

UNITED REGGAE

MAGAZINE

#3 ◀ December 2010

Rootz Underground
Live in Kingston
Horace Andy
& Scientist

Tippy
Lloyd Brown
Don Chandler
Glen Washington
Duane Stephenson

Pablo Moses
INTERVIEW

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✦ Trojan ✦ Buju Banton ✦ Gappy Ranks ✦ Special Delivery ✦ J Boog ✦
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NEWS

Lloyd Brown Is A Cornerstone

Mr. Dependable. If everyone in Reggae music worked on the schedule of sweet singing UK veteran of veterans, Lloyd Brown, then there probably wouldn't be many, if any at all, delayed or 'pushed back' projects [biggup Etana] [twice]. Each and every November of each and every year, the singer goes about releasing his latest, usually very very good, album. Well, if you haven't noticed, it's November and loaded and set to drop is the latest big album from Lloyd Brown, 'Cornerstone'.

Recently, most of Brown's releases came via the apparently now vanished and vanquished Cousin's Records, but 'Cornerstone' marks a bit of a landmark as the artist himself has stepped up to release this album on his own Riddimworks Productions imprint, in conjunction with JMG Inc. The very lofty titled project is highlighted by the fact that it contains approximately three billion combinations. Most notably [to readers of this site] joining Lloyd Brown are UK Reggae diva, Adele Harley, Curtis 'Da Grynch' Lynch Jr. from Necessary Mayhem and the tune No Thank You just happens to be surrounded in wholesome UK Reggae goodness as, on board are Top Cat [who also features on Look Lively], General Levy, Nereus Joseph and even the legendary Macka B.

November is almost over, which means this album releases very very soon. Fans worldwide can get Lloyd Brown's 'Cornerstone' on CD and digitally courtesy of Zojak Worldwide.



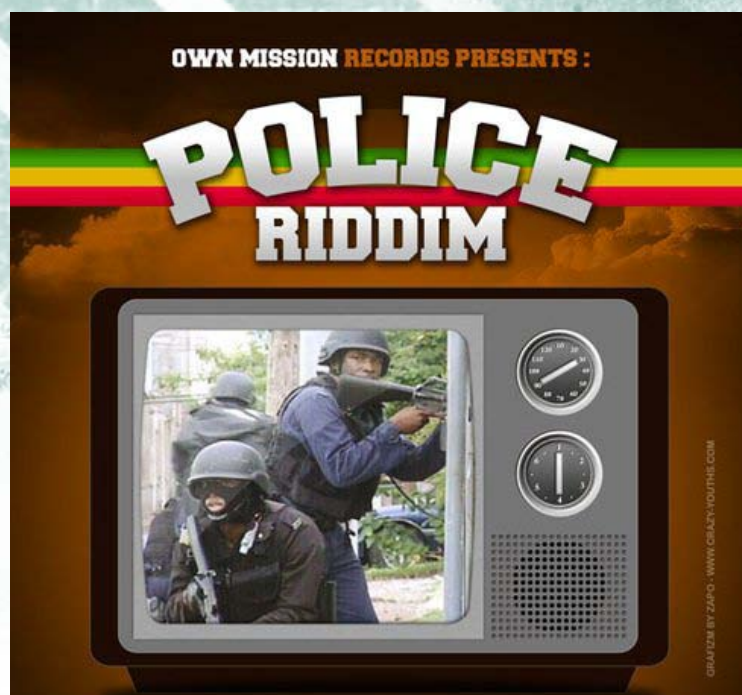
The Westside Riddim

It may not be completely accurate, but it certainly does seem to have been quite awhile since last was heard from one of the finest French labels on the planet [and there are billions of French labels, so that's say-

ing something 'special'], Special Delivery Music. Well the label known for having dropped such stellar compositions as the Visions Riddim, the Je T'aime, the Judgement Time and the massive Sugar Riddim from last year is back at work and back at work with yet another impressive release, the captivating Westside Riddim. As usual, Special Delivery has assembled a stellar cast to ride their latest piece and on board the Westside can be found the likes of I-Octane, Konshens, Ziggi Recado & Mr. Mojo [Mor-

gan], Fantan Mojah and of course Special Delivery's own, Gappy Ranks. Listeners can also look forward to big efforts from up and comers such as Slash and Redd.

The Westside Riddim from Special Delivery Music is currently available on etailers everywhere and is reportedly headed for a physical release in an expanded form featuring breakout Dutch star Maikal X, wicked Gwada chanter Tiwony and others.



The Police Riddim

It was only a couple of months ago or so when very active French label, Own Mission Records, was last heard from in the form of the very nice Bun Up Riddim [which just happened to feature the massive Nah Go A Jail from Echo Minott] and obviously they've wasted no time to get back to work as they now return once again with a big and colourful riddim, the pounding, yet somewhat melancholy Police Riddim.

The group of artists selected to voice the Police Riddim is arguably just as eclectic as the riddim itself. There's Jamaican star Chezidek, Pressure Busspipe from out the Virgin Islands, the Guadeloupe born - Swiss grown chanter Cali P, the exceedingly Straïka D from Martinique and also a combination featuring Mystikal Heights from St. Lucia alongside one of the most talented chanters in the world, French born, Gwada raised chanter, Tiwony. And to cover all bases, there is also an ever present guest spot served by American Hip-Hop legend KRS-1.

Own Mission Records' Police Riddim is set to hit digital retailers today and may be available on 7" singles as well soon.

A new reggae archive

A new website, entirely dedicated to reggae, launched yesterday bearing the name Jamaican-roots.com.

Where this site differs from established archives databases such as Roots Knotty Roots and Roots Archives is in the ability to listen to the records. Available in both French and English Jamaican-roots.com describes itself as: "On online reggae archive with 20,000 short clips" offering "a unique advanced search" as a means of discovering new music.

As well as a database, this site is a commercial venture, with a shop selling vinyl, books, merchandise and accessories. There's even a directory of "2,000 professionals, associations & amateurs" from around the world. Could this new French site rival the current collector's databases?



THURSDAY 21 APRIL - SUNDAY 24 APRIL 2011

THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL SKA FESTIVAL

THE CLAPHAM GRAND THEATRE, LONDON

London International Ska Festival Returns

Due to take place next year in London at The Clapham Grand Theatre between 21st and 24th April is the London Intl Ska Festival.

The last time a festival like this was held in the English capital was back in 1988 at The Brixton Fridge and featured acts like Laurel Aitken, Bad Manners, Potato 5, The Loafers, Hotknives, The Deltones, Napoleon Solo, Capone and The Bullets and Skin Deep. Next years festival will continue with that varied theme with many acts from around the globe that play not only traditional ska sounds but also have rocksteady and early reggae influences. The list of those appearing is now really starting to take shape and organiser Sean Floerdew has just announced that 'Mr Rocksteady' himself Ken Boothe will be there headlining the opening night, with a promise of more acts to be announced very soon, including a further four legendary Jamaican names. Backing up these performers throughout the event will be a fine selection of DJ's including Mark Lamarr, Gaz Mayall, Jim Cox and Greedy G to name just a few.

Tickets vary in price from a whopping £1850, for groups of a maximum of 10 people in a Royal Box across all four days, to £39.50 for any single day and they are on sale now at www.londoninternationalskafestival.co.uk

THE LIST OF CONFIRMED ACTS APPEARING SO FAR ARE:

KEN BOOTHE / THE ENGLISH BEAT starring DAVE WAKELING / JAMES HUNTER / THE SKA FLAMES (Japan) / DUB PISTOLS / THE TROJANS / THE LOAFERS (one off reformation) / HOTKNIVES (original line up) / BIM SKALA BIM (USA) / MAROON TOWN / INTENSIFIED / NAPOLEON SOLO (Denmark) / THE CAROLOREGIANS (Belgium) / THE AMPHETAMEANIES (Scotland) / THE SIDEWALK DOCTORS / CARTOON VIOLENCE (Wales) / JIMMY THE SQUIRREL

CONFIRMED DJ LINE UP:

MARK LAMARR / GAZ MAYALL / GAZS ROCKIN BLUES / WRONGTOM / THE TIGHTEN UP CREW w/ CHAMPION MC / JIM COX (REGGAE TRAIN) / FELIX HALL / GREEDY G

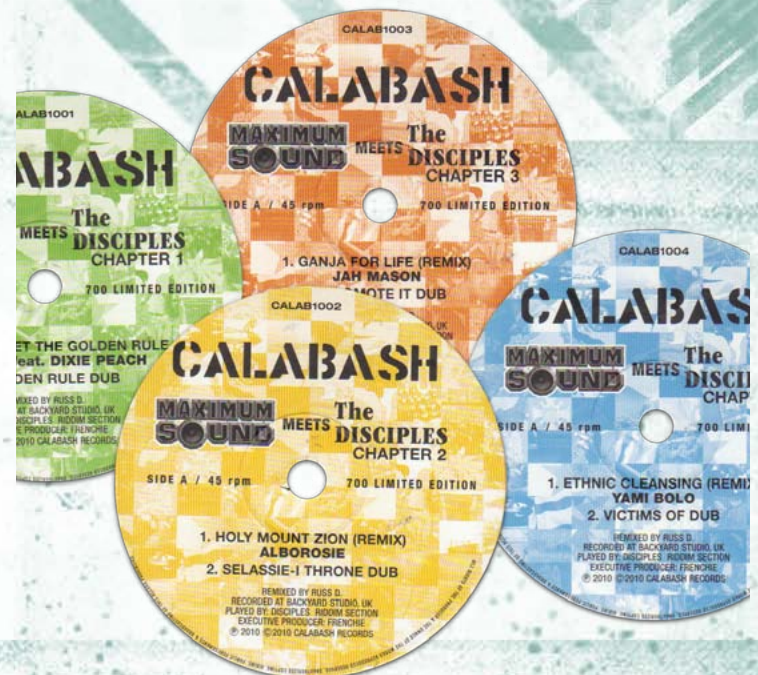
Buju Banton and Friends Perform in Miami

Buju Banton has been granted permission to perform at a concert entitled "Before the Dawn" set for January 16, 2011 at Bayfront Park Amphitheater in downtown Miami, Florida.

Produced by Rocker's Island Entertainment who also brings us the Best of the Best Concert, Buju fans will be coming from all parts of the globe! The veteran Reggae artist, who has been incarcerated in Northern Florida for 11 months, has not performed live in over a year. His Grammy nomination for his prophetic new album "Before the Dawn," and this timely event will definitely be history in the making! Buju Banton rises to this historical event which will not happen anywhere else in the USA. He will be joined by a list of performers from top Dancehall, Reggae, Hip Hop and R&B just announced!

Music for the event will be by New York's Hot 97 finest, Massive B with Bobby Konders, Jabba and Shotta. Other artists include Stephen Marley, Wayne Wonder, Gramps Morgan, Capleton, Shaggy, Sly and Robbie, Freddie McGregor, Nadine Sutherland, DJ Khaled & many more.

Billed as a family affair, doors open at 4:00PM and the show starts at 5:00PM SHARP and ends promptly at 10:00PM. Children under 12 will be admitted free with an adult. Details at <http://www.bujulive.com/>



New label from Frenchie

One of the greatest producers of contemporary reggae music – Frenchie – has set up a new label for roots and steppers. The new imprint is named Calabash and will only put out 10 inches. The first four releases are lethal remixes of Jah Mason, Alborosie, Luciano and Yami Bolo produced by Russ Disciples. Frenchie himself sat in the executive chair.

- I tried to give him [Russ D] some guidance on how I wanted the riddim to sound. He is one of the best UK steppers musicians/producers today and as I've known his brother Lol Bell-Brown for years we made the link, told us Frenchie, and continues:

- I've always thought that a lot of those UK roots productions had great riddims, but the vocals are sometimes not quite up to the standard of the music.

The first four releases are limited to 700 copies each. There will be more releases next year, mainly remixed by Russ D and some other producers in the same genre.

- I might do some myself as well, but it's a different branch basically from my Maximum Sound imprint.

J Boog is So Far Gone



Dazzling Hawaiian Reggae singer, J Boog, has spent the better part of the last couple of years or so catching flames with some of his releases and now he's continuing that very impressive trend with his most recent release, the tune So Far Gone for Special Delivery Music from out of France. True to form, the song is yet another outstanding lover's themed vibes for the singer and it won't do a thing to 'interrupt' notions that he sounds so much like venerable veteran Jamaican singer, Glen Washington. If you have yet to come across the vibes of arguably one of the best young Reggae singers in the world, J Boog, perhaps now is the time as So Far Gone drops digitally on December 3.

Konshens is Weak?



Reggae/Dancehall star Konshens continues along in a hot streak of big tunes which has seen him become one of the most in demand names in either genre and, again, continues to do it in a variety of different ways. This time, he's been tapped by solid French based label Akom Records, for a very interesting new single, Weak.

The tune which is, ostensibly, a 'gal tune', is on a much slower and more laid back type of riddim [which is apparently called the Bonafide Riddim] is yet another a strong and most interesting line from the increasingly wicked discography of Konshens. The Dub Akom Band produced Weak by Konshens is available digitally from December 7.

