

# Mento Music

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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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*

Harold  
Chin's Calypso Sextet    Richardson & The Ticklers    Count Lasher  
Lord Flea    **MENTO**    Lord Lebby  
Count Owen    **TIME**    Lord Tanamo  
Lord Messam    Count 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](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=-lOtt1tAFsQ>

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](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

STRUMMING  
PATTERNS

The musical notation consists of three staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. All staves are in 4/4 time, indicated by the '4' in the time signature. The top staff shows a sequence of eighth notes with accents, some beamed together. The middle staff shows eighth notes with dots above them, indicating a specific rhythmic pattern. The bottom staff, labeled 'BASS', shows a single eighth note followed by two dotted half notes.

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# LINSTEAD MARKET

JAMAICAN FOLK SONG

1 CAR-ry ME ACK - ee GO A LIN-STEAD MAR-RET, NOT A QUAT - TIE WOULD SELL.

5 CAR-ry ME ACK - ee GO A LIN-STEAD MAR-RET, NOT A QUAT - TIE WOULD SELL.

9 OH, NOT A BITE, NOT A BITE, WHAT A SAT - TUR-DAY NIGHT.

13 OH, NOT A BITE, NOT A BITE, WHAT A SAT - TUR-DAY NIGHT.

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

VOICE

CAR-RY ME ACK-EE GO A LIN-STEAD MAR-RET, NOT A QUAT-TIE WOULD SELL.

BANTO/  
GUITAR

D G D A D

RUMBA BOX

MARACAS

CAR-RY ME ACK-EE GO A LIN-STEAD MAR-RET, NOT A QUAT-TIE WOULD SELL.

D G D A D

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OH, NOT A BITE, NOT A BITE, WHAT A SAT-TUR-DAY NIGHT.

D G D A D

OH, NOT A BITE, NOT A BITE, WHAT A SAT-TUR-DAY NIGHT.

D G D A D

# SLY MONGOOSE

JAMAICAN FOLK SONG

