shreds of melody. Created by the studios' sound engineers, these special, exclusive mixes were called "dub". Originally and by definition, dub is a version of an existing music track that has been broken down into its individual components exclusively for the use of sound systems. These versions "were required to give the mic men the space to express themselves.[6]"

Dub became the live platform for deejays and singers in the Jamaican dancehall.

Around 1970/71, due to great demand, the first dub mixes were pressed onto the B-sides of new singles, and in 1973 an independent art form emerged in LP format. The appearance of occasional deejay tracks on various early dub LPs showed the dominance of deejay culture. In the development of this special Jamaican song interpretation, it increasingly determined the scene. Big Youth was involved in Prince Buster's *The Message Dubwise* as early as 1973, and again in 1978 together with I-Roy on Sylvan Morris' *Cultural Dub*[7]. In between, long-playing records appeared that presented deejays on one side and matching dubs on the other, such as:

- **U-Roy – Dread In A Africa** (Hit 1976) produced in 1975 with dubs by Errol Thompson, released a year later as a pre-release with a neutral cover, was not released regularly until 2022 on Jamaican Art Records, NL
- **U-Roy – African Roots** (Celluloid 1976), identical with **The Best Of U-Roy** (Live and Love 1976), with dubs from Tubby's studio
- **Rasta Have Ambition** (Live and Love 1976) with the deejays Dillinger, Shortie The President, Prince Jazzbo, Dr Alimentado and Jah Stitch plus King Tubby dubs from **King Tubby presents Dub From The Roots** released one year before
- **Dread Locks In Jamaica** (Live and Love 1976) with the deejays Jah Stitch, U Brown, Little Joe (= Ranking Joe), Tapper Zukie and Dillinger plus dubs from Tubby's studio
- **Strictly Rockers In A Dread Land** (Live and Love 1976) with the deejays Jah Youth, U Brown, Dillinger, Jah Woosh, Jah Stitch, Prince Jazzbo plus dubs from Tubby's studio
- **Straight To Babylon Chest** (Live and Love 1976) with the deejays I-Roy, Prince Jazzbo, Dr Alimentado and Jah Stitch
- **I-Roy – Can't Conquer Rasta** (Justice 1976) with dubs mixed by Prince Jammy at Tubby's studio
- **Lone Ranger – On The Other Side Of Dub** (Studio One 1977)

6 Booklet *Duke Reid International Disco Series* Doctor Bird UK 2021.

7 Harry J, USA.

On The Other Side Of Dub was produced by Coxson Dodd. The owner of the Studio One label with his studio attached explained years later in an interview: "The dub LP was one of the things that (was) responsible for breaking new deejays and artist. Because they had the rhythm now to rehearse on, you know. They could deejay until they got perfect."[8]

With the dub long-playing records, global expansion began, abstracting the local dub phenomenon into an international production innovation. Initially they were only intended for sound systems, that's why Coxson printed in 1974 their intended purpose "Sounds & System" on the covers of the first pressings of his *Mellow Dub* und *Ital Dub* LPs; however, the albums soon became export hits for an entirely different group of buyers. Jamaica's music producers, always looking for additional income, recognized their potential and sold dub in LP format to the UK. Often – and frequently without the knowledge of the engineers involved – in the form of master tapes, which were assembled there and pressed onto vinyl. In Kingston's record stores those products could hardly be found since they mainly sold singles. In its homeland, dub did not take place as a solitary event and, apart from its integration into the sound system culture, remained a stranger in its own country. The best place to find what you were looking for was in a souvenir shop by the Jamaica Tourist Board at Kingston airport, which sold dub LPs in addition to t-shirts and other memorabilia.

Dub conquered a market outside Jamaica. There it lost its roots, served as a blueprint for the remix of pop music and developed a life of its own. In 2010, Christopher Partridge meticulously researched and analyzed the (sub-)cultural reinterpretation of the dub technique, which had started in England. For his book *DUB in Babylon*[9], Partridge, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Lancaster, combed through essays and studies on immigrant sociology, liner notes of recordings and the mass of interviews and articles in the British music press, which had been discussing the topic since 1974. The journalists' interest was caught when Lee Perry's then life and business partner Pauline Morrison came to London with the original version of the *Blackboard Jungle Dub* LP – which was initially called *Upsetters 14 Dub Blackboard Jungle* – but had no cover. She told Perry biographer David Katz in retrospect: "I pressed 300 in Jamaica, brought 100 with me to England and went around to record shops. I remember Chris Lane (the later owner of Fashion Records) put in the magazine (*Blues and Soul*): This dub album will go down in history."[10] Lane would be proved right. In 1975, Keith Hudson's *Pick A Dub* became the first dub LP in the UK to be officially licensed on the Atra label[11], in a recolored cover, after it had previously come to London as a black and white packaged pre-release on Hudson's Mamba label. As early as 1976, the leading Rock magazine *Melody Maker* described the dub technique as "the supreme sound of surprise" and spoke of "the most interesting new abstract concept since Ornette Coleman undermined the dictatorship of Western harmony".[12]

