



## Specials – Ghost Town: Ska

- Origins go to Jamaica in the 1960 as one of the origins of reggae.
- Fast in tempo.
- A Ska revival in the 1970s saw British-born musicians combining calypso, rhythm & blues, Ska and Punk

1981 The Specials produced '*Ghost Town*' bringing together Reggae and Punk musicians.

1. Reflects the political issues of the day – race and unemployment.
2. Music is rather bleak and no obvious verse/chorus plan
3. Mostly in C minor – the mood is oppressive.

- Long introduction opens with electronically generated sounds using pitch-bend and wind-effects
- The first chord progression is a series of 6 *diminished-7<sup>th</sup> chords* with a *chromatically rising top line*. This gives a sense of scary tension.

- We are then led to the main chord pattern that establishes C minor as the *tonic*.
- 2 main ideas – *motifs* – (i) stays near an *augmented 2<sup>nd</sup>* at the top of a *harmonic scale* & (ii) a *bass riff*.

- Active bass-lines are a feature of Ska as well as chords on off-beat quavers. The drummer emphasises beats 2 & 4 (which demonstrates Ska's close relationship with Reggae). The opening melodic idea is answered by a *syncopated* trumpet and trombone (another element of Caribbean music). These figurations have a very sardonic character to the intro.

- Lyrics are delivered in heavy Jamaican accent, the 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> lines being spoken rather than sung.
- Line 4 ends with a surprising *E major chord in 2<sup>nd</sup> inversion* – giving a small sense of optimism.
- Then again, rooted in C minor, an instrumental interlude based on a *descending chromatic scale* that returns us to the original mood.
- There is some extra *reverb in the mix*.

- The interlude closes with a reprise of the diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chords and then lands on a D7 chord, marking the beginning of a brighter mood.
- The lyrics look back to the 'good old days' and the key changes to *G major* to reflect this.
- The new chord pattern is V7-I-V7-I suggesting (and played as) a calypso.
- Adding to the good cheer is an energised bass that hints at a *walking bass* and the flamboyant high trumpet line.

Happy memories do not last!

- An A-flat chord brings us back to C minor, & a return to the opening music.
- When the lyrics resume there is an *extra layering* (the song is recorded on 8 tracks)
- Another instrumental interlude links us to the outro, starting with just drums & bass (*cf rhythm & blues*).
- Voices repeat the line. 'This town is coming like a ghost town'.
- Electronic effects are evident here, and the voices sound distant + a synthesized wind sound.
- For the third repetition the bass & drums stop, 4<sup>th</sup> repetition the lyrics are followed by just wind blowing.

Discussion point –

**What is the purpose of 'issues-music? Does it change anything?**

**Can you think of any other music of this kind from today about other 'issues'?**