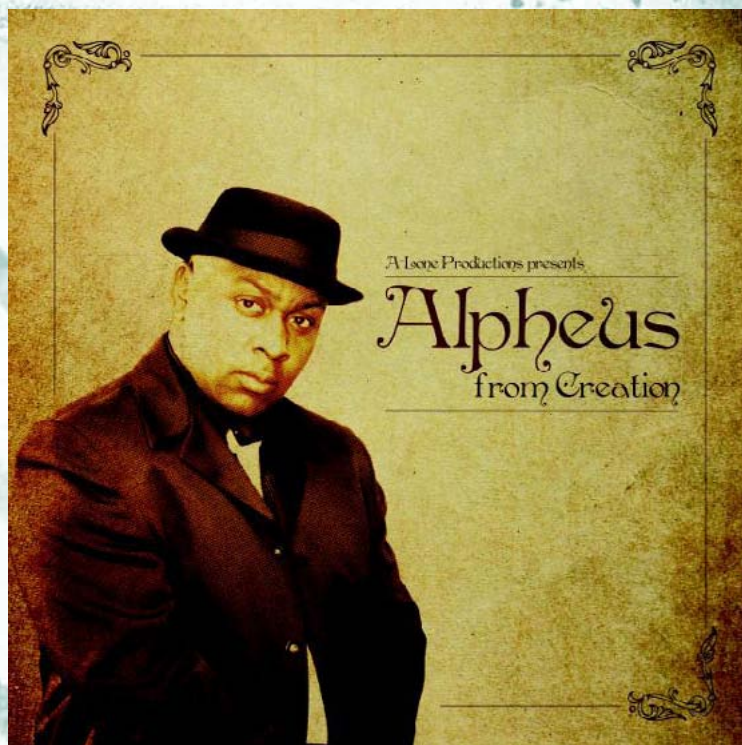


Latest Edition To Trojan's Popular New 7

The latest edition to Trojan's popular new 7" singles range is due for release on December 6th. The single will feature Eric 'Monty' Morris on the top side with the previously unissued 1969 cut 'Deep In My Soul', while on the flip is a horns led instrumental reworking of the riddim 'Reggae To Jeggae', by the legendary Tommy McCook. Demand for the previous three singles has been immense with each selling out within a fortnight of release. Trojan has therefore increased the number being manufactured from 250 to 400, but they promise to keep the music, standard of pressing and presentation to the highest of quality.

New ska and rocksteady album from Alpheus

The pure-singing style of Britain's Studio 1 protégé Alpheus has been absent from a long-playing release since 2007's Special Delivery album 'Everything For A Reason'. Now, at long last, he is back with follow-up 'From Creation', and a surprising change of direction - which he insists is permanent. Produced by Roberto Sanchez for A-Lone and FAK Records out of Spain, the album is entirely devoted to ska and rocksteady sounds. Classic rhythms abound from the Wailers to the work of the criminally underrated producer Phil Pratt. The backings to his instrumental Dirty Dozen and vocal Little Things (originally sung by Hemsley Morris) have been painstakingly recreated by Sanchez - as if Pratt had been given access to the clarity of modern recording equipment back in the day. Alpheus explains, "I kept quiet for about 18 months after the album for Special Delivery. I only went on one one-drop riddim for a label in Nantes called Metastone and that was my last one-drop. I'm not doing that any more. Now it's only ska and rocksteady - music that's long lasting". Whether Alpheus sticks to his plan or not, 'From Creation' is slated for a January 18th cd or download release.





The Everlasting Riddim

Arguably the biggest shot in Reggae production in the country of Germany, the Pow Pow Movement, is back with a potentially huge release - Its latest composition and release, the Everlasting Riddim. As usual, the piece is an excellently crafted project and features a healthy mix of established names and Pow Pow favourites alongside lesser known and up & comers hoping to catch the eyes and ears of listeners over this big vibed riddim. Such as who? Of course German Reggae superstar Gentleman is on board with the tune Everlasting Love, a highlight from his album 'Diversity' from earlier this year. With him, Gentleman has brought the likes of Natural Black, Perfect, Bescenta, Ginjah and Chuck Fenda on the high end. But hopefully names such as one of 2010's biggest breakout young artists, German Sara Lugo, big Aruba native Smiley, Nature, Malijah and others are set to make big impacts on fans smart enough to pick this up as well. You can show some brainpower and grab up Pow Pow's latest potential masterpiece, the Everlasting Riddim, when it drops on CD and digitally, December 10.

The Racer Riddim

Reggae star Perfect headlines a set also featuring the likes of Gambian Reggae act, Mandingo Warrior, Charly B and Wonda Prince - The latest composition from reputable Swiss imprint, Weedy G Soundforce, the Racer Riddim. This accurately titled release is a blistering tune aimed at the Dancehall and although the names here may not be the first to come to mind on such a project, it seems as if almost all, if not all, of the artists on board perform quite well.

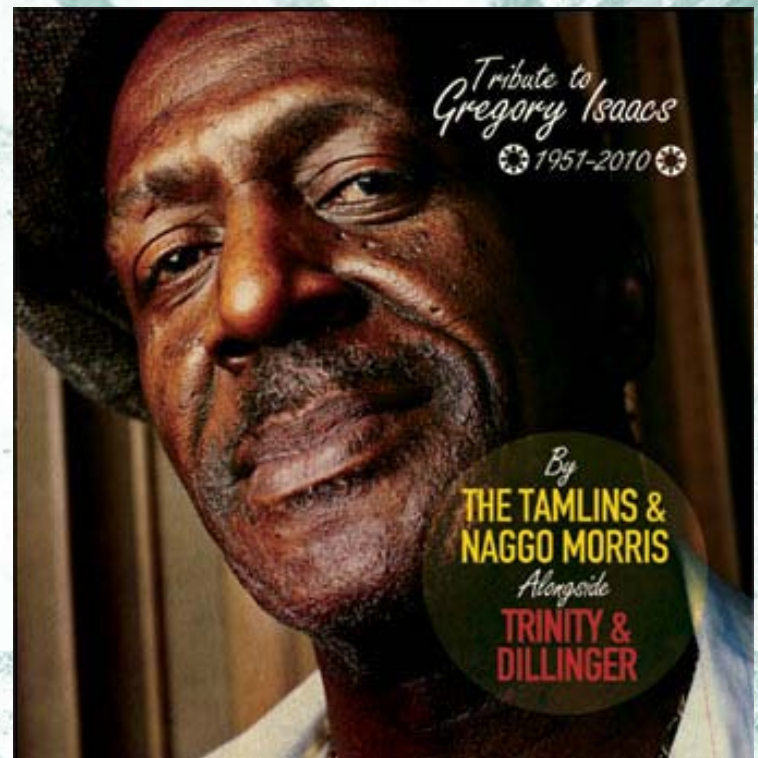
The Racer follows other heavy pieces from Weedy G Soundforce such as the Bubbler, the Maestro, the Strong Grain and most recently the Jaguar Riddim and it should rank favourably in that very impressive lot, particularly amongst the Dancehall crowd.

Should you be a member of said crowd, you might want to get your paws on the Racer Riddim from Weedy G Soundforce which is exactly what you can do via etailers worldwide.

Irie Ites' Tribute To Gregory Isaacs

Back in October the worldwide Reggae community lost one of its greatest champions of all time, the legendary 'Cool Ruler', Gregory Anthony Isaacs and while, collectively, the masses sang the praises of the incomparable vocalist, the most active Irie Ites Records from out of France, has taken its tribute to a higher level. The label has joined together the likes of The Tamlins, Naggo Norris, Trinity and Dillinger to pay respects to Isaacs across a riddim which made its name backing an Isaacs tune of the same name the Soon Forward.

This very special project is releasing quite differently. Only 500 [individually numbered] 7" copies will be made available, making it definitely one for the hardcore collectors. Everyone else can be sure to check it out digitally as well coming later this month.



Sadiki's Santa Claus



Fresh off the release of his latest well received album, 'Lifeline', veteran singer Sadiki and his Skinny Bwoy Records imprint waste no time at all returning and do so with a most unexpected project for the holiday season, 'Santa Claus', an EP featuring the vocalist singing four tunes for

Xmas of varying degrees of familiarity. Do You Hear What I Hear, The Christmas Song and Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas join the title track on the release.

The project which is helmed by the always on-point people at Joe Fraser Records (as is so much of Sadiki's work these days) is currently available digitally on fine etailers worldwide.



Thanks and Praise by Gappy Ranks

Earlier this year UK-based singjay Gappy Ranks dropped his debut EP 'Rising Out of the Ghetto' as well as his debut album 'Put the Stereo On'. Two very different efforts. While the former had a contemporary dancehall approach, the latter relied on vintage riddims from Studio One, Treasure Isle and Bunny Lee.

Now Gappy Ranks has scheduled a new album release. In February Hot Coffee Music will put out 'Thanks & Praise', an album that is said to be modern and uptempo, probably in the same vein as 'Rising Out of the Ghetto'. It's produced by Notice Productions, Special Delivery Music, Macro Beats, Jazzwad, Bass Runner, Clay Records and Gappy Ranks himself. Included are singles such as Stinkin' Rich, Thanks & Praise, Longtime and English Money.

'Thanks & Praise' is scheduled for release on February 15th.



Reggae Roast announce their Evolution

At the end of last month Upcoming UK label and dance Reggae Roast dropped a new 7" and download release. Sadly snowfall in England meant it didn't get to us until now!

It's a philosophical side over a tough organic modern roots rhythm by one time On U Sound collaborator Ghetto Priest entitled "Evolution".

The dub is spare and designed for chatting over rather than home listening.

You can listen to the song [here](#). Evolution is out now.

The Electricity Riddim

Following the first installment of the series, the Box Guitar Riddim which arrived back in June, Sherkhan and company at Tiger Records send out 2010 by delivering the second edition of the Riddim Zone, the Electricity Riddim. Keeping in tune with the direction of the label thus far - Where versatility is king - The Box Guitar was a definitively heavy Roots Reggae riddim, the Electricity most certainly is not. Instead, it's a kind of Hip-Hop vibed composition which may not make as great of an immediate impact on listeners as previous efforts from Tiger Records, but keen listening proves to be rewarded eventually.

Sampling the Electricity Riddim are the likes of Teflon, Zeno, Assailant, Tiger Record's 'secret weapon' Bazil and Juvenile whose Link & The Linkans takes top honours here.

Fans might also want to focus on the cover of this release which mentions "1st Part: AC". Of course, that means that a "2nd Part" is also in the works [and will reportedly reach in early 2011]. Until then, however, the Electricity Riddim from Tiger Records can be found digitally on etailers everywhere courtesy of Zojak Worldwide.



Chantelle Hernandez - My Forever

All-conquering London producer Curtis Lynch has put his mark on dancehall with his Necessary Mayhem label, and roots with his subsidiary Maroon. For 2011 he's taking his new Necessary Mayhem Classics imprint in a lovers direction with belting first signing, Kingston's Chantelle Hernandez. Pianist, dancer and actor Chantelle has worked as a backing vocalist with Gregory Isaacs and the Wailers as well as topping the Japanese charts as part of quartet UNITZz.

She became a Necessary artist while Curtis was over in Jamaica and new EP 'My Forever' should be one of the first essential releases of the New Year. From opener Good Man, through the rock-infused Hotta Fire ("I will never shrink me to make you feel higher. You've got to climb up my ladder") to closer Sort Me Out (previously issued on the Digital Acoustics compilation over a remake of Champion Lover by Lynch's favourite producer Gussie Clarke) these songs are all about high standards in music and life. Hernandez' self penned-lyrics crackle with insight and ingenuity while her powerful but controlled voice suits Lynch's bass-heavy production to a tee. Says Curtis "As long as I do my job and my ears are good and I can trust a singer, they don't have to be well established. No disrespect to the older artists but now I have established Necessary Mayhem, Maroon and myself as a producer, we have to build."

If you want lovers music with added Vitamin "B", 'My Forever' is out on iTunes on January 11th.

RIDDIM ZONE
TIGER RECORDS PRESENTS
ELECTRICITY RIDDIM

ELECTRICITY RIDDIM
The Electricity juggling is coming out in two parts. The first AC then DC. It is strongly influenced by 90's Hip-hop beats. A scratch vibe plus layers on top of layers of drums is the essence of the Electricity riddim. Frenzy and exhilarating.

JUVENILE - "LINK AND THE LINKANS"
Juvenile, a street kid from Kingston, who as been singing on Tiger records label for years now. We can think back of the excellent song "Bad" alongside his partner Jah Trouble. In "Link and the linkans," Juvenile tells us with style and humor about the way he party's and also how the fact of having a large network of friends makes you stronger. "When you bring a dog in a di link, the link get hotter than a bag a pepper shrimp".

BAZIL - "CELEBRATE"
It's hard to believe that Bazil is from France when you're listening to his Jamaican patois. This song is inspired by the high crime rate of Jamaica which teaches people to appreciate life. "Celebrate" is an ode to life. "We celebrate cause yes, we still alive".

TEFLON - "ANOTHER DAY"
There is no need to introduce Teflon. In "Another day" Teflon gives an excellent bad man song. The more he goes deep in the song, the more he gets wild. Teflon went in the voicing room without even listening to the riddim before, and recorded the song "Another day" in "one shot". When listening to this song you'll witness a natural and energetic crescendo.

ZENO - "SEE WHAT YOU WANNA SEE"
Zeno used to work with Computer Paul on the Bootcamp label in the 90's. In "See what you wanna see" he tells us that sometimes it's better to keep quiet about things that don't concern you. "See what you wanna see and talk, then you might learn, then you hear what you wanna hear and talk, and your skin get burn".

ASSAILANT - "FREE ME"
The collaboration between Bounty Killer's protégé and the label Tiger records is not new. We can recall outstanding songs like "It a get to me", "Don't do me dat" or "Under the covers". In "Free me" the talented writer Assailant tells us about the bad treatment jamaican artists receive because of stereotypes. "Just step off a di plane... left Miami where they treated me lame, now me drop a Yard and everything a di name... now police pull me right a Roquefort roundabout! Dem haft Free me, buss up the chuckles and free me...".

The background is a complex, layered composition. It features a large, circular, textured area in the upper half, possibly a faint portrait or a natural form like a stone or shell, rendered in shades of yellow, brown, and green. Below this, there are large, angular, overlapping shapes in bright yellow and vibrant green, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall texture is grainy and organic, suggesting a collage or a heavily layered print.

INTERVIEWS

TIPPY

INTERVIEW

By Erik Magni

Photos by Lee Abel



"St. Croix is a unique and mystical place. We've produced many internationally known artists, thinkers, musicians, writers and athletes"

Bright future for VI-reggae

U.S. Virgin Islands has over the last ten years become a powerful force in reggae, especially in the United States. But in Europe the impact has been more moderate. Erik Magni has talked to producer and label owner Laurent "Tippy" Alfred to learn more about the VI-scene.