In the UK, too, dub was spreading primarily through the sound systems. However, unlike in Jamaica, it was a cultural refuge for the un-

8 *Studio One Story*, Soul Jazz DVD 2002.

9 Christopher Partridge: *DUB in Babylon. Understanding the Evolution and Significance of DUB REGGAE in Jamaica and Britain from King Tubby to Post-punk*, London 2010.

10 From a mail correspondence with David Katz in October 2011.

11 The owner is Brent Clarke from Trinidad, brother of Sebastian Clarke, who presented the first description of Reggae history in book form with *Jah Music* in 1980.

12 Richard Williams: "The Sound Of Surprise", Melody Maker August 21, 1976 page 21. To understand the magnitude of this comparison: The art and music worlds have been buzzing about Ornette Coleman ever since he had "designed" Free Jazz fifteen years

derground in exile. In this environment, dub became a militant, sacred statement against a repressive, racist society. Bass and dub acted as spiritual transmitters in these places. The subversively celebrated mixture of underground and rebellion exuded an enormous fascination for British youth. Middle-class kids from the hippie-cannabis-LSD environment understood dub as the soundscape of their trips into mind-expansion. Jamaica's reverb and echo orgies fulfilled the promises made by psychedelic rock. When Sex Pistols singer Johnny Rotten/John Lydon played his favorite music on John Peel's radio show and presented almost exclusively dub and reggae[13], the underdog punks of the British working class discovered a revolutionary attitude in the Jamaican remix that corresponded to their own political anger. In addition, dub technique helped to overcome the limits of the own musical craftsmanship. It didn't take long for the new admirers to amputate dub from its original environment. The style created for reggae sound systems became romanticized and misused.

At the end of his analysis, Partridge stated that "dub, since the post-punk period and certainly in later rave and club context – which tend to be predominantly white – lacks 'reggae culture'."[14] As final proof, he cited a British study from 2006, which said that most of those who use dub today are "white and in full-time education or full-time employment. This is quite different from the cultures within which dub had its genesis."[15]

Dub is a concept that started out as a single B-side, became bolder and innovative and changed the world as an LP. In this process dub changed colour; a black functional product became an art form from which a white genre developed, using the same name. As with every intellectual mind game, it has moved further away from its origins.

Five decades after its incarnation, a degenerated dub cacophony is raging worldwide, in which dub is no longer recognizable for what it is, let alone for what it wanted to be. There is rock dub, punk dub, folk dub, jazz dub, classical dub, disco dub, techno dub, ambient dub, the list is endless. Nowadays, every musical minimalism and every echo used as a style runs the risk of being interpreted as dub. Dub seems watered down in the "holy seriousness"[16] of random terminology, is digitally located in "Cyber Zion"[17], squeezed in as sensationalism over subsonic deep bass, placed in abstract spaces of intellectual deconstruction. Dub became an easy target for absurd mind games. "Garvey's Ghost" und "Heidegger's Geist"[18] are the inspiration for a feature section that is constantly doing dub a disservice through speculative interpretation. In 2023, the perception was heading towards the "religious hypnotic charging"[19] and in 2011 "spiritually and stonedly happy blank places of dub"[20] were being

earlier. When Coleman was booked for New York's Five Spot Club in 1959, two planned weeks turned into ten and all of the city's cultural celebrities showed up, including Leonhard Bernstein, Miles Davis, James Baldwin, Norman Mailer and the painter Robert Rauschenberg.

13 After the Sex Pistols ended, Johnny Lydon even worked as a talent scout for Richard Branson's record company Virgin in Jamaica.

14 Christopher Partridge ibid p. 249.

15 Gordon Lynch & Emily Badger: The Mainstream Post-Rave Club Scene as a Secondary Institution: A British Perspective, in: Culture and Religion 7, 2006 p. 32.

