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White Reggae: Cultural Dilution in the Record Industry

Mike Alleyne

The way I feel about the music . . . it can be copied, you know,
but is not copy do it. Is the feel.

—Bob Marley

It is difficult to understate the importance of the idea that "there is a rough correspondence between the 'commercialization' of popular music and its 'cooptation'" (Garofalo 79). The wide cultural exposure which has enhanced the recognizability of reggae has been achieved primarily through a corporate commercialization effected at the expense of both the lyrical and instrumental essence of the music. This process has involved coerced or voluntary assimilation of more commercially compatible characteristics, appropriation by white mainstream artists, and an overall dispersal of ideological and musical meaning and creative value.

The mainstream Euro-American audience has continually demonstrated a propensity for adopting reggae-oriented material on the basis of its aesthetically pleasing surface qualities rather than for explicitly political or deeper musical content. Indeed, some research has suggested that this audience has in fact largely failed to comprehend what is actually being sung (Winer 36). Chart successes by reggae artists and pseudo-reggae songs by white pop artists have utilized fragmented elements of the music's syntax while simultaneously divorcing it from the political polemics of Rastafari, and reggae culture in general. Paradoxically, then, the very popularity of reggae, which has led to its global adoption among various artists and audiences, has contributed significantly to its ideological defusion and creative dilution.

The digital era in musical-instrument technology has further facilitated clinical replication of the mechanics of reggae by groups such as Sweden's Ace of Base. The limited commercial applications of this technology (drum machines, sequencer, samplers) have created a neutral zone resulting in reggae/dancehall practitioners creating less culturally distinctive music, while coincidentally imbuing similar Western fabrications with a false aural/cultural authenticity. However, while the mechanics of reggae can be technically reproduced, the intangible cre-

ative spirit which truly authenticates the expression by establishing a unique organic relationship between the component elements is not so easily replicated. The history of fragmented reproduction of reggae aesthetics by Euro-American artists exemplifies an ongoing disintegration of the reggae text. This particular manifestation of cultural dilution is the primary focus of this essay.

Defining Reggae

There is no absolute formula for reggae, but there are several defining characteristics of sufficient general relevance. Verena Reckord discusses many of reggae's intrinsic elements and simultaneously hints at the central cultural complication which I address: "As music becomes more commercial, more accepted and performed by people of varying tastes and cultures, the tendency is to ignore the roots of its origin and its deeper meaning and function" (Reckord 3). She notes the emphasis on minor keys in reggae compositions, and states that this is not always easily appreciated by "the ear conditioned to the 'sweetness' of Euro-Western harmonic and melodic design" (Reckord 3). She also remarks that Jamaica's popular music practitioners usually refer to works as "sound" rather than "song" or music, which may not involve attention to melodic flow (Reckord 3-4). This is a particularly salient comment since my analysis does not intend to be musicological as such, but rather an assessment of the cross-cultural transformation of the broader reggae soundscape as a whole. Therefore, the critical approach in this essay is suited to the creative conceptualization of the works in reggae culture.

In a closer examination of reggae mechanics, Reckord suggests that, "[g]enerally speaking, reggae has three components: *ridim*—the polyridimic overlays in the percussive weave—melody and voice" (Reckord 11). She also refers to reggae's traditional African influences, such as "a great deal of emotionalism, spiritual vitality and gnomic function. For instance, nowhere else in the world is the popular music basically religious music" (Reckord 11-12). This leads to a consideration of lyrical themes, which are described as "the ghetto people's suffering, repatriation to Africa, Haile Selassie as a living deity, slavery in Babylon" (Barrow and Dalton 129). It is also true that love songs form a central part of this thematic fabric, but the *ideologically dominant* themes are those described here. The key idea proposed in my discussion is that few of these instrumental features or lyrical themes are present in white reggae articulations. Moreover, when they do occur, their presence is commercially altered in one form or another.

The Politics of Authenticity

The complex issue of authenticity has frequently been the site of ideological minefields, especially in discussions of popular music. Even in works which have received broad academic recognition for their insights into global musical cultures, discourse on authenticity in reggae is often problematic.