U.S. Virgin Islands is an autonomous part of the United States, and can best be described as a tourist paradise. The three main islands of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix are located in the western Caribbean, just east of Puerto Rico. The largest island – St. Croix – has about 60,000 inhabitants and is the base for a type of reggae which is popularly known as Virgin Islands reggae (VI-reggae).

U.S. Virgin Islands are – just like Jamaica – located in the Caribbean Sea. But they have more in common. For example, the Rastafarian movement has been strong on the islands for many years:

— *Elder rastamen from the VI will tell you that the Rastafarian movement has been present in St. Croix and St. Thomas since the 30's, not long after the inception in Jamaica. So reggae, which is rasta music at its core, has been here for a long time, says Laurent "Tippy" Alfred, producer and owner of the I Grade label based in St. Croix.*

Started in the 70's

He says that the first reggae recording in the VI, which he knows of, is Ras Abijah from St. Thomas, who released the album *Ras Abijah vs. The Beast* in 1979. But there are more pioneers than that.

— *Zeus & the Kasha Heads, The Zioners, Umojah, Inner Vision and of course Midnite. Midnite was formed around 1989, eight years before they released their first album Unpolished. This crucial first release marked the start of the contemporary VI-reggae scene, Tippy says, and continues:*

— *From there, numerous studios and production houses emerged, like Glamorous Records, Sound Vizion and I Grade.*

Midnite is the foundation

Tippy describes the feel of VI-reggae as unique and far



more diverse than most people think. For example, there is not only one VI-sound.

— *The Midnite sound is the foundation of VI-reggae. So that's the dominant sound and what most people associate with the VI. Heavy bass lines, slower tempos, live instrumentation, sparse arrangements, bubbling keyboards and stiff guitar skanks.*

Something that brings together reggae from VI is that most producers use live instruments, which Tippy considers to be the foundation of classic roots reggae. However, Jamaica seems to have left it behind.

While the VI has a classic reggae sound, it is not reactionary or boring. Tippy lists several producers who he thinks describe VI-reggae.

— *We have Déan Pond's polished modern roots, Sound Vizion's upful digital roots and Bambú Station, who produce deep roots.*

Tippy has a hard time classifying his own sound. He mentions Midnite, but also hip-hop, soul, jazz and British step-pers as his influences.

Overall, I think the lyrical content is what unifies the VI-reggae sound. It is the only reggae movement that I know of where 100 per cent of the artists, so far, are singing conscious lyrics.



Mystical island

For an island with only 60,000 residents, St. Croix has succeeded in producing lots of talented singers and producers. Tippy says that the islands have an abundance of talented artists and it seems that every month a new voice with international potential emerges.

When he tries to explain why there is so much talent, the answer is somewhat puzzling and reminds me of the popular TV-series *Lost*.

— *St. Croix is a unique and mystical place. We've produced many internationally known artists, thinkers, musicians, writers and athletes. I think that St. Croix has some of the most creatively talented people on earth. Why is something of a mystery. My feeling is that there are centers of energy in the earth that create and shape minds in a way that modern science cannot grasp, says Tippy and continues:*

— *St. Croix must rest upon one of those energy centers. I think there are undocumented reasons why the VI has been so sought after by so many colonial powers in history. That is also why there are so many military installations and radio telescopes located nearby.*

He also provides more evident explanations and says that St. Croix has always been a rebellious island and the population is independent of the mind, something he believes fosters musical creativity. He also believes that being a part of the United States he also has had an effect.

— *We are a U.S. territory and have a large population from all over the Caribbean. Those who grow up here may be influenced by both the U.S. and the Caribbean. All this cross-cultural mixes makes for a very fertile environment for creative music and arts.*

Moderate interest in Europe

Reggae from the VI has had a stronghold on the U.S. mainland for many years, but in Europe, interest has been moderate so far. *Midnite* and *Pressure Buss Pipe* are the most successful to date. *Dezarie* has also received some attention. But not really much more, despite talented artists such as *NiyoRah*, *Ras Attitude* and *Batch*.

— *VI-reggae is starting to get wider attention in Europe, but I think it is difficult because artists from here have not received much support from Jamaica. Commercial success in Europe depends on acceptance in Jamaica, says Tippy, and adds that *Midnite* have managed to break that rule.*



Midnite have never had a single in the Jamaican charts. They have never played in Jamaica, but is still respected and loved in Europe. Tippy also highlights the lack of resources as an additional reason:

— *VI-labels are small organizations without resources to launch promotional campaigns that penetrate Europe.*

“A lot to be hopeful about”

Tippy criticizes some Jamaican artists and believes that dancehall is currently undergoing significant musical changes.

— *It is hard to even describe most of the riddims as reggae in any form. They are basically hip-hop/pop arrangements with little originality. It's nothing like the dancehall in the 80's or 90's, that brought a whole new sound to the world, he says and continues:*

— *There may be a lot to be disgusted about in contemporary reggae, but also a lot to be hopeful about. Even though artists like Vybz Kartel and Mavado get most of the airplay, there are countless others who spread positivity.*

He is not worried about the future, either for roots reggae in general or VI-reggae in particular. He believes that the contemporary dancehall sound may come and go, but the

roots will always remain.

— *The key for conscious reggae artists and producers are to adapt commercial and promotional formats so that we can continue to create music that will be heard.*

Seven fast ones to Tippy

Favourite artist?

Vaughn Benjamin (Midnite)

Favourite label?

Lustre Kings Productions

Favourite tune?

Handsworth Revolution by Steel Pulse

Favourite genre?

Roots

Favourite producer?

Karl Pitterson

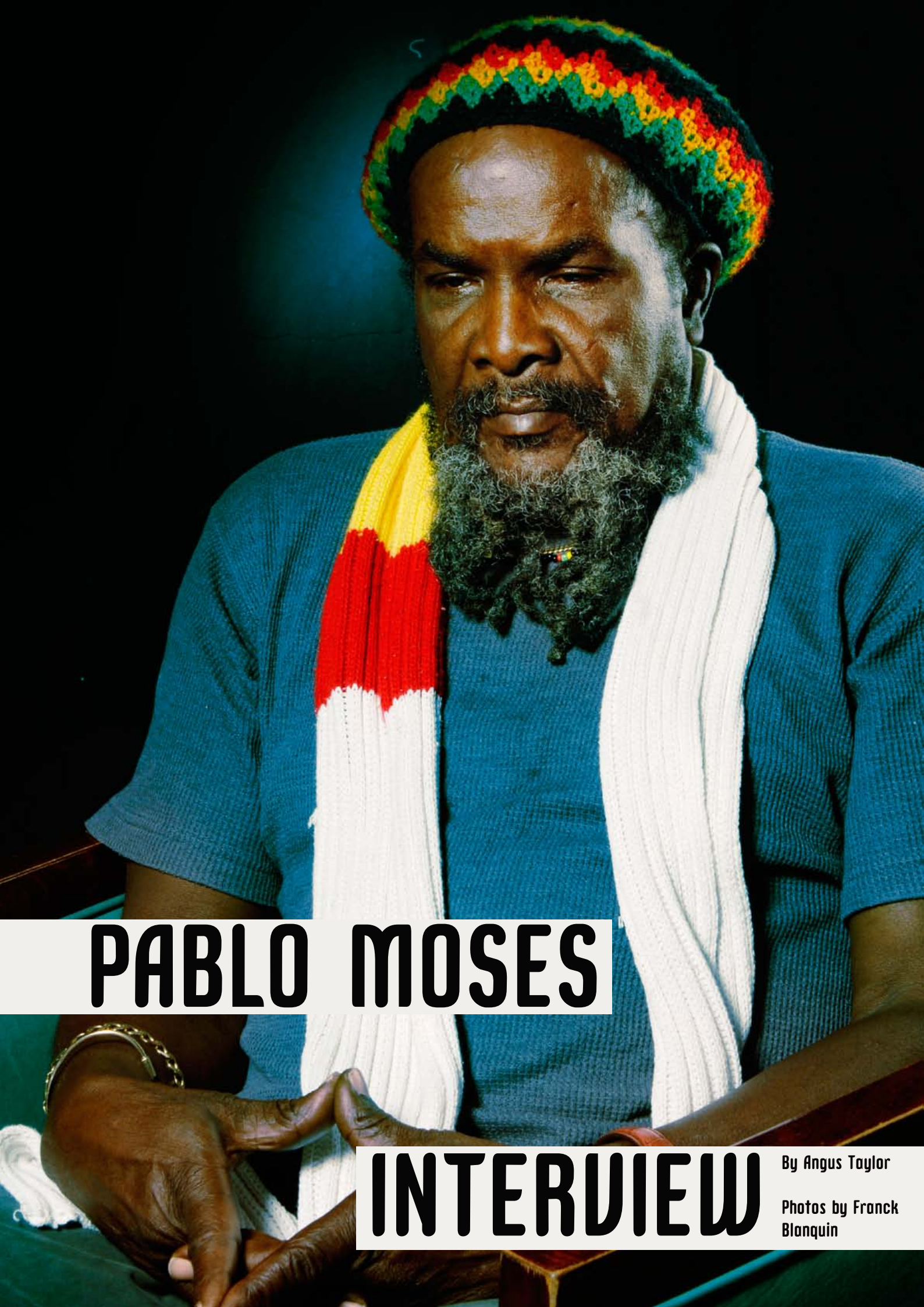
Favourite riddim?

Hard Times

Favourite record sleeve?

A New Chapter of Dub by Aswad





PABLO MOSES

INTERVIEW

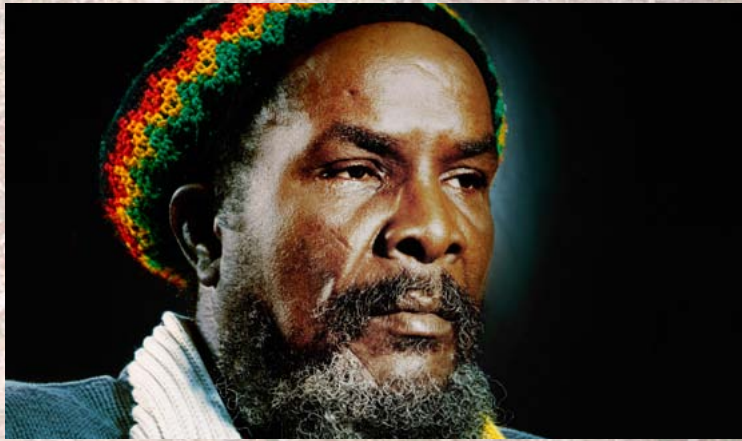
By Angus Taylor

Photos by Franck
Blanquin

Interview: Pablo Moses

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"Each of my albums always has a song made specifically for and about Africa"



Pablo Moses was born Pablito Henry in 1948 and grew up in the Vineyard Town area of Kingston. He became a professional musician late in life and cut his first LP 'Revolutionary Dream' in 1975, including the herbal celebration I Man A Grasshopper, recorded at Lee Perry's Black Ark studio and produced by Geoffrey Chung. Following the release, he decided to enroll at the prestigious Jamaican School Of Music to further his education, before cutting two albums, 'A Song' (1980) and 'Pave The Way' (1981), produced by Chung and Clive Hunt – a duo he would work with into the 1990s. When roots and overt Rasta themes retreated into the background from mainstream reggae music, Moses continued as a politically conscious singer; his outspoken views often expressed in a beguilingly subtle and non-confrontational singing voice. Unforeseen circumstances led to over a decade's silence between 1998 and 2010, finally broken by 2010's 'The Rebirth'. Angus Taylor caught up with this fascinating underground intellectual shortly after his performance at Rototom Sunsplash in Benicassim. Despite the media scrum for his attention, Pablo was happy to talk at length about his life and career.

Last year you released your first album in over ten years – The Rebirth. Why such a long gap?

There were various things that happened – change of distribution companies and recording companies. And also about four or five years ago I went through an accident where I hit my head and was in a coma for four days. A blood vessel burst in my head and I had to have a serious operation where a lot of people thought I would die. But because of the love of the people and the love of the music and the spirit of Jah I survived. So I think that's why I put out the new album and called it the Rebirth. For a long time not putting out anything, and also surviving that accident I thought it was only adequate that I call my new album that.

You also spoke a lot about Jamaican history in Harrison Stafford and Roger Landon-Hall's documentary Holding On To Jah. Is that a subject you're interested in, and, if so, why is history so important?

I think that history should be important not just to me but to everyone. The sustenance and the prolonged life of all individuals is based on history. You have to think about your ancestors and you also have to think about what happened before. I think that it's important that we talk about those things, especially the occurrences in Jamaica from that time until now. I mean, I was born in 1948 so I have seen a lot of things that have taken place in Jamaica: changes and manifestations of different governments; different manifestations of corporate Jamaica and how they handle and how they handled the Rastafarians; how they fought and discriminated and victimized Rastafarians coming through; how the prominence of Rastafarianism came in the Seventies. And, from that, the world was able to see that Rastafarians have certain potential where a lot of people had been saying, "Oh, they're lazy. They all have their dirty hair and they don't wanna trim". And when I look and see the same people who were fighting against our Natty – they're Natty now! And they claim they are doing dancehall music to try to make it look like it was dancehall and corporate Jamaica that made people be aware of Jamaica.

So you don't agree that dancehall can take credit for keeping Jamaica in the public eye?

It's the hard work of Rastafarians that really made Jamaica a success in the face of the world. From Bob Marley, from Peter Tosh, from Ras Michael and the Sons Of Negus and the Nyabingi days until now, I am fortunate enough to be a participant on this journey. So I give thanks to Jah that I am here as a witness who saw what went on and what is still going on and what is expected to go on. The spirit of Jah is working and all over the world Rasta is growing. And everyone that fought Rasta, now a lot of them are saying they are Rasta too! And they are even using Rasta as a commercialization too unfortunately, in order to diminish the potential and power of Rastafarians. But with people like myself and lots of young roots reggae Rastafarian artists that are coming right now, the sustenance of roots reggae will continue for a long time.

