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Dubstep.

Get used to it!

I would like to shed a light on a genre of music that is really starting to gain popularity worldwide. This diverse genre is called Dubstep, and it is the next biggest thing. Though many do not accept Dubstep as a legitimate genre of music, if you take a look into the past, wasn’t that the same for Rock ‘n Roll? Now look at Rock music. Rock is important to the world of music as we know it. Rock birthed other subgenres such as Metal, Punk, Grunge, and so on. Today there is no confusion about the fact that Rock is a popular and widely accepted genre, and you can hear Rock music playing on the radio, in restaurants, on the television, etc.

Dubstep is a genre of EDM (electric dance music) that is said to have originated in South London. Earlier roots of Dubstep were mostly experimental. The earliest Dubstep releases date back to the late 1990’s. UK garage producers using elements of drum and bass often ended up on the “B-side” of a white label or garage release. Eventually, listeners began to take notice of these B-side tracks. Through experimentation and dissemination, Dubstep was born. (Wikipedia Contributors)

The term Dubstep became a music reference around the year 2002 by the record labels Big Apple, Ammunition, and Tempa. BBC Radio 1 was one of the first radio stations to honor Dubstep in 2003. Listeners began to hear reggae and dub, as well as orchestral melodies incorporated into Dubstep. (Wikipedia Contributors)

In 2006, BBC Radio 1’s Mary Anne Hobbs started a show devoted to Dubstep called “Dubstep Warz”. This increased listeners’ interest in Dubstep. In the UK, Dubstep became more commercially successful. Producers started to take elements of Dubstep seriously and added these elements into their own work, creating fusion genres (Post-Dubstep, Electro House, and Brostep). (Wikipedia Contributors)

Since 2011, Dubstep has gained much more attention in the US thanks to American Dubstep producers such as Skrillex and Figure. American Dubstep is starting to be called “Brostep” and apparently it is a joke in the UK. Brostep is known for its mid-range bass lines and its heavy metal like rage. The first U.S cities to hold regular Dubstep club nights were: New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Montreal, Houston, and Denver.

At first, Dubstep tracks were usually instrumentals. These days, it seems like you can find any pop song Dubstep remixed by somebody. Another trend in Dubstep is that minor keys are frequently used and rhythms are commonly syncopated. (Syncopation is when a variety of rhythms are used in the same song, which makes an off-beat tune.) The average BPM (beats per minute) in a Dubstep song is at about 140. Typical structure for a Dubstep track is: an intro, a main section (usually incorporating a bass drop), a midsection, a variation of the main section, and then an outro. A common characteristic in Dubstep is the use of dramatic sound effects like shattering glass or what sounds like an explosion. (Urban Dictionary)

The element that really distinguishes Dubstep from other genres of music is known as the wobble bass. A wobble bass is where an extended bass note is manipulated rhythmically. Wobble bass is typically produced by using an LFO to change certain parameters of a synthesizer like distortion, or filter cutoff. LFO stands for low frequency oscillator. An LFO is a slow moving electronic wave that is used to modulate a synthesizer’s sound. This timbre is the key to most Dubstep. Just for the record, timbre is the quality of a musical note or sound that distinguishes it from different types of sounds, such as a human voice or an instrument. I would say that an entertainment factor of Dubstep is the use of several different timbres within one song. (Native Instruments)

Some artists have physical music recording studios with all sorts of equipment; however this is not always the case or necessary when it comes down to composing a Dubstep track. Dubstep is primarily made through electronics. You do not need to know how to play all sorts of instruments; you just need to learn how to operate the software of your choice. One kind of software can contain all the functionality and capabilities as a huge physical music recording studio. This allows just about any and everyone to make music off of their own personal computers, though having other hardware helps such as a MIDI sequencer. If you are not familiar with the term MIDI sequencer, it stands for musical instrument digital interface. This is basically using a remote controller signal to play and or record an instrument through your computer (using your computer’s keyboard to play a virtual piano). (Native Instruments)

Though Dubstep is primarily an electronic recording, going to the concert to see the artist live is still a priceless experience! Until you firsthand attend a Dubstep concert, you do not realize how much more there is to a song that you can not experience through most headphones and small speakers. Most modern Dubstep is meant to be heard loud on humongous speakers that truly encompass all audio frequencies like sub-bass. At a concert, you can literally feel the bass vibrating through the air and through your whole body. I have been to quite a few Dubstep concerts and I must say that they are my favorite concert experiences out of all the concerts I have been to. To be honest, they were all so memorable because they were so crazy and a lot of fun!

Some Dubstep artists that I really like are: 12th Planet, Bassnectar, Borgore, Caspa, Chase & Status, Datsik, Doctor P, Excision, Figure, Flux Pavilion, Foreign Beggars, Helicopter Showdown, Jakwob, Joker, Knife Party, Liquid Stranger, Modestep, Nero, Rusko, Skrillex, Subfocus, Vexare, Zeds Dead, and Zomboy. Out of all of these artists I would have to say I admire Skrillex and Vexare the most.

First, I would like to talk about Skrillex. Skrillex is the stage name of 24 year old Sonny Moore. Sonny was raised in Los Angeles. Before becoming successful in the EDM industry, Sonny was the lead singer in the post-hardcore band From First To Last. He recorded two albums with From First To Last. The first album was called Dear Diary, My Teen Angst Has a Body Count, and was released in 2004. In 2006 they released one last album together called Heroin. In 2007 Sonny split from the band and began to pursue his solo career. In 2009 Sonny released his first EP Gypsyhook and then was supposed to release his first album titled Bells. Unexpectedly, he stopped the production of the album and began to perform under the name Skrillex. (Wikipedia Contributers)

Skrillex, as an American electronic producer, released his first EP called My Name is Skrillex in early 2010. Later in 2010, he released his album Scary Monsters and Nice Sprites and saw very much success. Skrillex went on to create his own record label called OWSLA where he features new and upcoming electronic artists. In 2011, Skrillex released More Monsters and Sprites. Late 2011, Skrillex was nominated for five Grammy Awards at the 54th Grammy Awards. He won three! (Best Dance/Electronica Album, Best Dance Recording, and Best Remixed Recording, Non-Classical). Around December 23, 2011, Skrillex released his most recent success album Bangarang.

Vexare is the stage name of now 16 year old Palmer N. Hogen. Since Vexare’s music career is very young it was tough to find any biographical information on this up and rising electronic artist. Vexare produces electro/house, Dubstep, and trance tracks. Starting at the age of 9, Palmer learned to play classical piano. Around the age of 12 he started his efforts in producing trance and hardstyle tracks. In interviews (Last FM Radio), Palmer admits that at first, Dubstep was not his intention. Palmer and his friends had seen the genre as a joke upon first discovering Dubstep and its “humorous” sounds. In the present, it is clear that Dubstep is no longer a joke to him. His first professional release was a remix of “Broken Circuit” by Alpay Sahingoez in 2010. After exploring more types of Dubstep, Vexare moved on to produce harder sounding tracks with heavier bass-lines. My personal favorite track from Vexare is “Find Yourself” which is a remix of the original track by John O’Callaghan featuring Sarah Howells.

I look up to Skrillex and Vexare because they are both so young, yet they have really started to make a huge mark in the EDM scene. They both have such a distinct style to the point where any one of their tracks could be playing and you can easily tell who it is. With an open mind I believe that any and everyone can find an appreciation for Dubstep. Just like how other genres of music were bashed before they were accepted, Dubstep is the next.

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