Paul Gilroy's stimulating analyses are often implicitly divorced from the capitalist framework of the record industry, the very hub within or through which the artists seek to negotiate cultural and creative spaces. In *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (which I've critiqued elsewhere in "Positive Vibration? Capitalist Textual Hegemony and Bob Marley"), Gilroy posits the necessity of Bob Marley's commercial compromises, premised on the greater sociopolitical objective of black diasporic consolidation (170-71). But the deemphasis of the textual alterations which made the material supposedly more listenable to Western audiences (discussed later) raises serious questions. Gilroy highlights an authentic cultural intent, while disregarding the implications of the inauthentic means by which the message is conveyed.

Other analyses of reggae have been complicated in different ways. Timothy Taylor's discussion of reggae in *Global Pop* focuses mainly on the dancehall/bhangra fusions of the U.K.'s Apache Indian (Taylor 155-68). Issues of identity associated with Apache Indian, as an Anglo-Asian, relate to new cultural and creative authenticities in the context of Britain's developing multicultural pluralisms. The problem is that reggae in its traditional or "roots" form is only indirectly addressed in the book, leaving the reader without important evolutionary background. Furthermore, Taylor makes no distinction between Jamaican dancehall and its predigital reggae precursors. In Anglo-Caribbean culture, one cannot normally refer to dancehall as reggae without considerable qualification, since their respective aesthetic characteristics are so markedly different. Thus, his otherwise valid discussion of an authenticity intrinsically involving Jamaican popular music is detached from the authentic bases of that music.

In *Dangerous Crossroads*, George Lipsitz (who, incidentally, also discusses Apache Indian) productively illuminates the disjunction between organic roots reggae and overt commercialization of the form. However, his primary subject matter is the sporadically successful and short-lived U.K.-based teen group Musical Youth, whose "Pass the Dutchie" typified record-industry commercial remodeling (Lipsitz 97-114). Lipsitz's incisive commentary is problematized by the very inauthenticity of the group he discusses, since from the outset Musical Youth was a commercially calculated pseudo-pop-reggae construct rather than

a fully self-contained group thoroughly rooted in core reggae aesthetics of the type referred to previously. Moreover, the short shelf life of Musical Youth as opposed to reggae veterans such as Steel Pulse and Aswad leaves little room for positing authenticity on the basis of a substantial body of work.

In each critical case, then, the discussion and assertion of authenticity in reggae (or a reggae-related style) is ironically undermined by what can be perceived as conceptual inauthenticities in the arguments. This should not be read as a nonchalant dismissal of the authors' works, which prove highly fruitful in other areas. It is merely evidence of the complexity and innately amorphous nature which any discourse on authenticity in reggae will almost inevitably entail.

When I use "authenticity" in relation to reggae, I refer to readily recognizable features (such as those described earlier) which exist in relatively consistent sonic relationship to each other, from one artist to another within the genre. In addition, I imply that this authenticity lies mainly in the ways the instruments are used. The percussive heritage of African roots and cultural resonances pervades the articulation of vocals and instrumental elements. The kinetic cohesion of drums and bass guitar and the choppy interjections of rhythm guitar and keyboards reflect a percussive sensibility traceable to an Afro-Caribbean axis (highlighted by Mervyn Alleyne in *Roots of Jamaican Culture*), and these elements are rarely found collectively in white reggae. I cannot claim that my chosen use of "authenticity" is itself more authentic than others, but only that it is appropriate to the overall context of this discussion.

Text

It is useful here to establish and clarify the importance of the apparently obvious, yet all too frequently neglected, idea that the text of a musical work is its sonic and sensory *totality*. Popular music criticism has often adopted analytical stances which foreground the lyrical content, relegating the instrumental elements to the status of incidental backdrops, to the inevitable detriment of more holistic textual reading. This instrumental dimension provides crucial indications regarding the commerciality and creative authenticity of material in ways which are seldom apparent when lyrical themes are disembodied from their sonic context.

