Abstract, July 2018

_Sonic Media_ investigates the protean street technology and culture Jamaican sound system. It has been based on long-term research amongst the sound system engineers and producers, including the legendary producer King Jammy and the Stone Love Movement sound system. This book takes us inside the boxes of the sound system to understand how this instrument actually works, how its been modified and developed over the last fifty years and why it remains at the epicenter of Jamaica’s compulsive and ever-inventive popular culture. The book focuses on the sound system as the audio-mechanical-electrical means of production for vibrations, as well as on what these vibrations themselves generate – the dancehall hyperculture.

Identified as a _street technology_, _Sonic Media_ gives an account of the practice and techniques of the audio engineers and their ways-of-making with trial and error, DIY, re-purposing and re-assembling components, not to mention their own finely-tuned ears. The techniques and phonographic processes by which the engineers and equipment handle the frequencies and amplitudes is analyzed in terms of a proposed Vibration Theory. Further to a rhythmanalysis, Vibration Theory addresses of the periodic motion whether rhythmically inflected or not – across a spectrum from the supra auditory GHz of a hard drive, through audible bass, the b.p.m. of tempo, the r.p.m. of a 7 inch, to the DJs set in a session, to the season cycle of dancehall activities. As against Information Theory, Vibration Theory provides an understanding of the process of communication based on meaning, rather than engineering of probability and signal to noise ratios. Vibration Theory is underpinned with a critique of the _technocentric fallacy_ that bestows power to machines in isolation from their historical and cultural location and as independent of human embodied practices. It argues for the energetic _propagation_ across a vibrational field, rather linear _transmission_ from sender to receiver, as the most adequate situates, embodied, multi-sensory and multi-media model of communication.

Prior to _Sonic Media_, Henriques’ sound system research in Jamaica has been basis for his feature film _Babymother_, his sound sculpture _Knots & Donuts_, his book _Sonic Bodies_ and the organization Sound System Outernational.