So which modern artists do you admire right now?

You have some little youths like Tarrus Riley. I think he's on the right path. Luciano is one who I haven't heard much about recently but he's still on the scene. Unfortunately not all of them are original. I love to be totally original. I think it good to be original because with that originality



you can make the roots reggae music have more power. But when you do it on other [well used] rhythms I think it diminishes the power and the creativity of roots reggae music.

Music is obviously something you care deeply about. You famously took time out at the height of the success of your first album to enrol in the Jamaican School Of Music...

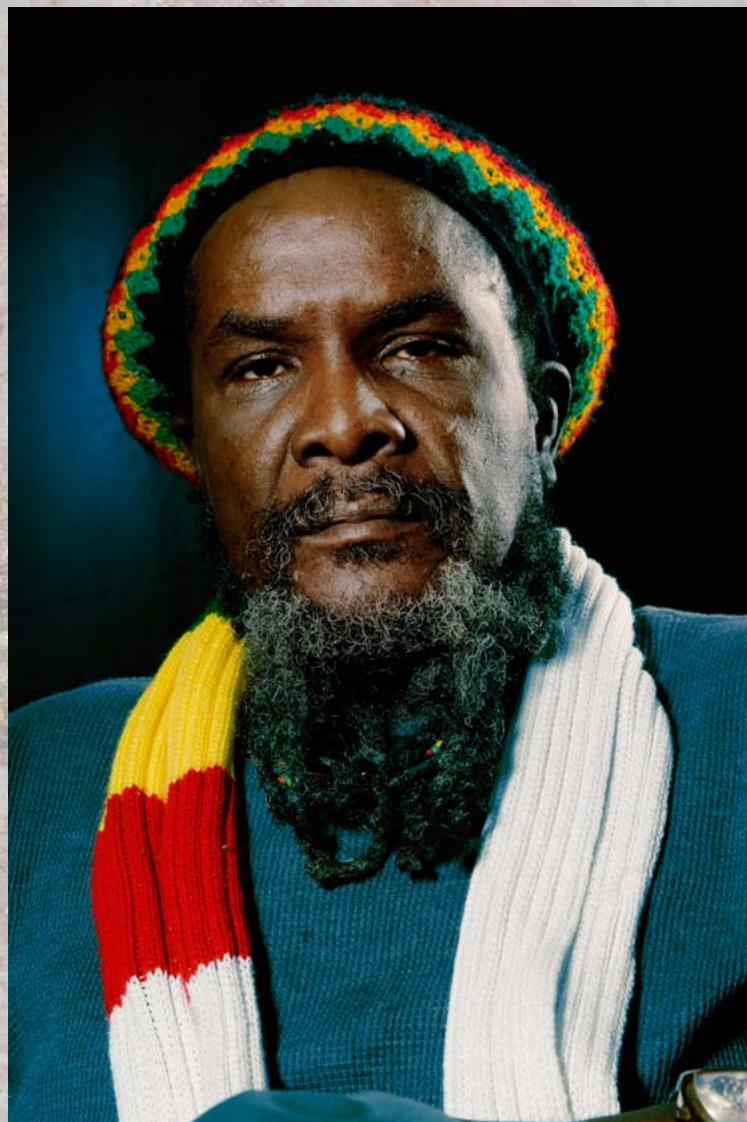
Yes I. Two and a half years I was there. I should have stayed longer but unfortunately there were bills and my career, and as I was into my thirties by then it was only appropriate for me to go back into the business.

What did you learn in your time there that you didn't know before?

I went there basically to deal with some of the fundamentals of music: groupings and awareness of the different modes and progressions. I also learned about blues and did some rock stuff and some jazz. The course I was doing was for the Afro-American department which dealt mainly with jazz, rock and blues as well as roots reggae. So it was an opportunity for me and it was good because in those days, in the seventies, with the new democratic socialist government which came in with the PNP gave Rastas the chance to come out of the gully and out of the wilderness and bushes to show their potential. And the music that was played in those days was not just songs that you "pay-to-play" but songs that have positive potential. So I was fortunate to be in that era at that time.

Today at the University Of Reggae talk here at Rototom, The Abyssinians and The Mighty Diamonds were asked the question: why don't more roots reggae groups go to Africa? As an artist who has been to Africa, what do you think of this question?

It's not a matter of us not wanting to go to Africa. Because I've been to Africa but I've mostly been to East Africa. I have never been to West Africa which is my dream. I have been to Chibuti, I have been to Reunion Island, I have been to Mayotte Island. So I don't think it's because we as roots reggae artists don't want to go to Africa – it's because the opportunity has not arisen for us to go there and perform. Let's face it – in order to go to Africa on your own you have to have money to pay for the ticket, and coming from Jamaica it's not cheap. It's an expensive ticket. But this company I am working with now, Music Action, have promised to work out ways for me to go to Niger, Mali and Ghana, so hopefully next year I'll be there. I'm just praying to Jah and it would be good if I could go there because most of my ancestors in Jamaica came from that section of Africa – Senegal, Ivory Coast and so forth. And



I would love to go through all of Africa: South Africa especially, and I would love to go to Zimbabwe and really see what's going on. And of course Angola because I once sang We Should Be In Angola. But I'm always singing songs about Africa. Each of my albums always has a song made specifically for and about Africa.

Finally, will it be another eleven years before your next album?

No! You can expect another album by the year 2012 and then another one by 2014. I can guarantee that!





DUANE STEPHENSON

Jamaican Voice, Global Consciousness

INTERVIEW

BY TOMAS
PALERMO

"I always like to leave an underlying message of hope in my songs, because while we are all going through these things, the message of hope can still resonate"

Jamaican singer Duane Stephenson is not on a hype thing. He doesn't have a gimmicky look, a controversial song in the charts, a flashy image or Rasta entourage to back him up. Instead, the conscious 34 year-old puts all of his passion, thought and ideas into his songs. His debut album on VP Records 'From August Town' established Stephenson as a fierce champion for the poor and oppressed with songs about complex economic, political and personal relationships. His vocal delivery has the nasal resonance of Jimmy Cliff and the introspective quality of artists like Jahman Levi but it can also soar with heartfelt intensity.

The latter trait is heard on Sufferers Heights, the magnificent lead single from Stephenson's new album 'Black Gold', produced at Tuff Gong with Cannon Productions boss and saxophone legend Dean Fraser. The album also features legendary dub poet and radio host Mutabaruka, rising lioness Queen Ifrica and Morgan Heritage's Gramps Morgan who also appears alongside Stephenson in the video for the song Rescue Me. We caught up with Stephenson in Jamaica to talk about green energy, global issues and what this inspiring singer is doing next.

What have you been doing to promote your latest project Black Gold?

I'm trying to jump on all the avenues that I can, whether its radio interviews, studio or live appearances. One of the major plans is to travel into new areas. California is place that I'm really passionate about getting to this time around. I'm really looking forward to going out there. We're making sure were prepared with the proper band and show for when we get there.

How was your tour in September supporting The Wailers through the southern United States?

It was a great experience. Most of the places I've been to in America with Dean Fraser and the Black Soil band, Tarrus Riley and the whole Cannon crew have been in the traditional reggae markets like Fort Lauderdale (Florida). So for the most part the tour was a whole new ballgame. I learned a lot while I was there and got a great response from people who had never heard my music before.



What show was a highlight?

Actually, the first show at University of South Carolina was great; people were calling out for songs like Return, which I did a video for but was not on any album, and Fool For You on the August Town album. It's not usual to go to places and hear those requests. People usually ask for August Town and Cottage In Negril.

During that time there were a lot of stories in the news about Buju, and Jamaican travel visas being revoked for dancehall artists. Did you experience any tribulations as a result of that?

A lot of the people who are putting this pressure on the artists pretty much know what they are looking for, and me or my music is not "it." I generally try and keep a clean slate in music and in life, so I don't have these problems.

What growth did you experience in the three years between recording From August Town and Black Gold?

I traveled extensively through the Caribbean and new places in America and Europe [to promote] 'August Town'. I experienced many different cultures throughout the world and I try and display that growth on the new album. Without growth you don't really go forward. Often people do their first album and it works, but then they try and duplicate it. I've learned so much on this journey that I want to carry forward. It's not back to 'August Town' – we've done that and been there and now it's time to move on.

Are the songs on Black Gold focused more on international perspectives?

Well, a lot of what we're seeing here in Jamaica, globally people are facing the same challenges. We don't want to make it seem like we are in our little corner of the world and we're oblivious to what's outside because that's not the case. So musically I tried to do that.

What was it like working with Dean Fraser on this latest album?

Well, you know, we've been working together even before my solo career. I was working with Dean as a member of the group To Isis. I did my first recording with Dean, so I always keep that close link. A lot of time we're both at the studio and chatting about music and I've learned so much. Plus the people that he works with are great musicians – from Sly and Robbie, to the guys in Shaggy's band, –Dean was the first to bring [producer] Christopher Birch into the business. And from Dean's work from way back [as a member of] the 809 Band he ends up with good musical company.



I met Tarrus Riley through him. [Tarrus and I] started out at the same time with our solo careers. Tarrus and I had a link from way back too, so it's a bredrin vibe. [Queen] Ifrica (who appears on 'Black Gold') has been in the business a long time, so we've been friends from long before too. Gramps [Morgan] is more of a recent friend, but we've always known of each other's work. The people that I chose to work with on the album are the people I thought would serve the songs best. For instance I have a track there with Mutabaruka (Truth Is), and it's a powerful track. When he came in and did his thing, it was well hitting. And the same thing with Ifrica, I think she really embodies what the song (Stay Ay Home) is about. And of course Ras Shiloh (on the track "Soon As We Rise") is a powerful voice in reggae now; I think he's much under-rated as a singer.

You and Gramps trade verses humorously on the song Rescue Me – it's like a musical argument for a woman's affections.

Trust me – that song went down in like hour! It was just a fun thing. I wrote the song and called Gramps and said, 'Bwoy Gramps, I have this track I want you to be on.' He got back and told me when he was going to be in Jamaica. When we went to record he told me he had listened to it only one time and started laughing and never listened to it again! So he got to the studio and everything was just so much fun – doing the lickle arguments and ting (in the song). The chemistry was just fabulous. It's kind of like that Michael Jackson and Paul McCartney song The Girl Is Mine. Sometimes you just have to have fun with music.

You record most of your music at Tuff Gong studios?

I record most of my stuff at Tuff Gong because you can't substitute for the sound you get out of there. It's the ultimate place to get a basic track, like the drum and bass. Most of the overdubs and vocals are done at Grafton Studios, in Vineyard Town.

You're not an over-recorded artist in the Jamaican market who appears on every new riddim. Does that make writing your albums more special?

I take pride in [the fact that I'm not over-recorded} because a lot of times people try and use that as a avenue to get power in the business, by sheer volume of releases. But volume is not special. It's like when you get some thing at the store and its 10 for a dollar. But when you pay just a little bit more it can be more special. I don't believe in volume, I believe in recording a good song for what it is worth.

The title song Black Gold talks about situations in Iraq, Sudan and Somolia. Are you talking specifically about the politics of oil and fuel or is it just metaphoric?

Well most of it is literally about oil production, because we've gone through a period of spending so much on getting oil when we know that green energy is what we need now. People doing research [on renewable energy] have to beg for money for it. It's like how we're spending so many billions worldwide to go to Mars when we don't live there now and we don't know if we can ever live there. It's also about an everyday thing, you know, how so much people dying of hunger. I've been doing some work with the World Food Program of late and I found out that 15, 000 children die every day of hunger. A lot of people are oblivious of this.

Sufferers Heights is another very powerful song where you contrast two different points of view, one of annoyed wealthy person whose day isn't going well, and the struggle of the poor. Tell us about that song.

The truth is, I think the song that speaks to these times the most is "Sufferers Heights." Because we understand the situation in the world for the average man, you know weh mi a say – tings are rough. You don't need to be living in any particular part of the world to be going through that stress or strain. It's a worldwide thing. So looking at the perspective of the average man, they might say, 'Bwoy, life hard 'cause me cyaan pay the light bill' but you can't let that get you down because there's always someone having it a little bit worse then you are. [The song] is saying that even though me seh bwoy, tings hard, consider giving a lickle of what you have left. I always like to leave an underlying message of hope in my songs, because while we are all going through these things, the message of hope can still resonate.

Who are some of your music influences from Jamaica?

At the forefront would definitely be Peter Tosh. I like what his music represents and the fact that he lived the values of his music. He was never a man to water down his opinions, he was that forward. And as a vocalist and a writer I totally respect Jimmy Cliff. I always thought that Jimmy Cliff was the premier vocalist out of Jamaica. Other than that I listen to a wide cross-section of music – from early dancehall like Buju, Ninjaman and Supercat, rocksteady from John Holt, Heptones and all those groups.

What are your thoughts on the passing of Gregory Isaacs?

Well, Gregory Isaacs is a big loss to the reggae community. We can learn a lot of lessons from the life of Gregory Isaacs, both good and bad. Because he's an example a man coming from down there in Trenchtown who from working hard and doing this kind of music became world famous. Then you can look at his whole road of self-destruction that went on until his later days and then all the changes he tried to make, but by then it was too late. Nevertheless, Gregory Isaacs did so much for the music and the culture that we can't deny that he was a great influence on many of us. Luckily I had the opportunity to work with Gregory Isaacs on many occasions. I can't boast the same for some of the other legends that have passed on, but at least I got to spend some real time with him and he will be greatly missed.

What's happening next for your music?