First, though, we should examine the textual reconfigurations wrought by or upon some of the genre's key practitioners. It has often been mistakenly assumed that international exposure for reggae has been and is wholly beneficial, with little consideration given to the negative impact of the record industry's capitalistic impulses. Generally, coopta-

tion and commodification have been omnipresent concomitants of efforts to reach wider audiences through major labels. The textual reconfigurations to which I refer are not limited to the lyrical domain, but instead are probably more readily identified by examining the instrumental components. Elsewhere, the case of Bob Marley has been critically assessed at such great length that fully detailed discussion here might be entirely impractical (Mike Alleyne, "Positive" 92-104). However, a few highlights from the chronicles of Marley's commercialization should give substance to the phenomenon which I portray as being so culturally and musically suspect. It is worth noting the preexistence of a small singles-based market for reggae in England in the pre-Marley era before the rastaman entered mainstream Euro-American consciousness. The scale of this "success" between 1968 and 1971 was quite limited in comparison to what would follow, but the role of the white audience (in this case, particularly the sociologically paradoxical skinheads) foreshadowed the primary market focus which would subsequently be adopted by record labels in the selling of reggae.

In these early reggae years, the limited white audience which had been reached was still undergoing processes of musical assimilation and cultural discovery. Few serious attempts to integrate reggae into the fabric of pop occurred, but, as I shall later demonstrate, those instances were quite significant in charting the course for white applications of reggae-oriented elements. Despite the numerous instances in the late 1960s and early 1970s of hit singles in the U.K., reggae had not yet established its aesthetic or commercial viability in the album format, which was necessary in order for it to be taken seriously by the Western record industry as a whole. This state of affairs would be initially remedied by Island Records and Bob Marley.

Marley

Marley's market impact was not simply the logical result of an intangible synthesis of charisma, performing talent, creative passion, and divine inspiration. These factors would have been of little significance without the careful tailoring of audio and visual texts to fit audience biases and record-label market preconceptions. Marley's first Island Records release, *Catch a Fire* (1972), features a treble-oriented mix and rhythm tracks accelerated in postproduction to attract the rock audience, as well as the overdubbed participation of Euro-American session musicians, many of whom had never played reggae before. The lighter sonic (mis)representation is particularly problematic due to the essential sensory textual significance of lower frequencies and bass textures in reggae. The commercially motivated dilution of a core element is alarm-

ing at the very least, and raises serious questions regarding authenticity and integrity (Mike Alleyne, "Resistance" 58-64). Later Marley albums and, indeed, posthumous releases provide further evidence of this damaging trend. A key single in sustaining the presence of Marley's legacy, "Iron Lion Zion," was originally recorded in the 1970s but was "substantially and controversially remixed in a manner which removes it from its original temporal context in an attempt to inconspicuously transplant it into the Nineties" (Mike Alleyne, "Positive" 99). For example, this version of "Iron Lion Zion" uses a digital synth-bass never used by Marley due to its nonexistence before his death in 1981, and which is of questionable aesthetic suitability. It creates an anomalous aural texture utterly unrelated to Marley's extensive body of work. Such reconfigurations created reggae facsimiles, altering intramusical relationships rather than retaining their textual normality.

The commercial breakthrough of Marley stimulated white groups to attempt to integrate reggae aesthetics into their music, with widely varying degrees of success, and also established a template for the selling of reggae, to which major label acts in the post-Marley era would be made to conform. The latter dissolution of creative and textual identities is evident in the major label careers of Steel Pulse, Aswad, and Third World, all premier reggae groups who suffered from commercial repackaging to attract new audiences. It is especially noteworthy that, as of 1999, all of these groups have sought refuge at independent labels, presumably to escape the commodifying hegemonic capitalism of the larger corporate entities.¹ The exploitation of reggae performers has been roughly paralleled by white appropriation of the genre, in which superficial representations of principal aesthetic features have been assimilated into pop texts by commercially successful artists seeking to expand the scope of their work. Ironically, however, this process has more frequently produced a detachment of reggae from its original lyrical, instrumental, and social contexts, thus creating a misrepresentative pseudoreggae manifestation to be consumed by the mainstream audience (Cushman 17-61). The cultural history of this process is almost as long as reggae itself, a style which first emerged with that name in 1968 (Barrow and Dalton 83). Examining the various phases of reggae's commercial appropriation by white acts demonstrates the transformation and inevitable reformulation of fringe music(s) entering mainstream consciousness.

Troubled Water under the Bridge

As Paul Simon sought to escape the creative limitations imposed by his partnership in the then recently dissolved Simon and Garfunkel, he began exploring new stylistic possibilities in launching his solo career. A

crucial element in establishing his artistic individuality and solo commercial viability was the success of his reggae single "Mother and Child Reunion" in 1972, an interesting harbinger of his later appropriation of African musical aesthetics on the 1986 *Graceland* album.

