

Jamaican 'Hillbilly'
Ingmar Lauer at Banjoree 2025



What is Mento Music?

- Jamaican folk music, predecessor to Ska/ Reggae
- Blend of English dance tunes (quadrille, contredanse) and West African slave music (musical form and syncopated rhythms)
- closely related to Calypso and Biguine
- remotely related to New Orleans trad jazz, hillbilly & country music (Jamaicans even call mento "country music" due to its rural origins)
- rural vs urban mento

What Mento Music isn't:

Afro-Cuban tresillo rhythm vs mento/ calypso's heavy
 2nd half note

Origin of Mento Music

- slaves with musical skills could receive better treatment when they played waltzes and quadrilles for their lords
- they incorporated European elements into their West African musical styles. - PLAY KISSES GO BY FAVOR
- the poverty conditions of Jamaicans in remote rural areas & mountains (e.g. communities of maroons) with no access to radios can be compared to the hillbillies of Appalachia
- instruments were made from accessible materials, eg bamboo fife, bamboo sax, gourd banjos & fiddles, rumba boxes
- musical functions: labour songs, African shout-ring traditions, rituals & dances, storytelling often with tongue-in-cheek humor, subtly criticizing authorities
- hence, one possible etymological explanation of Mento comes from the Spanish word *mentar* = to mention

fictional poster by M. Garnice for a show that could have taken place in 1957, featuring all influential artists of that time

FIRST TIME TOGETHER • FOR ONE TIME ONLY Wheel and Turn Productions presents

Chin's Richardson Count
Calypso & The Ticklers Lasher
Sextet
Lord
Lord
Flea
Count
Count
Owen Lord
Messam Sticky

Lord Fly • Boysie Grant • Sir Horace • Lord Power • Clyde Hoyte Arthur Knibbs • Hubert Porter • Lord Composer • Robin Plunket

SAT. MAY 16 2:00 PM KINGSTON

source material

a great online compendium by Michael Garnice:

https://mentomusic.com/WhatIsMento.htm

https://mentomusic.com/clips/pocomento1939.mpg

Hatfield Dance Group showing traditional Jamaican quadrilles https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gg0ZUI2ov U

Chin's Calypso Sextet showing the transition from European to Jamaican music https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDUs5mcXMZ4

Lord Fly with Dan Williams Orchestra – jazzy urban mento style medley of trad. folk songs https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-IOtt1tAFsQ

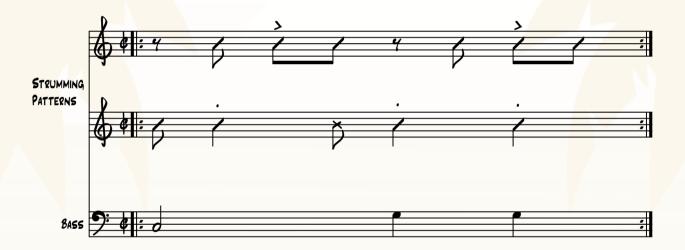
The Jolly Boys – Hog Inna Mi Minty, rural mento style https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QT8rKvVHnJw

Lord Messam and his Calypsonians – Linstead Market https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V ElsUr7LZY

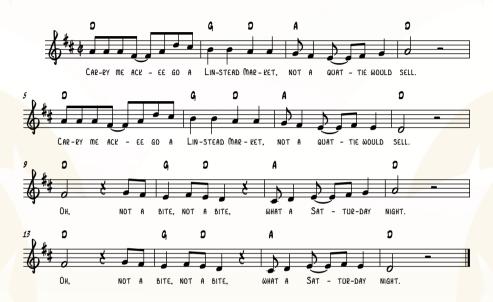
	Instrumentation	Harmonic Structure	Meter	Form	Rhythm	Dance	Lyrics	Roots	People
Mento Music	Fiddle, Fife, Bamboo Sax Banjo Guitar Rumba Box Maracas, Bongos	I-V or I-IV-V	4/4 a la breve	8 bar sections ABAB AABB	strongly syncopated	quadrille, contredanse, ring shout/dance, ritual	struggle of everyday's life, newsworthy accounts, storytelling, sexual innuendo, call & response	West African, English, Creole (Spanish, French)	rural people from the hills,
Old Time Music	Fiddle Banjo Guitar (Bass) (clogging, clapping)	I-V or I-IV-V	4/4, often a la breve	8 bar sections ABAB AABB (crooked tunes except)	often syncopated	square dance, contredanse,	struggle of everyday's life, newsworthy accounts, storytelling, nonsensical	English, West African Irish, Scottish	rural people from the hills,

MENTO MUSIC

RHYTHMIC PATTERNS



© by Ingmar Lauer



Everybody come feel up, feel up, not a quatty will sell Everybody come feel up, feel up, not a quatty will sell

[CHORUS]

It was a fight, a fight, a big big fight on that Saturday night It was a fight, a fight, a big big fight on that Saturday night

[CHORUS]

Do my mommy no feed me, kill me take a merry-go-round Do my mommy don't feed me, kill me take a merry-go-round

[CHORUS]

All those pickney come run come run to see what mommy did bring All those pickney come run come run to see what mommy did bring

[CHORUS]

LINSTEAD MARKET

JAMAICAN FOLK SONG ARRANGED BY INGMAR LAUER







SLY MONGOOSE

JAMAICAN FOLK SONG