There are a lot of opportunities. Right now I'm focused on promoting 'Black Gold', because its early days yet, we're just getting it out there. We're looking for new avenues for getting the music out there. The one thing that's going to remain consistent is to produce good wholesome music that the family can listen to. And I just want to tell your audience thank you for the support that I've been getting, thanks for the love and support from all over. I'm looking forward to coming out and playing for the people. Nuff blessings until that time.



DON CHANDLER

INTERVIEW

BY ANGUS
TAYLOR



Reggae In Da City, The Rhum Jungle, Friday November 26th 2010. Skatroniks' Don Chandler talks about his new night Reggae In Da City and how he wants to save reggae in the UK.

In October of this year Don Chandler, bassist with Skatroniks, Johnny Clarke and many other big reggae names read an article in The Voice newspaper by Davina Hamilton entitled "Is Reggae Dying A Slow Death?" He was inspired to start a free night of live music combining performances from top musicians and vocalists with a talent show format where audience members could get on stage and sing. Angus Taylor became a believer after attending the night on Friday 26th November and interviewed Chandler about his vision and how it could help get people in central London enjoying the city's rich reggae heritage again...

Why did you start this night?

The reason for starting this night was due to the lack of support for UK reggae from UK radio stations. David Rodigan has always been an ambassador for our music but with his show now being reduced to one hour per week, this will only contribute to the decline in exposure for our music.

We now live in a new age where the internet and social networking play a unique role in the promotion of all music, therefore we have to find new creative avenues to promote reggae music. Reggae In Da City is one of the avenues I chose to help promote reggae music.

What was your reaction to the Voice piece?

The headline on the front page of the voice read "Is Reggae Dying A Slow Death". I believe the article should have read "Is Reggae Dying A Slow Death In The UK". I am fortunate in the sense that I get to travel the world as a musician and I have witnessed that reggae music is far from dead in France, Italy, Germany, Hawaii, South America and the West Indies.

What I have noticed in these countries is that reggae has a high visual presence in the form of live events and television coverage and young people want to play musical instruments as a direct influence to what they see at the live events and on television. This is what I believe is lacking from reggae music in the UK.

I walked around with the Voice article for a few days pondering on what I could do to contribute to bringing our "dying" music back to life. Three areas I decided to focus on are educating young musicians through reggae music, live events featuring home grown artists and TV promotion. The Reggae school is up and running, Reggae In Da City was the first live event, next is the TV promotion.

Do you think the Voice piece has done some good by stirring people into action?

I'm not sure what the Voice piece did for anyone else but I knew it provoked something within me and something had to be done about it. In the first night of Reggae In Da City I asked who had read the article and I think one hand went up. This shows the importance of putting on these events to raise awareness for the work that needs to be done.

How does the night work?

The first thing was to find a venue in the heart of the city because I believe it was important to bring the music to an area of London which is not associated with reggae. After a few hours of internet surfing and phone calls I found a beautiful Caribbean restaurant in Islington called Cottons which has a venue attached to it named The Rhum Jungle.



I made some calls to some musician friends in the reggae business and explained the concept for the night, everyone got it straight away and jumped on board. These friends were Kashta Menilek-Guitar, Adrian McKenzie-Drums, Henry Holder-Keyboards, Ivan Christie-Guitar and myself on Bass. The importance of using this caliber of musicians was that there were no rehearsals and the musicians had to be able to handle any tune thrown at them by the various artists and MC's performing on the night.

The final piece of the puzzle was to find a host that represents UK Reggae. I called Peter Hunnigale and the line up was complete.

On the night Peter would call up singers from the crowd and call a tune for the band to play. The band would make a quick agreement on a key and go for it. Great performances were made by Aqua Livi, Solo Banton, AJ King, Barbera Naps and Peter himself. Skatronik sax man Brian Edwards was also in the house and came up and blew a tune.

Some guest musicians came and sat in, musicians swapped instruments and after 2 hours the live section came to an end.

It was important that the music played represented the concept of Reggae In Da City and rather than just play the regular top 40 of Jamaican reggae hits, UK artists would be heavily featured alongside their Jamaican counterparts.

Gappy Ranks, Phillip Levi, YT and Mr Williams were in the mix alongside Sanchez, Romaine Virgo and Berres Hammond and the crowd partied hard until closing time. This proves my theory which is play the music and let the people decide. Good quality music will shine regardless of whether it's from Kingston, Paris or Harlesden.

How Important is it to you that British reggae regains its former glory?

I don't think along the lines of British reggae or Jamaican reggae or French reggae - its all reggae to me and deserves to be treated on equal terms. If we go back to the 70's and 80's, British reggae was always played alongside Jamaican reggae with pride by British radio and club DJ's.

Djing used to be about educating new music to an audience, a great dubplate used to be a tune you had heard for the first time. Now every sound system has the same dubplates with a different soundsystem name. We need more DJ's that are not afraid to be leaders i.e David Rodigan.

The internet has shrunk the world and now it's just as easy to know what's going on in Jamaica as it is to know what is going on in France or Sweden. UK DJ's need to open their ears and minds and not be so excluding of reggae music outside of Jamaica.

Gentleman from Germany is a European Phenomenon and outselling many Jamaican artists, yet I never hear his music played in the UK. This type of thinking is small minded and doing nothing to help the progression of reggae music in the UK.

In September the UK was sent a blessing in the form of Gappy Ranks with his latest outing Put The Stereo On. I believe this album to be as good as anything Jamaica has produced over the past 10 years and has swung the door wide open for the rest of us to follow through.

Anyone interested in the next installment of Reggae In Da City or getting involved in the movement email donchandler@btinternet.com



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GLEN WASHINGTON



INTERVIEW

By Angus Taylor

Photos by Elia
Falaschi

I wish that a whole lot more artists would actually stand up for clean music. For music that will stay forever and ever

Glen Washington's story is an inspirational one for any artist struggling in the music business. He had his first hit in the late seventies with Rockers A Nuh Crackers but kept doggedly working behind the scenes until he struck again with Kindness For Weakness from second album 'Next To You' in 1998. Like his fellow Clarendon parishioner Freddie McGregor, he played the drums as well as being a singer and has recorded for Studio 1's Coxsone Dodd. And like McGregor and his idol Beres Hammond he sings sweet love songs with a roots sensibility. In 2009 he voiced the critically acclaimed 'Vibes' with one-drop producer of the moment Kemar "Flava" McGregor. Angus Taylor spoke to him after his performance at Rototom Sunsplash 2010 where he was backed by Switzerland's former European Reggae Contest winners The Dubby Conquerors band.

How does it feel to play at Rototom in its new location?

I'm elated! It feels real good. I'm really honoured to be on the first show in this new location and I was wondering about what it would be like but oh I like it! It's good and it's going to get bigger.

You can play the drums as well as sing – does the one help the other?

Yes it helps me as a singer with timing. I can sing anything in any time now and still don't fall off. And at times if I'm recording I do it but what happened is that I played the drums for many years and decided to leave it alone and let somebody else do it because I got more pressing work to do out front! I've got to let the people know what's going on!

Who is your favourite singer from your home parish?

Wow, we got so many good singers from my home parish! We got Freddie McGregor, we got Cocoa Tea, we got Toots from Toots and the Maytals, we got Barrington Levy, we got Carlene Davis...

Everton Blender...

Everton Blender! We got a whole bunch of entertainers from there. So there's too many to mention from my parish of Clarendon! (laughs)

It was kind of a trick question. (laughing)

The Maytones! These are people that I grew up with! A whole bunch of them!



Now a different McGregor we should mention is Kemar Flava McGregor who you recently released the album Vibes with in 2009. How did it feel to be working with one of the hottest one-drop producers right now?

That was a good vibe because Flava is like my brother you know. Aside from music we gelled. We always link up and free up the vibe!

Would you say singers like yourself and Beres are holding the candle for the pure no frills no gimmicks singing style with so many deejays around?

I am really happy about that and I wish that a whole lot more artists would actually stand up for clean music. For music that will stay forever and ever. Because that's how it's supposed to go.

Your career started in the seventies but bloomed late in the nineties. What advantages has that life experience given you?

Well like I said before, nothing happens before the time and I never questioned. I believe in God and I never questioned him in whatever he does. I just follow. Whatever the vibe comes and tells me to do I just follow. Anytime I follow my first vibe I'm always on the right side every time! If I feel I'm supposed to do something, and I'm sitting here and the urge kicks in, I'm going to go and do it. Because if I don't do I'm not going to feel comfortable. I've got to go get it done. That's how I am. And ever since I've been living like that, it's always been right.

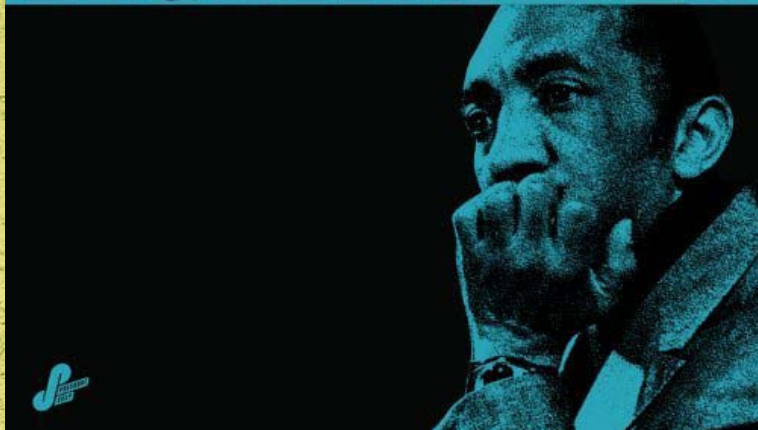
Finally, what advice would you give to young singers coming up based on your own experiences?

Know your craft, love your craft. Practise, practise, practise your art and get it to perfection. And don't do anything you will be ashamed of later on!

DO NOT BRING
NO GUNS

REVIEWS

MUSIC FOR MODS: SOUL & SKA SOUNDS FROM THE SIXTIES

*Voodoo Woman***LAUREL AITKEN****Voodoo Woman by Laurel Aitken**

The UK-based Cuban-Jamaican singer Laurel Aitken was a truly versatile vocalist. From the year 1957 to his death in 2005 he rode mento, ska, rocksteady reggae and dancehall rhythms. In his heyday he could croon pop standards by the Drifters and Elvis Presley, and chat patois about the latest gossip and sound business. He even alternated between social issues and obscene material - sometimes to the same melody (fighting for tenants' rights on *Landlords and Tenants* and then complaining that Pussy Price "gone up").

Nowhere is this versatility more apparent, though, than on Cherry Red subsidiary Pressure Drop's 10th reissue of his back catalogue, 'Voodoo Woman'. It's not really a reggae compilation at all, focusing on the R&B sounds that were all the rage during the "Mod" years following his arrival in the UK.

Taken from a series of mid Sixties 45 releases on the Rio, Rainbow, R&B and Dice labels these opportunistic, danceable grooves wear their influences on their sleeves. The opening title track uses the famous Bo Diddley stomp, while the near instrumental *Last Night* is based on The Mar-Key's hit of the same name. But as well as secular party tunes, Laurel gets spiritual on the shimmying *I Believe* for a bluesy sermon that would have seemed scandalous a decade before. There are also a few pre-ska shuffle boogie cuts, including *You Can't Stop Me From Loving You* and *Don't Play With Fire* and, in the minor key *Looking For My Baby*, some bonafide ska should you miss the Godfather's most celebrated side.

Record Collector scribe (and equal parts soul and reggae expert) Mike Atherton supplies some fascinating sleeve notes to this typically well-packaged release. As an introduction to Aitken's reggae work you'd be better of choosing Pressure Drop's bonus-packed Pama reissue 'The High Priest Of Reggae'. But once you have that, this curious window into the melting pot that was the sixties music scene should follow close behind. **Review by Angus Taylor**

Obtaining records was trickier: there was just one half importer of R&B and his new offshoot, Soul, Transon Imports in Soho's Lisle Street, and that was open only on Saturday mornings, but US servicemen who came to the London clubs at weekends soon learned to bring a box of the latest singles from home with them on such visits if they wanted to make some ready cash.

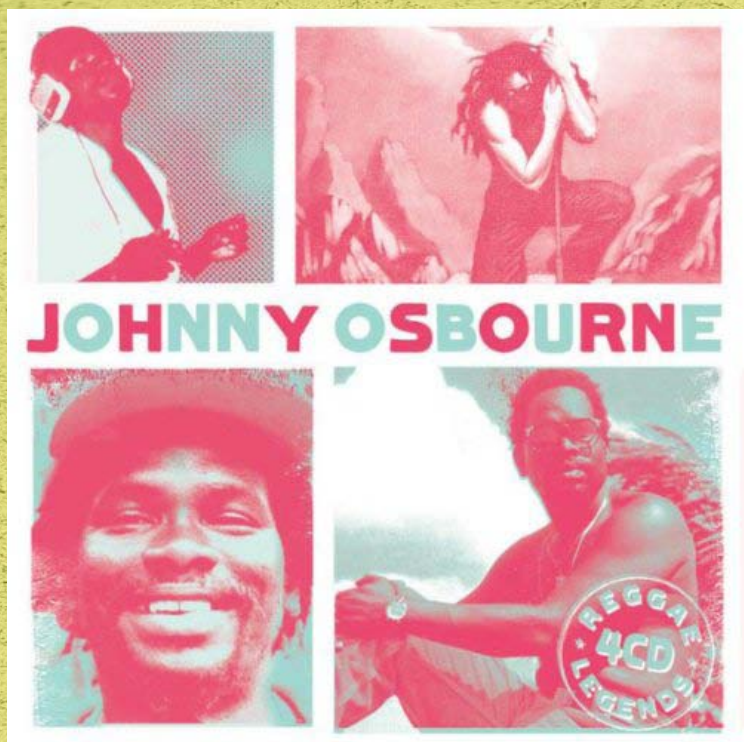
The Mods' desire for exclusive sounds led them towards Blue Beat. Known as Ste in his native Jamaica, this exciting, vibrant music had evolved from US R&B around 1961 but was developing a character of its own. Unless you were black or lived in an area where there was a significant black population, Blue Beat records were hard to find. The major labels after a few flop releases, wouldn't touch it with a barge pole, so the records came out on myriad small labels - Rio, Island, Blue Beat, R&B Dice and more - whose distribution was at best patchy. You could get them in shops in some areas of London, even in some areas of Birmingham and Manchester, but if you lived in Ashby-de-la-Zouch, tough, record shops to such small provincial towns did not stock the discs, and speciality orders only occasionally got through.