Recorded in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1971, the song arose partly from Simon's desire to record a song in ska—reggae's precursor—with an authentic feel rather than the comparatively pale imitations which American studio musicians could offer (Steyn). Interestingly, once he reached the Jamaican recording studio, Simon learned from the local musicians that ska was no longer popular and had metamorphosed into reggae, a word he had, remarkably, never previously heard (Smith).

The aesthetic authenticity sought and found by Simon in Jamaica was achieved at the expense of his own instrumental participation. He states, "I started to show them the song and play, and we started to work it out, and they were playing, and I would play, but I couldn't play with it. Couldn't fit" (Landau). Thus, "Mother and Child Reunion" was based on an all-Jamaican rhythm-track performance, prior to later stateside overdubs. So, despite the presence of a white mainstream artist bringing reggae into the commercial spotlight, (his song was imbued with a rhythmic veracity from the cultural source which was not otherwise readily attainable.)

The textual interrelationship between the song's music and lyrics is less than straightforward. Simon's lyrical approach here is not untypical of his previous work, but it is particularly noteworthy that when the music was recorded in Jamaica, no lyrics had yet been written for "Mother and Child Reunion" (Landau). One can clearly assume that the instrumental text directly influenced the lyrical formation, as Simon himself implies: "I had no words. The words I had never intended to use. But sometimes you get a very good record that way because you fit the words right to the track. You play with the feel of the track and the words" (Landau).

From an ideological perspective, the theme of familial loss and/or recovery bears no direct relationship to the sociopolitical outpourings which dominated domestic (Jamaican) reggae texts in this early '70s era and which crystallized its cutting edges. Moreover, the song title's curious origins as a chicken-and-egg dish on a Chinese restaurant menu underscore its thematic distance from reggae. It is, however, certain that both the lyrics and their articulation through Simon's voice ensured the commercial viability of the project, whereas neither the record company nor the mainstream audience would have otherwise been interested.

Another key reggae-influenced hit in 1972 was the Staple Singers' "I'll Take You There." While, of course, this was not a white group, the

song proved important in reinforcing the mainstream commercial potential of the art form and in foreshadowing reggae's later widespread cooptation. Ostensibly a soul song, since it was not an overt attempt to play reggae, it nevertheless employed the bass syntax of reggae, which provided it with a conspicuously uncommon groove that was undoubtedly critical to the song's commercial success. The central rhythmic components were unquestionably reggae-derived, and the record's undertones have clear origins in reggae culture. The music uses riffs taken directly from an instrumental called "Liquidator," by Harry J & the All-Stars, which was a major hit in England in 1969, about three years before the Staples' decontextualized recording. The lyrical dimension added to this melody by the Staple Singers proved crucial in ensuring commercial viability in the U.S., which had not previously demonstrated chart acceptance of reggae-styled instrumentals.

The interrelationship between the two texts is indisputable, as brilliantly demonstrated by the biracial British group General Public in their 1993 pop-reggae hit remake of "I'll Take You There." Hailing from Birmingham in the English Midlands, the band would have been directly exposed to West Indian culture due to the large immigrant population residing there, the presence of group members with West Indian heritage, and West Indian music's demonstrable impact on British youth culture.² These factors suggest that active musical and nonmusical members of this cultural cauldron would have had working familiarity with a vast body of reggae material, much of which never penetrated the mainstream market (but which has ironically done so since then through the *Labour of Love* series of albums by UB40, who hailed from the same general area). In their remake, General Public successfully reintegrate "Liquidator" with "I'll Take You There," inserting the melodic references omitted from the Staple Singers version. In so doing, they make clear their own cultural and commercial awareness and reestablish the inextricably reggae core of the song, recuperating its identity from previous hybridization.

