

Where in the world?



Caribbean History

The Caribbean region is made from many island states that all share a common history.

The main languages spoken in the Caribbean are English, French and Spanish from the European nations' colonisation of the rest of the world in the 15th Century, along with the Portuguese and Dutch. The other European nations began to take over the region after the decline of the Spanish Empire. The original inhabitants of the islands, the Arawak and Carib American Indians, were driven out and replaced by slaves from Africa. Crops such as sugarcane were grown and then sold in Europe.

The area became the home of pirates during the 17th Century.

Musical Influence

Caribbean music is a fantastic mix of musical influences from African and Western music., making it unique in the world as a melting pot of musical ideas

- ✦ The African influence is clear from the lively, **syncopated rhythms**, the use of **call-and-response** vocal patterns, and the use of **ostinatos**.
- ✦ Western influence can be heard in the use of **major and minor keys**.

Musical Styles

Reggae (Three Little Birds)

Reggae originated in Jamaica in the late 1960s. Its' development was greatly influenced by traditional **mento** (Jamaican folk music), **Ska** and **Rock Steady**.

Ska was a mix of American 'Rhythm 'n' Blues' and **mento** and the words were often about the poor living conditions of some Jamaican people. **Rock Steady** was a slower version of Ska with more **complex melodies**. The **bass guitar** become louder and more important too.

Reggae songwriters wrote about serious issues and used the bass guitar melodies and chord accompaniments from rock steady.

Reggae is made up of a short **bass guitar riff**, repeated **percussion rhythm** (usually drum kit), and **chords** played on either a guitar or an organ. They are played on the **off beats** (beats 2 and 4) giving reggae its **distinctive feel**. The melody is usually made of short phrases with lyrics sending a message to the listener.

Calypso (Banana Boat Song)

Calypso is a style of African Caribbean music that originated from **Trinidad and Tobago** at the start of the 20th Century.

It was characterized by highly **rhythmic** and **harmonic vocals**, which was most often sung in a French creole and led by a **griot**- a West African historian storyteller or musician.

Calypso combines this storytelling with memorable **tunes** and **rhythms**.

It is an important feature of the Trinidad and Tobago carnival, and performances range from a man with a guitar to a singer with drums, saxophones, brass and guitars.

It can also be heard at the **Notting Hill Carnival** in London every August Bank Holiday

Salsa

Salsa developed from several different types of Latin music, the main one being 'son Cubano' in Cuba in the early 20th Century.

The music began with Spanish guitar playing combined with call & response vocal traditions from African music.

Salsa is really syncopated with polyrhythms and a wide range of instruments such as Latin percussion, brass instruments, saxophones, piano and guitars.

Salsa is hot, like the sauce (Salsa means sauce in Spanish!) and is a great dance too!