16 Klaus Walter in: "Punky Reggae Party mit House" ("Punky Reggae Party with House"), German newspaper TAZ September 17, 2012.

17 Steve Goodman in: *Sonic Warfare – Sound, Affect and the Ecology of Fear*, p. 160, Cambridge 2010.

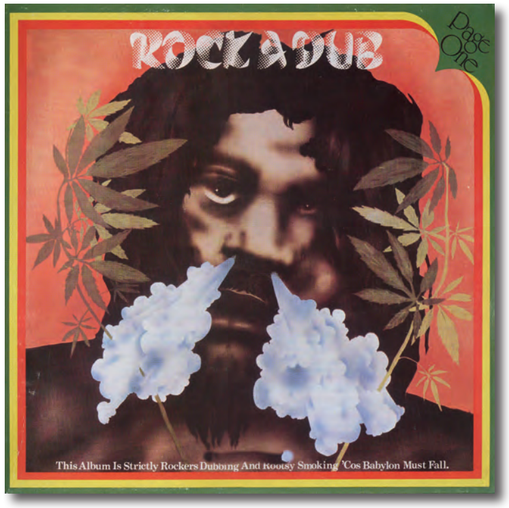
18 Ian Penman: „Klang!" Garvey's Ghost meets Heidegger's Geist. In: Experiencing The Soundtrack, Sidney 2001.

19 Swiss newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* on Simon Reynold's book *Futuromania*, October 17, 2023.

20 Diedrich Diederichsen in: „Karg, scharf, grau und genau. Zum neuen Album der stilbildenden britischen Post-Punk-Band Gang Of Four" ("Bare, sharp, gray and precise. About the new album by the style-defining British post-punk band Gang of Four") German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* feature section from January 29/30, 2011.

invoked. Spiritual, stoned and blank spaces – none of which dub ever wanted to be. Such attributes were only later persistently assigned to it by its primarily European reception, a perspective to which Jamaican self-presentation in combination with the reggae profit industry has contributed its share. The international perception of dub went hand in hand with the rise of roots and Rastafari reggae, and was therefore subject to the same stoned dreadlock clichés. In 1975, producer Pat Francis aka Jah Lloyd described his LP *Herb Dub* in the liner notes on the back cover as a "tribute to the herb" that "will take you far, far away"[21]; in 1979, on the front of the album *Rock A Dub*[22], released on the British label Jamaica Sound (and repressed by the German Bellaphon), the following was written under the image of Rasta smoking like a dragon: "Strictly Rockers Dubbing And Rootsy Smoking 'Cos Babylon Must Fall". In a conversation with King Jammy, we will learn that British documentary filmmakers in the 80s cemented this image forever by deliberately staging the stoner atmosphere that was popular in Europe for their films in the Kingston studios. Although dub has been floating around mixers and music magazines for half a century now, there has been little research into its cultural calibration. Even Partridge has admitted that a general study of dub history is long overdue.[23] The first person to approach the topic from a scientific perspective was the American author and lecturer Michael Veal in 2007, with a study that had the apt subtitle: *Soundscapes & Shattered Songs in Jamaican Reggae*[24]. The book David Rodigan later described as "very heavy reading" has nevertheless made a great contribution by its general approach, despite various errata in technical descriptions or personnel.[25]

However, some of Veal's interpretations are controversial. He also followed the common practice of Afrocentric interpretation, which in America and the Caribbean assumes African roots per se in every form



of musical expression of the successive generations of slaves. This compliant automatism in research into the origins of black music has long since been disproved in detail by the Austrian musicologist Maximilian Hendler.[26] Veal's classification of dub as "reflecting the ruination of an idealized African past"[27] or as "electronic music of African exiles several generations removed"[28] is contradicted not only by dub veterans such as Soljie Hamilton and Scientist. Dub is a product of the (electrical) technical evolution in sound recording and therefore can hardly be seen as a continuum from a time when there was no electricity. Also, dub, at least in its Jamaican form, was never as complex as it was posthumously made out to be, also by Veal. It was a simple day-to-day business in which the studios' mixing boards turned into play stations, and dub became the playground in which the engineers were supposed to

21 Sleeve Notes LP *Herb Dub* 1975 on Micron and on Teem Records. Was released in the same year as *Kaya Dub* on Kaya Records in the US, with identical mixes but in a different track order and with different song titles.