Paul McCartney's interest in and utilization of reggae in parts of hit singles in 1973 and 1974 further reinforced mainstream awareness of the commercial viability of reggae rhythms. As a former Beatle, all of his creative output subsequent to the group's demise received considerable critical and commercial attention, and he was thus an important vehicle for any musical subgenres he chose to incorporate into his work. Though McCartney, with his group Wings, never recorded an entirely reggae hit, the integration of pop-reggae segments into the fabric of some songs was notable, especially since the mainstream audience possessed limited familiarity with the genre. "Live and Let Die" (1973), a melodramatic

and highly successful James Bond movie theme, only slides into a pseudoreggae mode for a few bars in the middle of the song. The bass and rhythm guitar phrasing is articulated through a pop sensibility but remains unmistakably derived from reggae. In fact, the stark counterpoint that this brief pseudoreggae occurrence provides to the largely orchestral substance of the song makes it all the more conspicuous. The 1974 hit "Jet" demonstrates a more liberal use of pop-reggae stylings. Utilizing this approach (featuring reggae-styled staccato rhythm guitar) both in the intro and within the song made it one of the first commercially successful pop-reggae efforts in which the artist actually participated in the instrumental execution (as opposed to Paul Simon's largely supervisory role in the case of "Mother and Child Reunion"). Significantly, none of McCartney's pop-reggae recordings bore any lyrical relationship to established reggae lyrical themes.

The year 1974 was a watershed for reggae's popular profile. Besides the commercial impact of McCartney, Eric Clapton scored a major hit with his revamped version of Bob Marley's "I Shot the Sheriff." In the same year, Marley himself released his third major-label album, *Natty Dread*. The quality of his songwriting and passionate performance shone through the sonic commodification of the album's bright, light mix, and, coincident with the increased exposure and awareness resulting from Clapton's hit, Marley's profile was gradually rising. Once again, though, in Clapton's mainstream interpretation the portrait of reggae to which most would be exposed was a sonically sanitized pop facsimile bearing only a vague relationship to the original music, message, or meaning. Ironically, Clapton was reluctant to include "I Shot the Sheriff" on his album because he felt his version did not do the song justice (Shapiro 135).

The Eagles' 1976 *Hotel California* album not only confirmed their ascent to the multiplatinum stratosphere, but the title track, propelled by a light reggae feel, reinforced the high impact of diluted representation. "Hotel California" (the song) speaks of a surrealistic desert encounter—subject matter typical in rock but arguably rare in reggae at this time.

In establishing the commodification and ideological defusion of reggae, Cushman notes that "Hotel California" was one of several songs by white artists "which inflected reggae rhythms but not its content" (Cushman 37). In so doing, the song shared "very little with the meanings articulated in the lyrics of Jamaican reggae" and exemplified a commercialization which "appealed less to the audience's sense of social inequity and utopianism [than] it did to its sense of what was aesthetically pleasing" (Cushman 37). For many listeners, the Eagles' assimilation is so enshrouded within the song's pop fabric as to be either

unidentifiable or, at the very least, inconspicuous. There is, however, no doubt (as further demonstrated by Cushman's comments) that "Hotel California" uses reggae syntax, resulting in a text unlike any other produced by the Eagles either before or since. The rhythm guitar's staccato punctuations, combined with the accented bass phrasing, point unequivocally to a musical vocabulary derived from beyond the borders of the white Western pop mainstream. The rarity of observations such as Cushman's in Western commentary on the Eagles is somewhat remarkable. Critics appear to have overlooked the role which reggae played in enhancing the appeal of the title track of one of rock's biggest and best-known albums, ironically underscoring the pervasiveness of the cultural dilution referred to here. This aural integration of reggae elements into pop was to continue with and be most significantly manifested through the Police.

Reggae under Commercial Arrest

The case history of the Police is particularly noteworthy since they are the most successful white group to continually employ reggae influences throughout their span of albums, and whose application of these influences is inclusive of several singles rather than being merely a stylistic aberration. Many critics also discuss the punk outfit the Clash as another example of a highly reggae-influenced rock group. Their work is often viewed as possessing greater authenticity than that of the Police. The Clash did, at one point, employ the services of the enigmatic Jamaican producer Lee Perry, whereas the Police never adopted a similar strategy. However, aspects of reggae aesthetics were entirely integral to the overall identity of the Police, who arguably would not have been so successful or appealing without these stylistic inversions. The Police also demonstrated considerable range in their reggae-influenced interpretations, from the jarring abrasiveness of their first album to the comparative luxuriance of their last. They created a market niche by executing a pop-reggae hybrid with more distinctiveness and consistency than did their counterparts.