But at least there was one authentic Blue Beat singer whom you had a chance of seeing live on stage. Laurel Aitken (you thought you'd forgotten all about him, didn't you?) had moved to England in 1960 and had live links firm in making records for all the companies mentioned above, and more besides. Mods liked to look and to act cool, neat, sharp, hip and smart, so they admired West Indians who seemed to achieve all that without even having to try, and the dapper Laurel fired the bill successfully as well as musically. With his typical announcements incorporating Soul dress tunes and Beat bel ballads into his act, and the Mods lapped it up. To a Mod, having the latest Aitken single as Rio in your collection was as much a fashion statement as your vented jacket, your Vespa scooter or your copy of 'Rude Dough' by the 'Blacks' on US Volt.

So here's a collection of the music that Mods would dance to in the clubs and try to find in the shops. Of course, Laurel Aitken maintained his popularity with UK West Indians, but during the heyday of the Mods, from 1963 to 1966, he reached a new, wider audience.

Time to cut the chatter and spin the platter...





Johnny Osbourne - Reggae Legend

'Reggae Legends' the superb CD box series from Greensleeves, that takes classic artists and highlights 4 of their albums, have recently brought out this fine set from veteran singer Johnny Osbourne. He started off working for Studio One in the late '60s but it wasn't until 1979 with the release of the iconic 'Truths And Rights', a must have for any reggae fan, that he really made it big. Indeed if this hugely popular album had been originally released on Greensleeves then I'm sure it would of featured on this Legends set, but as it wasn't the time has come for 4 of his other great albums to have their chance to shine again.

The first of these is the follow up to 'Truths And Rights', 1980s 'Fally Lover'. No second album syndrome here, ok technically it's his third after having released 'Come Back Darling' with The Sensations but that was way back in 1970, for this is equally as good. It was produced by the legendary Henry 'Junjo' Lawes, with the Roots Radics supplying backing, a classic combination. The album in truth is more a collection of singles, but when those singles are titles like Fally Lover, Man Of Jahoviah and Ice Cream Love, all recorded at Channel One Studios in Kingston you know its gonna be quality all the way..

'Never Stop Fighting' released in 1982 continues with more classy rootsy, dancehall fashioned songs, again produced by Henry 'Junjo' Lawes with the Roots Radics bringing the riddims. This time the album was recorded at two renowned Kingston studios, Channel

One and King Tubby's. The King Tubby connection doesn't just end there as a young Scientist appears as mixing engineer and so subtle dubby tweaks and phrases give extra texture to the sound, which really comes through on songs like Never Stop Fighting, Over 31 Under 21 and the pleading Give A Little Love.

The third CD 'Nightfall' is one of those albums that seems to have been released in various guises as 'In Nah Disco Style' on VP records in the USA and Cha-Cha across Europe in the early '80s and then Majestic Records reprised the album as 'Nightfall Showcase' in the '90s, where it was revamped and extended. The version here though is the original Jamaican release from 1981, on the Jah Guidance label. It saw a break from Lawes on production as Osbourne teamed up with Linval Thompson and carries on with the early eighties dancehall style, with Scientist still twiddling knobs and dials on the mixing board. This makes for what is the heaviest album of the set with bass to the fore and Scientist really coming into his own as he plays with the instrumental parts of the extended versions on the latter 5 songs off the album, with the title tracks deep and dark drum and bass throb pick of the bunch.

The final CD is 1983s 'Water Pumping'; Prince Jammy at the controls now with Scientist still on the mix. The High Times Band supplied the riddims with the prolific Sly and Robbie sharing drum and bass duties with Ben Bow (drums) and Christopher Meredith (Bass). This album unfortunately does not hit the highs of the previous trio, though this doesn't mean it is not without merit. The title track, an adaptation of the Hopeton Lewis' hit Take It Easy was hugely successful and tunes like Fire Down Below, Dance With You, Na Look Nobody, Purify Your Heart and closer Angel In My Arms, on the Life Can Be Easy riddim, first utilized by King Everall and also by Wayne Smith for Cheating Woman, have plenty of solid roots charm.

This box set series is really shaping up to be a fantastic way to collect albums by some of reggae's legends, with this one serving as a firm reminder of what a truly superb artist Johnny was in the early '80s when both he and reggae were most definitely at the top of their games. **Review by Karl Pearson**





Cornerstone by Lloyd Brown

"No bother try fi put me inna no box ya / No bother put me in a singular genre..." ...Sings Lloyd Brown on the intro to his self-released 14th album 'Cornerstone' and we know that, after the crowd-pleasing traditional reggae of previous outing 'For Your Consideration', this will be another eclectic affair like its predecessor 'Brownie Points'. The first track, featuring one Curtis Lynch of Necessary Mayhem, is a typical Brown warning to the haters (it's hard to believe a man who makes such pleasant music has haters) while the second reboots the Impressions' Amen, just in time for Christmas. Neither is straight reggae, and on the first mix of single Hit The Ground Running, Lloyd could even be a cultural Craig David or Robbie Williams - two artists he admires.

But that's just the album's opening blast. We then travel right to the foundation, with Bob Marley inspired roots (No Thank You, a jungle-reggae-party with an army of guests comprising Matic Horns, General Levy, Top Cat, Nereus Joseph and Macka B); nostalgic rocksteady (the Duke Reid based Another Sunday); and the most classical of classical reggae (two utterly perfect covers of Joe Higgs in Come On Home and There's A Reward). In paying homage to the greats of Jamaica's past and Britain's present (check the reggae-hip-hop fusion If Only with venerable mc Rodney P) Lloyd is telling us to open our ears and embrace good music - wherever it's from. Some of the more tradition-minded and fussy reggae fans may be thrown off guard by the sheer range of material and collaborators on display but this is another quality Lloyd Brown album - as if we expected anything less. **Review by Angus Taylor**

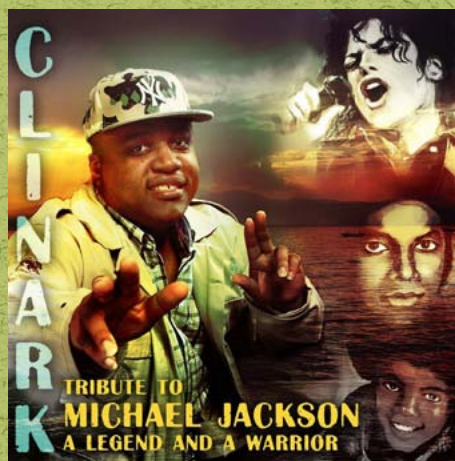
Clinark - Tribute to Michael Jackson, A Legend and a Warrior

"A poignant set straight from the heart."

The death of Michael Jackson in June last year coincided with the inclusion of Tarrus Riley's previously released cover of the American singer's Human Nature on his third album 'Contagious'. But Tarrus wasn't the only reggae artist moved by the end of the self titled "King Of Pop".

Bermudian singer Clinark has just dropped his own 18 piece tribute, distributed by East London's Nurture Projects Music. Like Riley junior, Clinark was planning to pay homage with a song before the tragic event, yet instead his project snowballed into a full blown long-player. Recorded at London's Stingray studios and featuring the legendary rhythm section Mafia & Fluxy, It includes both one-drop and dancehall renditions of smashes such as Heal The World and more obscure tracks like Heartbreak Hotel - delivered in a convincing yet distinctive take on Michael's voice.

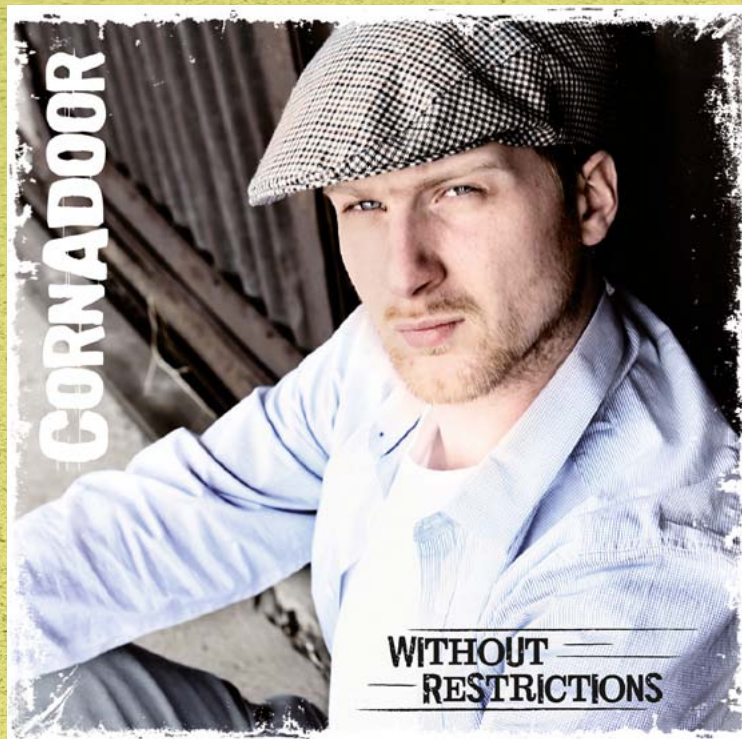
What is interesting about Clinark's interpretations is the way later material - stripped of the panoply of



vocal tics that, according to popular myth, so irritated Quincy Jones - reveals the quality of Jackson's songwriting as never before. And in starting with the protest song They Don't Care About Us, Clinark encourages us to

consider the superstar as a voice of the Black Diaspora rather than the eccentric figure popularized by media reports in his latter years. There's also a duet with British singer Adele Harley (who seems to be popping up everywhere these days) on a remix of I'll Be There, released as a single in 2009 after Michael's death.

As with 'Contagious', if you think "smooth soul" and "pop" are dirty words this album may not do much for you. But as a tribute taken in its intended spirit, this is a surprisingly poignant set whose best moments leave even Tarrus' rendition behind. **Review by Angus Taylor**



Without Restrictions by Cornadoor

"Cornadoor's connection to reggae obviously runs deep, emanating from a heart full of love and appreciation for the music"

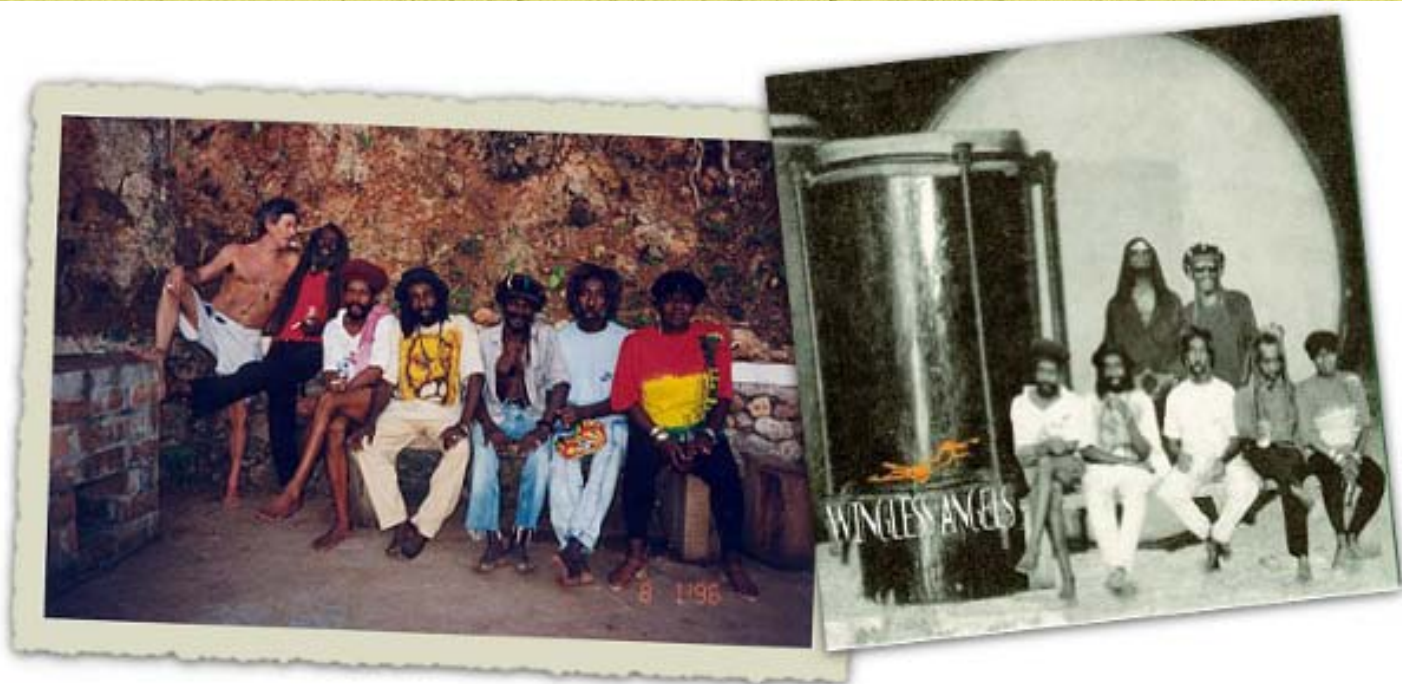
Growing up in Bielefeld, north-west Germany, Cornadoor was introduced to reggae by his father's record collection. His dad also took him to concerts and big festivals when he was still only a child. As a young man, he went to the Caribbean several times, getting to love the Caribbean lifestyle and the local patois. (His name is taken from the patois saying 'throw corn a door'.) After returning from the Caribbean he recorded a couple of demo tracks which left a lasting impression on his current label, Sound Quake. This partnership has been going strong since 2008 with Cornadoor voted 'Best National Newcomer' for 2008 and 2009 by Riddim Magazine. Riddim also noted "All Cornadoor needs now is a nice roots album and next time he'll be mixing it with the big boys. We've now reached that point with Cornadoor's debut album 'Without Restrictions'. It's a record that establishes Cornadoor as a true player in the industry. This is more than a 'nice roots album'. 'Without Restrictions' presents Cornadoor's impression of the world in a very precise and discerning way, allowing the listener to experience a classic roots-reggae album, musically and thematically. Cornadoor employs many of Europe's finest production houses on the record, including House of Riddim, Kingstone Records, Goldcup Records, Bassrunner, and Irievibrations among others. The crew from Sound Quake is credited for 6 of the 17 tracks. 'Without Restrictions' is a quality collection of original, modern-roots riddims.

