A journey into sound system culture in



Sound System Culture project flyer

Let’s Go (Yorkshire) has secured funding from Arts Council England to build and tour a new mobile arts-based audio installation to 4 carnivals and 4 galleries in the region. The new work will complement the existing ‘Sound System Culture’ project, a heritage project funded by Heritage Lottery Fund which documents the lives of Huddersfield’s early Jamaican settlers who set up reggae sound systems in the 1960s and 70s. This existing project will lead to a photographic exhibition, book and documentary film which capture a colourful history of local people’s heritage.

The oral histories will inform the arts-based audio installation in which voices will be carefully selected from the sound archive and under layered with different reggae and dub beats to evoke feelings of nostalgia… evoking memories from the past to come alive. The edited material will eventually be formatted as vinyl dubplates. A dubplate recording forms an intrinsic part of the reggae industry; these recordings are often used for competing in a sound clash, in which rival reggae sound systems compete with each other to produce the most imaginative or unusual dubplate specials.

The physical installation will consist of a sound system, a turntable, a stack of 10inch dubplate vinyl and an empty speaker displaying the film. The sound system will take on the 'traditional' design and one which is capable of reliably giving good quality sound at a strong sound level. The installation will allow the public to interact with the sound; putting on a record, touching down the stylus, handling the mic, playing with the bass/mid/treble cut out switches / fiddling with the sound effects etc. Also the public will have access to all the controls on the pre amp/amplifiers. The pre amp will be

customized so that all the public controls are at the end of a wire which is isolated from the main set up but will allow the public to 'mix up' the sound and chat the mic.

The project also forms the basis of a partnership with the University of Huddersfield, through the participation of Professor Paul Ward, Head of History and member of the Centre for Visual and Oral History Research. Paul Ward has undertaken a number of local oral history projects as well as having authored a book on Britishness since 1870. Ward says: “We are keen to get people to think about their life histories in Huddersfield, to explore the way in which different life histories are intertwined because of the diverse heritage of Huddersfield.” The University is paying for the production of a number of high-quality limited edition design products to accompany the Arts Council England grant.

Project Manager, Mandeep Samra says: "The installation will inspire audiences to find different ways of relating to stories, sound and space. It will allow its audience to touch as well as listen to the past.”