

ART OF REGGAE

BASIC REGGAE VOCABULARY AND DEFINITIONS

Bassie – a reggae bass player

Drummie – a reggae drumset player

Keyzie – a reggae keyboard player

Guitsy – a reggae guitar player

Chop, Skank, Strum, Bang – the aggressive rhythmic attack played mainly by the guitar and keyboards on the 2nd and 4th beats of the measure (if counting in ‘cut time fast feel’ *). The note content can vary from a very high pitched scratch tone with almost no sound of the chord coming through to a full sound where you hear the chord tones clearly.

Bubble or Shuffle – the rhythmic pattern played mainly on the Hammond organ, or organ sounding keyboards, that plays subtle, mostly muted, attacks on all the upbeats of the measure (‘cut time fast feel’). It is often times felt more than it is heard but is a critical sound for songs that incorporate the bubble. Not all reggae tunes have a bubble.

THE BUBBLE & CHOP RHYTHMS

(OR SHUFFLE)

CUT TIME "SLOW" FEEL

Musical notation for Cut Time "SLOW" FEEL. The top staff is labeled CHOP and the bottom staff is labeled BUBBLE. The notation shows the rhythmic patterns for these two elements in cut time (2/4).

COMMON TIME "FAST" FEEL

Musical notation for COMMON TIME "FAST" FEEL. The top staff is labeled CHOP and the bottom staff is labeled BUBBLE. The notation shows the rhythmic patterns for these two elements in common time (4/4).

One Drop – the rhythmic pattern played by the drum kit characterized by crisp high hat work off set by the kick drum and snare drum rim click (or side stick) “dropping” once on the third beat of the measure (if counting in ‘cut time fast feel’). There are many sub-styles within the one drop drumset pattern.

Steppers – the rhythmic pattern played by the drum kit characterized by crisp high hat work off set by the kick drum playing on all four beats of the measure (‘cut time fast feel’). There are many different sub styles within the steppers drumset pattern.

Stuck line – the muted, (plucked) staccato technique of playing guitar used to double the bass line.

The technical name for this technique is ‘palm muting.’ Other names for the stuck line are, ‘sticky’ or ‘picks’ as well as others we don’t even know about!

* See the intro video entitled “**Cut time vs. Common time. Reggae feel and notation (Swing & Straight 8th feel)**” for more about the two basic ways to feel reggae music.

Riddim – This is the Jamaican pronunciation of the word ‘rhythm’ but it means more than just that. In Jamaican musical culture there is a deep catalogue of songs consisting mostly of one or two bar phrases that are comprised of a very distinct bassline, drum groove and sometimes a signature vocal or instrumental melody. Often times these Riddims are re-recorded by different artists who will sing different lyrics or raps and create bigger hits than the original recording. Riddims are used heavily in Dub music. (We use two types of demo songs for the video lessons and in the Practice Loop section. 1) electronic re-makes of famous Jamaican Riddims and, 2) “Originals” which are original riddim-type songs which are written specifically for Art of Reggae lessons.

Original – This is NOT a term associated specifically with reggae but is included here because we use it to signify the use of an original piece of music written for demonstration purposes for Art of Reggae. We use both digital re-makes of famous Jamaican Riddims and our own Originals throughout the site.

Nayabinghi (Ni-uh-bin-gee), sometimes shortened to ‘Binghi.’

This term has a series of overlapping meanings within the contemporary Rastafari Movement. It refers variously to the island-wide religious gatherings, known as a “groundation” or a “grounation” of Rasta brethren and sistren at which communicants “praise **Jah**” and “chant down Babylon,” to the three-part drum ensemble on which chants are composed, to the African derived dance-drumming style performed at these events, and to the corpus of chants themselves. It also refers to the most orthodox organization within the broader Rasta movement variously known as the House of Nyabinghi or the Theocratic Government of Emperor Haile Selassie I. The term Nyabinghi entered the movement in late 1935 during the Italian Invasion of Ethiopia and is actually derived from an African secret society which operated in the Congo and Rwanda during the last quarter of the 19th century.

- The nayabinghi drum in reggae is seen as directly injecting, or blessing the music with the spiritual intention of Rasta and must be played “tough” with a fierce intention to crash down Babylon!
- Some nayabinghi practitioners sum up the intention of the drumming style as meaning, “death to all oppressors, black and white.”

* **Bass or Thunder** – bass drum (*The thick mallet used to play it is sometimes called the “pope smasher.”*)

* **Repeater or Funde** (*pronounced ‘fund-ay’*) – middle drum, playing the “heart beat”

* **Akete** (*pronounced ‘a-ke-tay’*) sometimes shortened to ‘kete’ – lead drum, playing lead fills

The basic rhythm of the Repeater/Funde drum rhythm is in opposition to the skank and is always played with a straight 8th feel even if the tune is a swing 8th feel. Traditional binghi drums always use a goat skin head. If you don’t have a binghi drum, use a conga, a set of bongos or a higher pitched djembe.

Example without one drop and skank: “Rastaman Chant”(Burnin’), “Babylon System” (Survival)

Example with one drop and skank: “War” (Rastaman Vibration)

Example of Akete fills: “Zimbabwe” (Survival)