The very single on which their success was founded, 1978's "Roxanne," demonstrated a reggae influence from its opening bars. Despite the mildly unsettling displacement of percussive accents, the textual format is undeniably recognizable. The lyrical focus on a protagonist exhorting a prostitute against selling her body foreshadows the later dominance of love concerns in their pseudoreggae texts. However, since the *Outlandos d'Amour* debut album was not the release which established the overwhelming commercial strength of the Police, analysis of their career-shaping breakthrough second album is perhaps more important.

In its title, *Reggatta de Blanc* served notice on the record industry of the Police's artistic manifesto. The "white reggae" which they had begun to substantially refine reaped commercial benefits through selective use of reggae aesthetics on singles which subsequently became hits. "Message in a Bottle" and "Walking on the Moon" demonstrated reggae's sense of apocalyptic urgency through employment of intense bass and drum syntax and through clear awareness of the spatial potentialities of dub.³ The alliance of these elements with a pop lyrical sensibility and appropriately manufactured image helped assure the band's success.

It cannot be claimed that the Police never attempted to use reggae stylings to underscore political and philosophical reflections. Instances such as "Driven to Tears," a critique of the Western conscience in the face of "Third World" hunger and poverty from 1980's *Zenyatta Mondatta*, and the psychosociological postulations of "Spirits in the Material World" from 1981's *Ghost in the Machine* lend some credibility to their use of the reggae text as an appropriate soundscape for ideological articulation. These cases are, however, notable exceptions in their catalogue.

Observations by the group's members reveal an interesting awareness not only of reggae's peculiar instrumental mechanics but also of the band's own assimilation and reinterpretation of key elements. In a 1983 interview, band member Sting summarizes the process:

We had reggae influences in our vocabulary and they became synthesized into our infrastructure until it was utterly part of our sound and you couldn't really call it reggae anymore. It was just the way we played. (Garbarini)

Drummer Stewart Copeland also accurately notes that reggae is "an interactive form; no one instrument by itself can play it" (Doherty). This awareness of the band's creative synthesis made viable an unselfconscious expression of reggae's elements despite the fact that they were disembodied from the textual corpus which gave them life. The Police's reggae-pop evolved over the course of their albums to the point where its integration into the song texts was far more subtle, refined, and controlled (though no less intense), as evidenced on "Wrapped around Your Finger," in which the bass notes and syntax provide critical mood reinforcement while never becoming overpowering. Indeed, Sting's solo albums have sustained this approach (one example being "History Will Teach Us Nothing" from *Nothing Like the Sun*).

As a rather ironic postscript to this group's career, 1997 saw the release of *Reggatta Mondatta: A Reggae Tribute to the Police*, the first of two volumes in a series. These albums, featuring Police interpreta-

tions by reggae artists, seem especially odd given the significant role of the Police in widening the gap between reggae's ideals and its commercial realities, both musically and in consumer perception. All this despite the fact that they were never a reggae band per se, but a rock group whose identity was inextricably linked to the utilization of reggae/dub aesthetics, from their first album to their last. The release of reggae tributes to the Police not only underscores this point but also raises tantalizing questions related to commerciality and textual authenticity. How does one account for the emergence of such an album beyond commercial considerations? Gilroy observes that the Police's approach "served, within pop culture at least, to detach reggae from its historic association with the Africans of the Caribbean and their British descendants" (171). This detachment represents a significant component of the ideological and commercial damage done to reggae and helps explain the pragmatic utility of such projects as the tribute album.

Album Cover Perspectives

It is significant that the album covers of Eric Clapton's *461 Ocean Boulevard*, which features "I Shot the Sheriff," and the Eagles' *Hotel California* both feature palm trees as a major component of their visual texts. Besides the logical factor of both albums being recorded at appropriate locations, this particular visual emphasis assimilates a typically tropical symbol in the same manner that the music itself essentializes reggae's rhythmically seductive dimension by utterly separating it from its ideological and ontological underpinnings.