22 Produced by Page One, a pseudonym of Jamaican producer Winston Holness aka Niney The Observer.

23 Christopher Partridge ibid, introduction.

24 Michael E. Veal: *DUB Soundscapes & Shattered Songs in Jamaican Reggae*, Wesleyan University Press 2007.

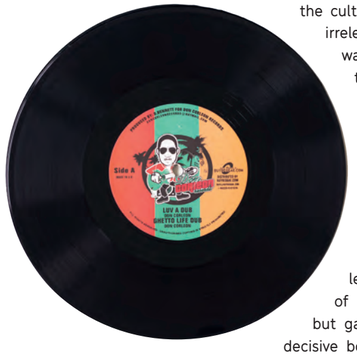
25 For example, Errol Brown's uncle was not the Treasure Isle engineer Byron Smith, but the owner Duke Reid. *Catch A Fire* by the Wailers was recorded at Harry J on 8 and not on 16 tracks (both p. 105). Lee Perry did not destroy his studio in 1979 (p. 13), but only closed it. It was destroyed by fire in 1983. Above all, no Jamaican engineer understood dub as "low-fi production" (p. 257), on the contrary. People like King Tubby, Scientist and Ernest Hoo Kim were focused on high-end sound results.

26 See the analysis by Maximilian Hendler *Vorgeschichte des Jazz* (Prehistory of Jazz), Graz 2008. Hendler refutes the common assumption that music played by Afro-Americans must have its roots in Africa, because African-American musicians also come from Africa. A point of view that is also widespread in reggae research.

27 Michael E. Veal ibid p. 218.

28 Ibid p. 255.

go nuts on behalf of sound operators and producers. While the Jamaican audience celebrated these technical gadgets as playbacks at sound system dances, long-playing records were sold outside the country in respectable numbers to a clientele for whom the cultural context was foreign, even irrelevant. For these customers, dub was given the status of "music of the sound engineers", although the original motivation for its creation came from the Jamaican sound systems.



When Jamaica, like the rest of the world, let machines make music towards the end of the 1980s, this led to the extinction of the native dub, but gave the genre a decisive boost in Europe. From the DNA of the remains, clones such as neo dub, digi dub, steppers dub, hyperdub and the apparently related evolutions such as jungle and drum'n'bass emerged in digital laboratories. In the haze of this dancefloor subbass culture, the dubstep that prevailed in clubs at the beginning of the millennium seemed to be the last link in a long chain of misunderstandings. This was something the British engineer Mad Professor also agreed with, even though he released a dub album entitled *The Roots Of Dubstep* in 2011.

There was no discussion along the lines as to whether dub is an (analogue) improvisational art or whether it can be programmed (digitally). The standing of computers seemed clear, with the Jamaican studios no longer making any significant contribution, and the hype from England taking all the attention.

Then, in 2010, came the unexpected turnaround. Accidentally, the then 33-year-old Donovan "Don Corleon" Bennett, a successful producer from Kingston and shadow man behind artists like Protoje, Gentleman and Rihanna, came across the old tradition of his homeland. His cousin Protoje had a Scientist LP in the car that made him curious. Don Corleon studied the technology via YouTube videos, consulted with Mad Professor and began dubbing as it had been done in the analogue years. His album *HD In Dub*[29] appeared at a time of recollection in Jamaican music, to which the Busy Signal album *Reggae Music Again* released in 2012, also contributed. It said "it's been a long long time, we nah have no vibes like this". Parallel to the Busy Signal album, a vinyl LP with dub versions was released, something Jamaica hadn't seen in two decades.[30] Bands and artists like Dubtonic Kru or Protoje started to describe their performances as dub. Jamaica's young generation of musicians now rocked with the flavor of the 70s and a desire to improvise.