At the moment, it appears that no one can match the smart sophistication that European producers are using to create their music. The instruments are played, not programmed. The attention to detail is impressive. The riddims are layered and multi-dimensional. This fact makes 'Without Restrictions' an exceedingly good record. Cornadoor's indignation toward government is felt strongly on the better than average tracks Crying, World Inna Crisis, Get Up (Set to Kingstone's Cognition Riddim), and How Long. On the heart-wrenching Ten A Dem, Cornadoor tells a gripping story of the plight of the poor and quickly rushes to their defense with a call for equality. Definitely a stand-out tune! The title track is a 'feel good' tune set to a bubbling riddim that breaks down in places allowing Cornadoor to chat the box in impressive fashion. This is one of those tunes that sounds great on record but will sound absolutely incredible live! Cornadoor's message is one of unification and impartiality. "I wish I could burn my passport and become a world citizen... moving without restriction... Tear my I.D. to pieces and be a free man." The message, though improbable to many, is one that this divided, insular world needs desperately. Traitors sees Cornadoor calling out and rising above the plastic smiles and back stabbing of band-wagon friends that surface at the slightest hint of success. Sound Quake's Bigfinga presents a sweet riddim reminiscent of a Winston 'Niney' Holness production of the 70s or 80s, sparse yet complete. Long Road is a stand-out track that captures the never-give-up mentality that is so necessary considering the struggles that plague us all. Cornadoor's raspy tone flows almost effortlessly over a polished and precise riddim played by Kapten Rod and Jeepstar. From The Day is a tribute from Daddy to his 'likkle treasure'. Cornadoor cheerfully gives thanks for his daughter, the blessing he cherishes most in life. Outta Mi Heart is set to the same riddim as Sizzla's 'Africa Chant'. (You may recall this wicked track from Kalonji that was featured on the 'Still One Drop' compilation from Irievibrations.) Cornadoor rides the riddim beautifully though the song doesn't quite reach the level of Sizzla's. It's an excellent, stand-out track for Cornadoor, nonetheless, closing the album on a very high note. 'Without Restrictions' is a really good album. It is a roots-reggae album, through and through. The music is unreal. The hooks are catchy and well-delivered. Cornadoor's patois comes from a place that is not at all forced or contrived. His connection to reggae obviously runs deep, emanating from a heart full of love and appreciation for the music which fully explains why he was able to produce such a good record. Recommended. **Review by Daddy Matty**

Keith Richards' sublime Wingless Angels

"Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards re-releases a timeless set of traditional nyabinghi songs and chants."

As an experiment, I've been playing the 'Wingless Angels' CDs to everyone who stops by our house for about a week now. As you can imagine, nyabinghi music isn't everyone's cup of tea, and reactions have been mixed. One friend who usually likes reggae offered rather dismissively, 'I think there's something wrong with your stereo. I can't hear anything except for some muffled drumming and some seriously off-key vocals?' Another friend who's been going through a very difficult time listened to the first of the two CDs all the way through and said, 'I feel better, more balanced. Listening to that slowed me down. It's like a great tonic for the soul.' But don't let that description scare you; there's nothing soft or New Agey about this rough and ready set of spirituals.



This collection of traditional songs – with some of the rhythms dating as far back as the 17th century in Uganda – was recorded over the last several years by Keith Richards at his Jamaican home. In 1997, Richards released some of these songs on his own record label as a CD entitled 'Wingless Angels.' The collection not only featured some of the greatest 'spiritual healing' tunes ever performed, but it was also one of the most important roots based compilations – from a musicological perspective – to be released in several years. This new updated and expanded set has a much greater breadth than the original and serves as a fine memorial for Justin Hinds, Locksley Whitlock and Jackie Ellis, three of the musicians who contributed to the original release who have since passed on. Keith Richards has owned a vacation home in Ocho Rios near St. Anne's Bay, Jamaica for many years now. One of the country's traditional rural parishes, St. Anne's is located right in the heart of roots reggae country and is a stone's throw away from the birthplaces of such legendary reggae musicians as Bob Marley and Burning Spear.

Not surprisingly, it didn't take long for the guitarist to meet and begin to play music with many of the local musicians, but rather than seek out the next big name in reggae as he and Mick Jagger did when they helped launch Peter Tosh's career as a solo artist in the late nineteen seventies, Richards found himself drawn to the deeply spiritual percussion based world of the nyabinghi chant.

In essence, Nyabinghi – a word that means either 'black victory' or 'she who possesses all things' in ancient Ugandan – is a trance inducing percussive musical form designed to bring the listener and the musician closer to God and the centre of the universe. The antithesis of modern production, the sounds Richards has recorded could not be more open and spare. Rhythms are stripped down to their essentials with conga, shaker and akete repeating drum providing the musical backdrop to the singers' invocations. The slight interventions of Richard's droning electric guitar are infrequent and never distracting; rather they illustrate his deep understanding and empathy for the music.

He resists any temptation to lay down a solo on top of a subtle harmony or overlap the rhythms with string based melodies. Instead, through careful listening and the patience born of ganja sessions that begin at dawn and carry on around the clock, he has captured the essence of a music that is as old as humanity. Who would have thought that this gangly old rock and roll pirate would have had it in him to have recorded the most rootsy set of songs captured on tape since the Lomaxes ventured into the deep south to record the music of migrant workers in the nineteen thirties? I'd go as far as to say – and you can accuse me of any heresy you'd like here – that the simple fact that Richards has released these songs for everyone to hear equals any other contribution he has hitherto made to the world's music.

Wade Davis, the explorer in residence for the National Geographic Society, recently remarked that one of the tragedies of the modern world is that currently one language or dialect disappears from the planet every single week. As elders from traditional cultures die, so do their customs and linguistic knowledge. Seen in this light, 'The Wingless Angels' is a peerless work of cultural preservation that honours the ancient percussive traditions the late Justin Hinds, Jackie Ellis, and Locksley Whitlock embodied and communicated in their music. While it's become a cliché to point out the connections between African and new world musical forms like the blues and jazz, it wouldn't be much of a stretch to say that by listening carefully to the songs on 'Wingless Angels' one can hear the seeds of most of the music you've ever heard on the radio.



So, this music is 'good for you', but is it any good? As someone who has suffered through countless field recordings of dry traditional song forms recorded out of context by someone with a tin ear, I'm the first person to be wary of projects like this. Rest assured. Keith Richards' approach to these songs embodies a perfect balance between joy and respect, and he never lets the cultural value of these recordings overshadow the sheer sublime qualities of the music itself. The versions of We Shall Overcome, Rivers of Babylon, Roll Jordan Roll and Morning Train are beautiful, uplifting and all encompassing.

To let these songs into your heart is to allow time to slow down, way down and get in touch with a world of sound that is at once familiar and completely new. This record probably won't take the commercial world by storm, and I'm not expecting to hear about any emerging nyabingi movements within mainstream western society, but those with open ears will marvel at the power of simple rhythms created by drums, shakers, and voices in approximate harmony to penetrate deep into the soul and release a world of trouble and care. These are vanishing sounds, and we all owe Keith Richards a profound debt for capturing this music before it's too late. Every fan of roots music owes it to him or herself to at least give this one a listen. This is as good as music gets.

Review by Doug Heselgrave

Reggae Knights by Israel Vibration

"An interesting, mellow and diverse listen."

As is so often the case in reggae, schisms between foundation groups can result in various members fighting for our attention. For just as former Israel Vibration lead singer Apple Gabriel has exploded back onto the scene with his powerful new album 'Teach Them Right' (for Dutch labels JahSolidRock and Not So Easy At All Productions), Cecil "Skelly" Spence and Lacelle "Wiss" Bulgin, the two remaining constituents of the harmony trio, have released their own latest, bearing the grand title 'Reggae Knights'.

The release comes via the French conglomerate Mediacom, who got the Congos back together with Lee Perry for the mixed quality collaboration 'Back In The Black Ark'. Certainly, like the Congos effort, and in contrast to Apple's tense, visceral if rather traditional roots record, this album contains a lot of different musical directions. There's a laid-back summery recut of their debut recording Bad Intention; a banjo plucking mento number in the humorous yet patriotic ode to Jamaica, Cantankerous; and even a tub-thumping dancehall piece called Original Gangster - where the disparity between the hazy vocals and hard beats is an intriguing if not entirely successful melange.



Judging by the gentle pop ballad New York City, while Apple has been living a tough life in Atlanta, Skelly and Wiss have been leading a more leisurely existence in their adopted US home.

Musicians include members of the Roots Radics, Robbie Shakespeare, Dean Frazer and Nambo Robinson, and like Burning Spear's 2009 Grammy winner 'Jah Is Real' (which used the same engineer, Christopher Daley) this record has a good-time boogie demeanour and a fairly soft MOR sound. But while it might lack the unity and diamond-edged social commentary of Apple's album, this is something of a grower - from a more Jamaican perspective than the comparatively Eurocentric 'Teach Them Right'. An interesting, mellow and diverse listen: with Cantankerous and the deep roots tracks Dig Up The Ground, If You Do Bad, Old Town and Poor and Humble standing out above the rest.

Review by Angus Taylor



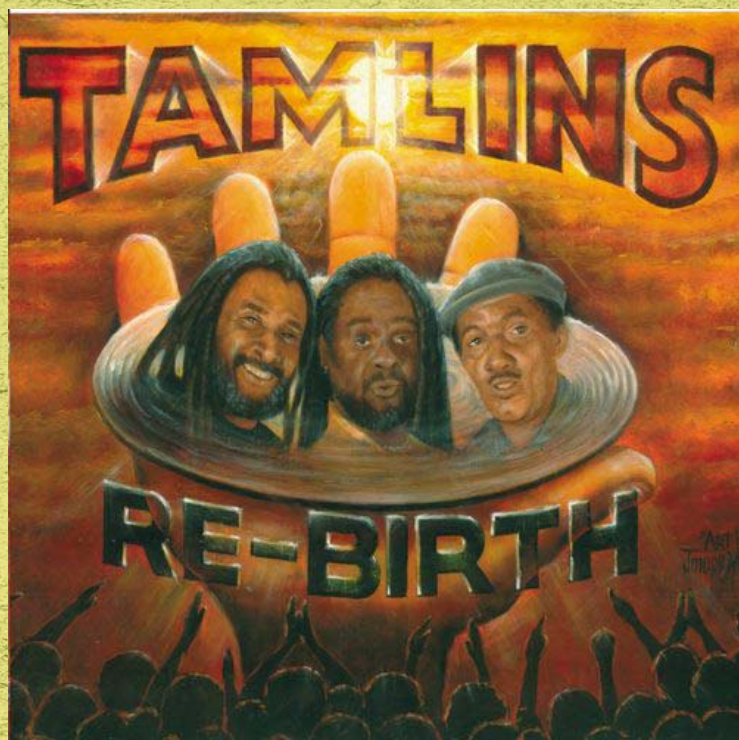
Re-Birth by The Tamlins

"The Tamlins are born again."

You can't say that the reggae world has been spoiled with sweet harmony vocal trios the last twenty years or so. They had their heydays in the 60's and 70's and since the glory days of Culture, Mighty Diamonds and Gladiators nearly no new groups have emerged.

That's why it's such a blessing to listen to the 'Re-Birth', the new album from Derrick Lara, Carlton Smith and Sylvanus "Junior" Moore, better known as The Tamlins.

This outfit began recording in the mid 70's and have had some well-known tunes, mainly covers such as Smiling Faces and the wicked Sly & Robbie production Baltimore. Sly & Robbie are also present on 'Re-Birth'. Not in persons, but in production style. Alborosie and Clifton "Specialist" Dillon have managed to create a sound that's very reminiscent of early 80's Sly & Robbie. The production is bubbling, organic and vital. It's fun to listen to. Their voices and harmonies are as good as in their prime. Just listen to the Send Them Come, on the Full Up riddim, or the bouncy Delano Stewart cover Tell Me Baby. Included are also two duets, a reworking of Baltimore with Alborosie himself, and the pleading Who Are Leading Us, with an – for me – unknown singer called Spiritual. Both work really well since Alborosie's and Spiritual's rugged voices contrasts nicely to the beautiful harmonies. The Tamlins albums and singles from the 70's are today quite hard to find. This great new set shows that they're in desperate need of a reissue program or anthology. **Review by Erik Magni**





Jahdan Blakkamoore - *Babylon Nightmare*

"An ambitious concept carried off."

The first thing we hear at the start of Guyanese New Yorker Jahdan Blakkamoore's second long-player is a sample of Ras Michael's portentous No Hoppers, refashioned in a hip-hop-meets-reggae fusion by Lustre Kings' Andrew "Moon" Bain and I Grade's Laurent "Tippy" Alfred. Immediately we know this is an album that looks forwards, backwards and in all directions to make its point.