In a far more blatant subversion of iconography, the packaging of the *Reggatta Mondatta* compilation executes an interestingly symbolic synthesis in which elements of three of the reggae-influenced Police albums are evident. The titles of *Reggatta de Blanc* and *Zenyatta Mondatta* are fused, but, more significantly, on the cover of Volume I is a visual transformation of the digital L.E.D., previously used on the cover of the fourth Police album, *Ghost in the Machine*, into a pseudodreadlocked symbol. Apart from typifying clever marketing, this visual reconfiguration underscores the audiovisual manipulation of reggae by the record industry, and even, by extension, reggae's own loss of organic center due to misappropriation of digital technology. Volume II utilizes the broad horizontal yellow, blue, and red paint strokes of the Police's 1983 *Synchronicity* album, replacing those colors with the red, green, and gold typical of Rastafarian culture. In effect, the album is culturally resynchronized to implicitly imbue a collection of inauthentic reggae songs performed by authentic reggae artists with visual legitimacy. As the *Reggatta Mondatta* tributes were released through Ark 21 Records,

run by Miles Copeland, former manager of the Police and currently Sting's manager, the compilation (ostensibly to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Police) might be construed as a calculated business move to consolidate the group's significance within popular culture. The project also serves to legitimize the commercial reconfiguration of reggae in having the songs interpreted by reggae artists.⁴

Conclusion

Whenever a musical form is utilized outside of its cultural and creative contexts, transformation becomes inevitable. Specific problems arise when such change is disconnected from the organic musical and lyrical roots, as intercultural and amorphous as those roots may be. As a hybrid text in the first instance, reggae was influenced by and has sought to assimilate elements of other musical styles. However, the commercial framework within which this has most often been attempted has usually been detrimental rather than progressive. The white representations of reggae in this commercial context (and, to a lesser degree, manipulation of visual imagery in relation to the genre) have produced a creative vortex within which notions of authenticity eventually become highly distorted.

Notes

¹Steel Pulse had been signed with Island, Elektra, and MCA before their current deal with the independent label Mesa. Aswad are also signed to this label after a lengthy spell with Island. Third World are another former Island act, subsequently signing with CBS and Polygram before their present independent affiliation with I-MAN Records. All of the aforementioned independent labels are based in the U.S.

²The cross-cultural youth-market impact of reggae in England's urban centers is assessed in Jones.

³"Dub" is the term given to remixed, largely instrumental versions of reggae songs. The genre, at its height in the mid-1970s, emphasized major sonic reconfiguration involving liberal use of reverb and delay, foregrounding of drum and bass components, and fragmentation of vocal parts. Dub has greatly influenced current trends in mainstream electronic music.

⁴Some versions of Police songs had been recorded many years prior to the release of this project but were specifically licensed for inclusion. Interestingly, Copeland was also the head of I.R.S. Records, to which General Public (previously mentioned) were originally signed.

Appendix: Selected Reggae-Pop Hits

YEAR	ARTIST	TITLE	LABEL
1968	Johnny Nash	Hold Me Tight	Regal Zonphone
1972	Paul Simon	Mother and Child Reunion	Columbia
1972	Johnny Nash	Stir It Up	CBS
1972	Johnny Nash	I Can See Clearly Now	CBS
1972	Staple Singers	I'll Take You There	Stax
1973	Paul McCartney/Wings	Live & Let Die	Capitol/EMI
1974	Paul McCartney/Wings	Jet	Capitol/EMI
1974	Eric Clapton	I Shot the Sheriff	RSO
1974	Elton John	Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds	MCA
1974	Stevie Wonder	Boogie on Reggae Woman	Motown
1976	Eagles	Hotel California	Asylum
1978	10cc	Dreadlock Holiday	Phonogram
1979	The Police	Walking on the Moon	A&M
1980	Stevie Wonder	Master Blaster Jammin'	Motown
1980	Blondie	The Tide Is High	Chrysalis
1983	The Police	Wrapped around Your Finger	A&M
1983	UB40	Red Red Wine	A&M
1993	Ace of Base	All That She Wants	Arista
1993	Ace of Base	The Sign	Arista
1993	Snow	Informer	East West
1994	Big Mountain	Baby I Love Your Way	Giant

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Mike Alleyne is an assistant professor in the Department of Recording Industry at Middle Tennessee State University. His published work focuses on the industry's interaction with Caribbean music. E-mail: malleyne@mtsu.edu.