Even though the term "dub" did not catch on for concerts, a set of events emerged at around the same time, including "Inner City Dub" in the community of Tivoli Gardens, "Dub School" in Vineyard Town, "Vinyl Thursdays" that originated in Papine, and "Dubwise", a series that started out around 2013/14 at the Driftwood Bar on Mannings Hill Road, eventually turning into a global brand with events from Miami to Trinidad and its own location, the Dubwise Café in New Kingston. In the hills above the city, the "Kingston Dub Club", founded in 2012, has established itself with a sound system and live music. In 2013, Tarrus Riley shot the video for his song "Gimme Likkle One Drop" there. Many millions of YouTube clicks later, the location remains an internationally known hot spot of the roots, dub and reggae renaissance, frequented by musicians, Rastas, uptown residents and reggae tourists. Suns Of Dub including melodica player Addis Pablo are common guests at the "Dub Club". He revived the tradition of his father Augustus Pablo (1954–1999), whose instrumental music played a distinctive role in the emergence of dub culture. The son says: "Most people start from the past and then take it to the future. But we start from the future and take it to the past."[31]

Rory Gilligan also regularly plays at the "Kingston Dub Club". The veteran selector of the "Stone Love" sound system wants to go back to the "revolutionary roots" of the 70s. In 2007 and 2010 he produced the al-

29 Released only digitally; individual tracks released as limited 10-inch vinyls were available via buyreggae.com.
30 *Busy Signal – Reggae Dubb'N Again*, VP Records 2012.
31 „Addis Pablo. Suns Of Dub. Bridging The Gap" German Reggae print magazine *RIDDIM* 03/2014.

bums *Movement*[32] and *Gravity*[33] with the band Rootz Underground, not only setting a high standard of sound technology, but also anticipating everything that would later be interpreted by Protoje's Indiggnation band or Raging Fyah as a musical expression of a nu roots movement. From realpolitik and Rasta topics in the lyrics to guitar solos and collective improvisations that shake up the rigid song and sound structures of reggae, Gilligan built up artists like Samory I and Jah9, and initiated a label by the appropriate name "Black Dub Music". He focused specifically on female voices such as Kristine Alicia (*Songs From Zion* 2017), Keida ("Ganja Tea"), Nadine Sutherland ("Karma"), Indrani ("Journey") and Nelly Stharre ("Find Your Roots"). With dubs, remixes and exclusive dubplates, as well as several new interpretations of the soul classic "Is It Because I'm Black"[34] which was repeatedly covered in Jamaica, he was looking for a way back to "more spiritual sound, frequencies and voices".[35]

Following the concept of "preserving for the generation now and the generation to come to know where this t'ing a come from"[36] producer Gussie Clarke published a lavishly stocked box-set in 2018.[37] Besides three CDs with the LPs he produced, *Black Foundation Dub*[38], *Dread At The Controls Dub*[39] and *The Mighty Diamonds – Dubwise*[40] it also included a DVD with a one-hour group discussion called "Dub Talk!", in which Clarke met a 16-person panel of key players. The large round comprised of sound system operators Mikey Faith from "Emperor Faith HiFi", Papa Jaro from "Killamanjaro" and Finger Man aka "Tippertone", besides the selectors Danny Dreadlocks and Jah Screw, as well as the studio engineers Sylvan Morris and Soljie Hamilton, and also Carolyn Cooper, professor of Literature and Cultural Studies at the University of the West Indies in Kingston. The discussion was led by Mutabaruka. Clarke put forward the thesis that Jamaica did not recognize that the creativity of its engineers had created an independent music format with dub. The debate turned into a fiasco. Unsuccessfully, Mutabaruka and Clarke tried to have the group focus on the topic of "dub as a form of musical expression" while the sound operators and selectors only saw dub as specials and dubplates with just one important aspect i.e. that the sound's name was mentioned in

32 Riverstone Records 2007.
33 Riverstone Records 2010.
34 Syl Johnson 1969.
35 „Die fantastische Metamorphose des Rory Stone Love" ("The fantastic metamorphosis of Rory Stone Love") by Ursula "Munchy" Münch in German Reggae print magazine *RIDDIM* 06/2014.
36 *Gussie Clarke – Dub Anthology* Music Works Records 2018.
37 Music Works Records.
38 Burning Sounds UK 1977.
39 Hawkeye UK 1978.
40 Music Works Records JA 1981.

them. Danny Dreadlocks asked what all the talk about dub as music was about. "Dub nah go work unless you have a couple of deejays fe talk pon di riddim!"[41] In her following analysis of the conversation, Cooper suggested that the foundation's representatives needed to be brought into conversation with today's young generation: "We can't go back. But it's important for the youths to understand the foundation of the music."

