

ReggaeEDM is for real. It's not nostalgia.

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Sweat and steam spread a misty haze above a sea of anticipating ravers. It had rained that day, in fact, it was raining outside now, a fitting stage for the dreamlike haze that filled his mind. Hiding any hint of nervousness behind thick glasses, he followed his entourage of backbeat dancers and musical alchemists onto the smoke-filled DJ stage. The crowd erupted like a living heartbeat, waiting for the drop. His voice waited in silence, cradled in the warmth of green tea, the melody steeping in his chest. One, Two, Three, Four. On the fourth breath of the bassline, something ancient awakened. Reggae met the pulse of the future, and from Kēvens' vision, ReggaeEDM took its first breath.

Kēvens never claimed to have invented ReggaeEDM, only that he was the first to give it a name. But his role as its earliest ambassador is undeniable. A tireless pioneer, he carried this live fusion of reggae and electronic dance music to stages across the globe. From the roots of Reggae Sunsplash in Jamaica to the massive pulse of Ultra Music Festival, from Tokyo to the frozen lights of Russia's Ice Palace, Kēvens has been the genre's beating heart, long before the world knew what to call it.

Critics say ReggaeEDM is nothing new, that its roots trace back to the Jungle movement of the 1990s.

And they wouldn't be wrong. The echoes of dub, drum and bass, and UK sound system culture are all there. But ReggaeEDM isn't Jungle. It isn't dub. It isn't drum and bass. It's something else entirely, a new branch from the same family tree, grown in fresh soil and reaching toward a different sky.

ReggaeEDM fuses the uplifting messages and rhythmic toasting of dancehall and roots reggae with the high-energy 4/4 beats of contemporary EDM. This genre preserves reggae's tradition of social consciousness while embracing the pulsating rhythms that resonate with today's youth. As EDM festivals like the Electric Daisy Carnival continue to draw massive crowds, with over 525,000 attendees in 2024, ReggaeEDM is carving out its own space, bridging cultural and musical divides.

"It's a genre that is in the early stages," says Matt Phillips, Co-Founder and President of Silverback Music. "A few artists have crossed the barriers... both genres work well together; it's about the beat and the rhythm." His take reflects the industry's growing awareness that ReggaeEDM, while rooted in history, is carving out its own path of rhythm and reinvention.

Phillips, who manages many of reggae's modern torchbearers, sees clear signs of its rise. "The artist I identify the most as pushing ReggaeEDM on the highest worldwide stages is Major Lazer," he says. "A lot of the rhythms pull from island, reggae, and world music, and they've done a lot of great collaborations with Jamaican reggae stars."

While dozens of artists have shaped the rise of this sound, from Thievery Corporation out of Washington D.C., to Mungo's Hi Fi in Glasgow, to Adrian Sherwood in London, many of them did it without ever knowing the genre had a name. This fusion happened naturally, born from shared rhythms, a universal message, and an underlying love of both reggae and EDM.

Silverback Artist Management first made its mark in the 1990s by helping shape the legacy of the cross-genre-defining band Sublime. That moment cemented their role as architects of the modern reggae-rock movement. Since then, they have continued to steer the sound of a generation, promoting landmark events including the Closer to the Sun festival in Riviera Maya, Mexico, CaliVibes in Long Beach, CA, and Point Break in Virginia Beach. Now, with the rise of a new wave of genre-blending acts, they are pushing boundaries once again.

"We're trying to incorporate EDM more into our reggae festivals. People go to music festivals to have fun and dance," says Matt Phillips. "Now that more artists are crossing between reggae and electronic, I see a huge place for it on our shows."

ReggaeEDM, once a fringe experiment, is quickly becoming the next wave. Silverback is ready, helping to set the stage in the international reggae scene.

If there's one person who can speak on the birthplace of ReggaeEDM, with a front-row seat, it's Damian Pinto. Known around the world as the Voice of Dance Music, Pinto has been the MC for Ultra Music Festival since before it even had a name. Pinto's voice has become synonymous with the global electronic music culture, woven into the sets of the biggest acts to ever grace an EDM stage. Pinto is to EDM what Howard Cossell was to football, what Bruce Buffer is to the MMA. Long before massive crowds and international tours, Pinto was forging Miami's underground, helping to shape a scene that would eventually take over the world.

This is where he met a young band leader named Kēvens.

The two crossed paths in Fort Lauderdale, years before Ultra. Back then, Pinto ran a 20,000 square foot

club in Florida called The Theater Nightclub and Concert Hall, promoting shows with early dance music pioneers, including The Orbital, The Chemical Brothers, and Meat Beat Manifesto. He and his partners launched the club after coming off a run with Don King Productions, using his unforgettable voice to announce world-title boxing matches. Then Kēvens stepped up with his band Le Coup! His reggae vocals woven into the electronic pulse, and right away, Pinto recognized the magic..

“His ReggaeEDM mixes were the first I had ever heard,” Pinto says. “That was even before the first Ultra show. ReggaeEDM has a special place nestled in those early days.”

To hear that from Pinto is no small thing. He was with the founders of Ultra from day zero. He’s been the voice behind the Ultra Music Festival every single year it’s been held. His voice has opened sets for almost every major EDM act on Earth over the past twenty-five years. And through it all, he never forgot what he heard in those early days in Florida..

“What can you possibly say about Kēvens?” he asks. “Besides being an original OG in the Florida drum & bass scene, he’s an icon, a legend, and there really isn’t a word to describe his love, authenticity, commitment to pushing boundaries, and his unwavering dedication to spreading love, peace, and positivity, which are the very foundations of this whole thing.”

Pinto and Kēvens both came up through the same Florida scene, each finding their own passions and helping to shape the sound of EDM. Over three decades later, that recognition still holds weight. Because Pinto hasn’t just seen every phase of dance music. He’s helped define it. And when he singles out Kēvens as the one who carried reggae’s soul into the world of electronic music, he means it.

“In the dance scene, when it comes to reggae, nobody even comes close to Kēvens’ massive influence,” Pinto says. “To summarize it all, there’s only one Kēvens.”

That’s the truth at the heart of all this. ReggaeEDM isn’t a new genre that just fell from the sky. It grew from sweat-drenched nightclubs in South Florida, in London, in San Francisco, and in the abandoned warehouses of Los Angeles. It came from sound system culture meeting rave culture, and from friendships like this one.

“ReggaeEDM is for real. It’s not nostalgia. It’s a modern sound with history, heart, and purpose.”

“If anyone can bring this to the forefront,” Pinto says, “it’s Kēvens.”

And maybe now is the moment. EDM fans are reaching back towards its Jungle roots, reggae fans are leaning into the future, and right in the middle, ReggaeEDM is finally having its day. The beats have changed, but the message still matters. Both crowds are ready, ready for the fusion, ready for the now, ready for ReggaeEDM. And as Kēvens has been reminding us for over 30 years, “Positivity is a necessity.”

Story by **Luke W. Archer**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sl7HvY7yrhU>



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