

ROCKERS SOUND SOULHEADS SYSTEMS + LOVERS BACK IN DA DAY...



After *The Beauty Shop* (2008), **ROCKERS, SOULHEADS & LOVERS** is the second project developed by writer, playwright, artist/curator Michael McMillan in collaboration with Dubmorphology (Gary Stewart & Trevor Mathison) for 198 Contemporary Arts & Learning. Michael's work includes the widely acclaimed *The West Indian Front Room*, and more recently *Doing Nothing is Not an Option* (Peckham Platform, 2015), and *No Colour Bar: Black British Art in Action 1960-1990* (Guildhall Art Gallery, 2015–16).

Working with Dubmorphology (Gary Stewart & Trevor Mathison), Michael drew on his lived experience and research of sound system culture, spending several months gathering contributions from people in London.

Beginning with the Bluespot radiogram sound systems provided the means in House parties (late Blues parties and Shebeens) where post war Caribbean migrant excluded from British pubs and clubs could entertain themselves in the domestic space. Custom made sound systems originated from Jamaica and comprised of high powered mobile hi fis, where Box Boys and Engineers who would 'string up' the equipment, the Selectors played vinyl records and the Toasters/MCs would 'chat' on the mic.

The A to Z map of London locates many of the clubs that sound systems 'played out' at, such as the *Q Club* (Paddington), *Roaring Twenties/Colombos* (Carnaby St), *Four Aces* (Dalston), *All Nations Club* (Hackney), *Ram Jam* (Brixton), *Cubies* (Dalston), *Dougies* (Clapton), *Bali Hai* (Streatham), *Night Moves* (Shoreditch), *The Africa Centre* (Covent Garden).

To recreate the sensory experience of being in a dance the exhibition includes silhouettes of dancers created by Fran Smith, a 1980s speaker stack from Markie RDK, and a three screen triptych featuring archive footage and the stories of pioneers and practitioners: Lloydie Coxson (Sir Coxson Outernational), Dennis Bovell, Anthony Brightly (Sir George), Lewis Benn (Mastermind), Parliament & Valerie Robinson 'Lady V' (V-Rocket), June Reid & Lynda Ade Rosenior-Patten (Nzinga Soundz), Young Warrior, Mykael Riley, Janet Kay, Carroll Thompson, Victor Romero Evans, as well as the 'ravers': Pat Cumper, Jeune Guishard-Pine, Loraine Martins, Heather Dolphin, Josephine Taylor and Veronica Barnes.

In the window there is a display of what ravers wore and how they groomed themselves as well as archive flyers and photos. Completing the story, a collection of vinyl records on display reflects the mood and the music back in da day that pays tribute to the enduring impact that sound system culture has had on the British music, dance and subcultural movements.

Michael McMillan



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