When looking for the youth of the next dub generation, Carolyn Cooper might have a hard time finding anything in Jamaica. At least she would come across dancehall producer and Grammy winner Romaine Arnett aka Teflon Zincfence[42]. In 2018 he surprised everybody with *Dub Policy*, a promising sound-creative statement album. The set consist-

41 Scientist also repeatedly called out to the audience during a live dub set in Berlin's Café Zapata in 2010: "Someone must deejay!".
42 Romaine "Teflon" Arnett aka Zincfence from Spanish Town participated in the Chronixx EPs *Hooked On Chronixx* 2011 and *Dread & Terrible* 2014. For the production "Blazin'" with Koffee he received a Grammy in 2020.

ed of six programmed, bass-heavy tracks that are full of reminiscences of the golden era of dub. Zincfence incorporated vocal samples by U-Roy, Prince Far I and Prince Francis from Studio One, and used original samples and new overdubs to construct an impressive dub remake of the over 40-year-old Bunny Lee production "No Wicked Shall Enter The Kingdom Of Zion" aka "Fittest Of The Fittest" by Barry Brown. In memory of a monumental King Tubby mix, he called his adaptation "A Ruffer Version". This title lead to some confusion, since Tubby's "Ruffer Version"[43] is actually Johnny Clarke's song "Don't Trouble Trouble". *Dub Policy* remained a singular action and appeared only as an mp3-file.

Three years later Dubtonic Kru guitarist Omar "Jallanzo" Johnson dropped *Dubbin' It & Lovin' It*, a gently mixed collection of less brutal riddims compared to Zincfence. Only two of them had vocal versions at the time of publication; the playbacks served primarily as templates for live dubbing. He was not alone in this. King Jammy, Mad Professor, Scientist, Laurent "Tippy I-Grade" Alfred from the US Virgin Islands, the Germans Jah Schulz and Captain Yossarian, as well as international neo dub sound systems have been dubbing live with laptop and small mixing consoles in front of real or streamed audiences. In these moments, dub becomes a temporary event. Jallanzo continues live what he had already practiced in the studio with the band Dubtonic Kru. "Back in those days when they were mixing there was a vibe [in the studio]", said the keyboard player Luke Dixon, "same thing with us. It is brought on stage, right in front of your eyes." Jubba White, the drummer added: "The base is being roots, rock [and] Jamaican rub'a'dub style." But Jallanzo had moved away from rub'a'dub. His steppers' beats are influenced by the neo dub style from the UK.

A dub newcomer like Collin Bulby York, who mixed *Use Your Loaf Dub* for the US Record Store Day in 2017, is no longer a youth; he has been known as a producer and engineer since the late 1980s. [44] His dub LP, recorded by A-class musicians such as drummer Kirk Bennett, was analogue mixed at Mixing Lab studio in Kingston, and released in an edition of 750 copies, distributed by Lion Vibes. The title "Use your Loaf" is a proverb that encourages you to think before doing anything. However, Bulby's unleashed echoes were not designed to show Jamaica the way in search of the lost dub. On the other hand, his album was the only one that was released physically. Jallanzo's *Dubbin' It & Lovin' It*, Zincfence' *Dub Policy* and Don Corleon's *HD In Dub* appeared only digitally. Which is also an indication of the interest in real albums.

Anyone who pressed new dub onto vinyl at that time complained about stacks of records in the warehouse that no one wanted. By contrast, reissues of historical dub albums sold out rapidly. It was these old LPs, rather than B-sides, maxi or showcase mixes, that spread the word of Jamaica's dub outside the traditional scene. For these reasons, the number of albums that have come and are still coming from Jamaica are a significant indicator of the influence of the Jamaican original. In the twelve years from the first LPs in 1973 to their sudden death due to digitalization in 1985, an estimated 600 dub LPs came from Jamaica, although an exact number cannot be determined. Lists like Smokey Room's[45] "Dub LP Archive", which has not been updated for a long while and lists 358 albums, allow approximate estimates. Gaps have got to be filled with the individual knowledge of collectors. Even though reissue labels such as Pressure Sounds in the UK, or Dub Store in Japan, have recently reissued sought-after rarities from that time, you shouldn't be fooled. Since the turn of the millennium, no more than 20 new dub albums have come from Jamaica, including periodic releases by King Jammy and albums by the "immigrant worker" Alborosie.

