“Sir George (Hackney) like Maxi Priest and others Lovers Rock’s singers were responsible for a lot of the children being made in that era because that was the music we played.”

ANTHONY BRIGHTLY (Sir George)

This British-born Reggae genius typically had romantic lyrics sung over a warm melodic bass by young females and male singers like Carl Thompson, Winston Rodney, and Junior Gay with his 1979 hit “Lovers Rock” resonated with a socially aspirational generation, and men and women worked/wanted to dance with each other having shadows of themselves on the wall in many black music parties. It also empowered women to take ownership of the dance and the dance floor by, with, and for themselves, rather than just seated.

By the early 1980s, Bob Marley was dead, and Dancehall had arrived, British Reggae bands like Matumbi, Aswad, Steel Pulse, Young Roots and UB40 popularized Reggae music. Meanwhile, British born Susan stylish and Jazz B (Soul II Soul) could hold their own in the dance with the “double chic” lyrics, and a fresh distinctly black British sound. Sound system culture widened often represented as a male domain, yet women ran many parties, raving in places like Bow, Hackney and Aldgate. Sound systems like The Euphoria, The Silver Sound System, and the Yardie Sound System, were a place to express oneself.

In the 1980s, some sounds opened pirate radio stations with some eventually licensed like Choice FM. This was later bought by Capital Radio. Sound system culture in the UK has a significant, yet rarely acknowledged influence on British music and dance culture. Through Reggae, dance culture has played a foundational role in bringing together the different cultural influences of Britain and its diaspora. It has also been an important aspect of black music culture, with its distinct sounds and styles.

“[There were codes about who you danced with in a party. Someone would be eyeing you up, and the next thing they’re standing beside you asking for a dance. If they couldn’t dance then you’d signal to your friends to avoid them or we’d disappear to the toilets.]”

HEATHER DOLPHIN (Brent)