In 2015, singer Protoje called his third long player *Ancient Future*, and referred to the symbiosis of tradition and innovation, which the author Dutty Bookman associated with the controversial marketing term "Reggae Revival" back in 2011. "What we see happening in the local creative industries is that the conscious, Afrocentric, often Rastafari reggae aesthetic is making a powerful comeback in various art forms and cultural expressions. Music unsurprisingly leads the way, with a new crop of singers and musicians who are emerging to give expression to this awakening."[46] Bookman recognized a roots historicism that was returning to its origins. Also, the future of dub lies in its own past, but very little happens in this sector. Jamaica's producers and engineers no longer seem to be interested in the international competition for their own creation. 50 years after its initial spark, the desire for counteraction can hardly be heard anymore.

43 Not to be mixed up with "A Rougher Version", which is based on Jackie Edwards' version of Burning Spears "Invasion".

44 Bulby has worked for artists such as Shabba Ranks, Super Cat, Sean Paul, Beres Hammond, Rihanna, Britney Spears and Sinehead O'Connor, among others.

45 http://dubwise.smokeyroom.net/.

46 http://www.jamaicansmusic.com/news/Culture/Reggae_Revival_Online_Movement. (last accessed October 31, 2022) The quote originally appeared on the website www.reggae-revival.com, which is no longer accessible.

DUB – The Sound of Surprise

History – Interviews – Sound Systems – Engineers & Studios – Discography

Helmut Philipps

DUB – THE SOUND OF SURPRISE

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DUB, The Sound of Surprise is a detailed chronicle and fascinating guide to the captivating history of Jamaican dub music, the first of its kind. This archetype of the remix style grew out of reggae in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The book presents over 200 illustrations and some rare album covers, and describes the origins and development of a unique technique created in Jamaican recording studios which would change the world of music production forever. Author Helmut Philipps has visited the places dub happened, and met its pioneers, inventors, and key figures.

In addition to analysis, Philipps includes essays and conversations with and about

King Jammy, Scientist, Style Scott, David Rodigan, Bunny Lee, King Tubby, Lee Perry, Dennis Bovell, Ernest Hoo Kim, Errol Brown, Linval Thompson, Tippy I-Grade, Victor Rice, Mad Professor and many others.

The gripping narrative also takes a look at the development of dub in Europe, the UK, and the United States.

Helmut Philipps is a journalist and passionate collector of dub, who has mixed dub music himself. He has written two award-winning books about reggae that have been published in Germany.

Helmut Philipps hat selbst Dub-Musik gemischt und bereits in Deutschland zwei Bücher über Dub und Reggae veröffentlicht, die beide im Jahr ihres Erscheinens als „Bestes Buch" von der Fachpresse gewählt wurden.

Helmut Philipps and Ursula "Munchy" Münch share a life-long love of Jamaica, its people, its music, and its culture. Both write for *Riddim*, the internationally renowned reggae magazine, and are trained sound engineers.

DUB, The Sound of Surprise ist die weltweit erste Biografie des jamaikanischen Dubs in englischer Sprache. Das Buch mit über 200 Abbildungen beschreibt die Ursprünge und Entwicklung einer Technik, die zu Beginn der 1970er Jahre in jamaikanischen Studios entstand und die Musikwelt verändern sollte. Der Autor Helmut Philipps hat jene Orte aufgesucht, wo es passiert ist, und Pioniere, Vordenker und Erfinder des Dub getroffen. Neben Essays und Gesprächen mit und über

King Jammy, Scientist, Style Scott, David Rodigan, Bunny Lee, King Tubby, Lee Perry, Dennis Bovell, Ernest Hoo Kim, Errol Brown, Linval Thompson, Tippy I-Grade, Victor Rice, Mad Professor und vielen anderen wirft das Buch auch einen Blick auf die Entwicklung in Europa, England und den USA.

Translator Ursula "Munchy" Münch is an internationally active reggae author who has lived in Jamaica. Reporting for *Reggaeville*, the online magazine, she regularly visits the scene there, and has conducted more than 500 interviews.

Die Übersetzerin Ursula „Munchy" Münch ist eine international vernetzte Reggae-Autorin und hat lange Zeit auf Jamaika gelebt. Als Reporterin für das Onlinemagazin *Reggaeville* ist sie regelmäßig dort unterwegs und hat weit über 500 Interviews geführt.

Münch und Philipps eint eine jahrzehntelange Leidenschaft für Jamaika, für das Land, die Menschen, die Musik und die Kultur. Beide schreiben für das international renommierte Fachmagazin *Riddim* und sind ausgebildete Tontechniker.

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