That point is often a serious one. 'Babylon Nightmare' is a concept album targeting what its author sees as Western Society's self-made confusion. Jahdan is a voluminous reader and it shows in a series of free flowing evocative images, frequently delivered in a rapidly spat rapper-deejay style. Yet he is also both an earthy, soulful singer and an occasional playful mimic. For self-deprecating love song Dim View of the World he invokes Lutan Fyah, before briefly channelling falsetto Sizzla and Pressure (All Over The World) and even a touch of Capleton (Red Hot).

The production - from Lustre King's co-founder Bain, Tippy and long-time Lustre collaborator Nick Fantastic - is beautiful rather than visceral. Live instrument sounds (clavinet, vibraphone, and some of the nicest horns you'll ever hear) co-exist with the aforementioned foundation samples - check the use of Eek-A-Mouse's Ghetto Living in the unsurprisingly titled Down In The Ghetto. But an artist with as wide a musical scope as Jahdan was never going to employ one production team. Dean Pond's Pura Vida rhythm used on Pressure's Pure Life backs Songs of Love, while Mountains To Climb on Bobby Konders' now immortal Kingdom base rivals Chezidek's Call Pon Dem and Collie Buddz' Let Me Know.

European commentators as weighty as Rodigan has complained of hip hop affecting the sound of reggae. Yet whether you agree with them or not, what the US based Lustre Kings and Jahdan have done here is not the lazy or desperate trend following of which some Jamaicans are accused, but a carefully considered distillation of the influences around them. Earlier this year Nas and Junior Gong created a truly international work that fused ancient and modern, urban and rural sounds and ideals. This feels like chapter two.

Review by Angus Taylor





ARTICLES



Is reggae dying a slow death?

By Davina Hamilton

ONCE A popular music genre, particularly during the late 1960s and 70s when it found favour amongst the white working class, reggae music has seen a rapid decline in popularity in Britain.

Every Bodies MusicThe upcoming closure of record shop Every Bodies Music (formerly known as Body Music) - the famed store in Tottenham, north London, best known for its extensive collection of reggae music - has sparked concern amongst reggae enthusiasts, while the decline in the music's sales is further indication that the genre which began in Jamaica is suffering.

"Satellite television and Internet communication has had a dramatic effect on the type of music that's being made in Jamaica," says veteran reggae DJ David Rodigan. "Producers out there are hearing music from America and thinking that they can create the next Usher or Ne-Yo record. As a result, very little reggae is being made by young producers in Jamaica."

"There's also no longer any reggae industry the way there was before, in terms of CD manufacturing and 12-inch singles; all that is more or less gone. Dynamic Studios [in Jamaica] was one of the biggest reggae distributors and they closed down. I heard they even melted all the vinyl they had in their storerooms."

"Record sales are really poor and record shops are finding it hard to survive as a result. [Former west London record shop] Dub Vendor is now a café at the front and a small record store at the back."

"We're now at the point where some artists are releasing their music for free. Tanya Stephens put her last album out on the Internet, and it was available via [German magazine] Riddim as a free supplement."

Fitzroy Sterling, director of Every Bodies Music confirms that poor sales have contributed to the store's forthcoming closure.

"We have seen a steady decline in sales over the last five years and it's at rock bottom at the present moment," he says. "With new technology, the younger kids can download the music they want and the older folks have got enough music already. As a result, people just aren't buying music. That's what's led to the current situation with the store, though we won't be closing for now."

Reggae journalist John Masouri says that the sales figures for recent reggae releases make "grim reading."

"The last SoundScan figures I saw were for July/August. Damian Marley and Nas [with their collaborative album Distant Relatives] were way out front with around 120,000 sales, while Busy Signal sold just 400 copies of his last CD and Gyptian sold 12,000 - and that was with help from a US Billboard hit."

Emerging British reggae artist Solomon, son of Aswad star Drummie Zeb, feels the genre needs to evolve.

"I think people feel that in order for reggae to be authentic, it needs to sound like it was made at Studio One 20 years ago," he says. "I think that's rubbish. Hip hop has changed, r'n'b has changed, and even dancehall has changed, but reggae, to me, is stuck in this old sound. I think that's part of reggae's problem - it's not evolving."

But while the statistics might not look promising, some feel the music is more popular than ever. Reggae star Damian Marley says: "Traditionally, reggae music isn't a music that sells a lot of copies in terms of CDs, but live shows have been the source for most reggae artists' revenue. And now that the music industry in general is going back to that live music element, it's a great time for reggae because we already have a head start."

Journalist Chris Salewicz agrees. The acclaimed author of Bob Marley: The Untold Story and last year's Keep on Running: The Story of Island Records feels that reggae is in a good place.

"What is interesting is that although reggae shops may be closing in the UK and Europe, reggae has never been more popular. A few weeks ago I went to the Rototom reggae festival near Valencia, a phenomenal event that had over 130,000 people attend over the course of eight days. Sometimes I feel that because reggae first broke out in the UK, people here have become tired and blasé about it."

"However, reggae rhythms and dub effects are omnipresent in other artists' tunes, and in TV and radio ads. I think reggae has become so much of the mainstream in the UK that we hardly notice its existence."

Reggae Grammy is a Joke

by Erik Magni

The reggae category was introduced in 1984 and the first winner was Anthem from Black Uhuru. Since then, several siblings in the Marley family have been awarded. Stephen Marley two times for his mediocre Mind Control (2009, 2007) and Damian Marley for his Welcome to Jamrock (2005) and Halfway Tree (2001). Ziggy Marley has also been awarded several times, most recently with Love is My Religion released in 2006.

That's why I thought Distant Relatives from Nas & Damian Marley was a given nominee. But no. Instead, this year's list consists of six albums by a strange bunch, namely Lee Perry, Sly & Robbie (with two albums), Andrew Tosh, the late Gregory Isaacs and the imprisoned Buju Banton.

Weirdest on the list is Lee Perry and his Revelation set. This is a very poor album and I guess the jury just wants to give him some kind of lifetime achievement award.

I understand if the jury doesn't find and appreciate gems such as Judgement Time by Chezidek or United States of Africa by Luciano. But, it missed out on decent albums from very well-known artists such as Busy Signal and Gyp-tian. With Hold You, Gyp-tian scored one of the biggest reggae hits in recent years, and it's a mystery why his album wasn't nominated.

And if the jury wants to premier nostalgia and veterans, they should've nominated Clinton Fearon or Earl Zero.

The only great album that has won the Reggae Grammy is Jah is Real (2008) from Burning Spear. The jury needs to scrutinize themselves and come up with some real nominees for next year. Now the reggae world is just laughing at them.

Meet Jah Turban!

By Ras Achis

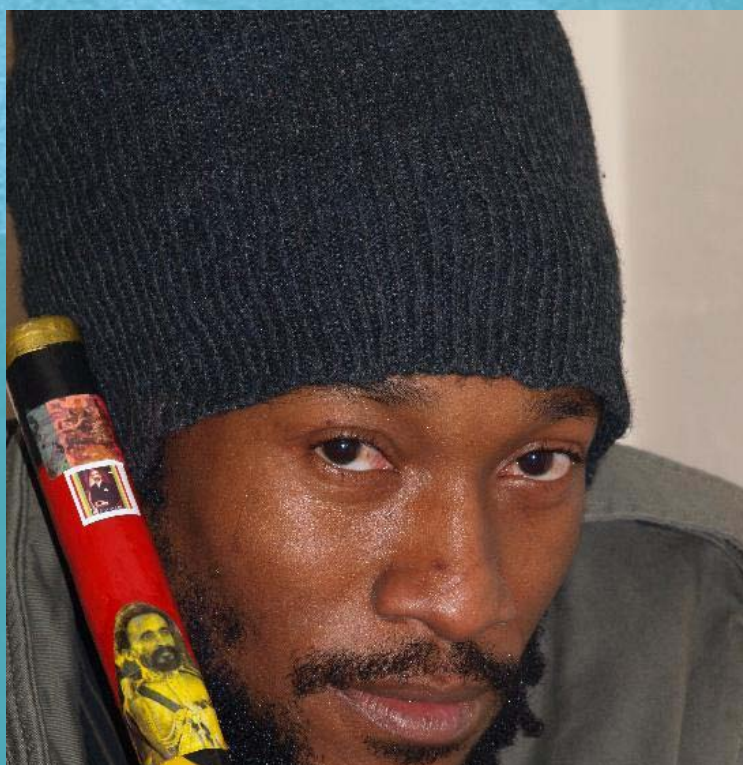
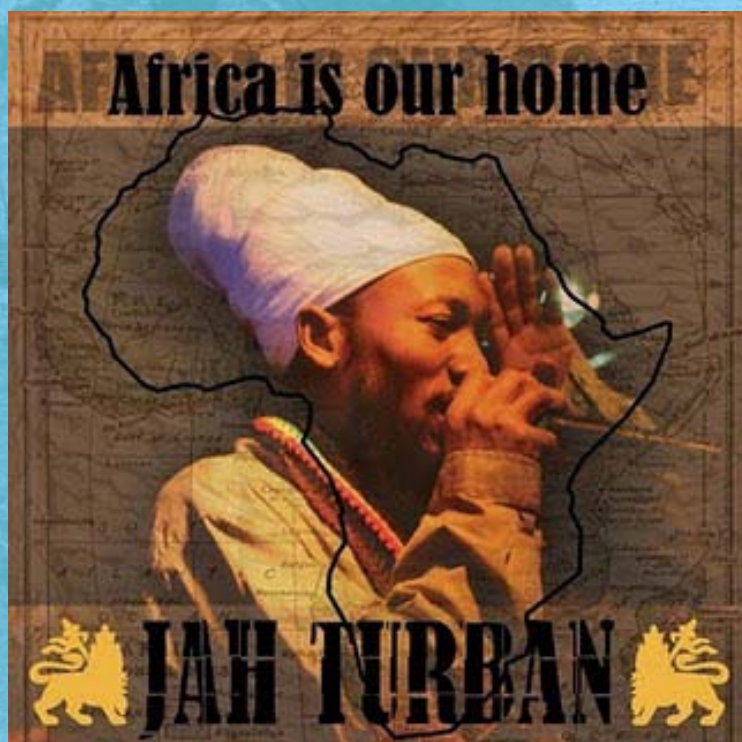
Unlike several of its closest neighbours such as Germany, the Netherlands and the UK, Denmark isn't exactly known as being a European hotbed for Reggae music and it never has been. This is so despite the fact that there has been a significant Danish Reggae artist, the late Natasja Saad, whose death in mid-2007 certainly affected the Reggae scene in Denmark, at least internationally. Thankfully, however, as one might imagine she may've hoped, the country's fascination with the most beautiful music that Earth has to offer did not end with the passing of its brightest star. Instead there have been Danish artists such as Natasja's good friend Karen Mukupa, Wendy Wonder and others who have furthered their names internationally and with them, the Danish Reggae scene, as well as a significant presence from outside artists. By far one of the

most crucial and compelling of the non-Danish artists to have made it on that scene is also one of the most interesting as it is a Jamaican in the form of the wicked Spanish Town born Jah Turban who has not only made a name for himself amongst Reggae fans in Denmark, but is now starting to push his music globally as well.

It is a very straight forward and 'no frills' type of style and talent which has drawn comparisons from Jah Turban to another, more popular, native of Spanish Town, Lutan Fyah. However, where it seems that Turban manages to distinguish himself from the ever growing pack of talented modern Roots Reggae chanters is with his overall passion and obvious commitment to what he is saying. Jah Turban That is definitely not to say that you won't find that amongst his peers - You most certainly will - However, in Jah Turban's case, it appears to be the application of that passion and that commitment which is a great chunk of his central talent. This man not only clearly believes in what he sings, but what he sings appears to be a part of him.

From the outside looking in, this has worked for him greatly within Denmark's Reggae scene as Jah Turban has appeared on releases and riddims from some of the biggest Danish Reggae labels. Earlier this year, his big herbalist tune, Pass Me The Ganja was on the stacked Alis Riddim from Juicy Halftone [which featured both Wendy Wonder and Karen Mukupa, as well as Jamaican veterans Mykal Rose and King Kong] and he's also recorded for Danish labels such as Burton Records and even Food Palace Music, the label responsible for the big Colliemonster Riddim, which featured the likes of Reggae and Dancehall superstars Sizzla Kalonji, Turbulence and even Vybz Kartel.





Still, perhaps the biggest moment for Jah Turban has come via S.J.P. Records which not only birthed the hit tune *Babylon Doom*, but is also behind the project which is surely going to be introducing this fantastic artist to more and more fans worldwide, his debut EP set, *'Africa Is Our Home'*. The release features six very strong selections - Besides the title track and the aforementioned *Babylon Doom*, there is *Mystic of Jah*, *Show Some Love*, *My Empress* and the dazzling *Move Vampire*.

While Jamaican artists heading off to Europe to do the lion's share of their work is certainly nothing new and is something which has been going on for decades at this point, it still seems rather odd than an artist as talented and current [in terms of his age] would not only head off to Europe, but end up in Denmark particularly. On the other hand, if the early returns on the quality of his music are any indication [and they are], apparently Jah Turban has made the proper choice and there's nothing preventing him from branching out one day and not only working with the best European producers outside of Denmark, but home in the Caribbean as well, which would be a guaranteed joy to hear.

Regardless of where his travels are to likely to take Jah Turban, his musical journey will be very interesting to see [and hear] and particularly should he continue on working in Denmark. Natasja and others are evidence that the country can produce top flight Reggae talents. Jah Turban's talent may just prove to be the greatest example that it can develop it and do so after Natasja said goodbye.



PHOTOS

Summer Of Rootz by Lee Abel

Check these photos of Rootz Underground several performances in California since this summer.

The best reggae music merges infectious rhythm with poignant lyrics, our consciousness rising while our hips sway, meditation and aerobics all wrapped in one. When you add a tight band whose members clearly enjoy playing together and a charismatic high jumping, sweet smiling lead vocalist, you have discovered Rootz Underground.

Northern California was treated to several dynamic performances by the Jamaican band from June to October, including 3 large festivals (Sierra Nevada World Music Festival, Reggae on the River, and Earth Dance) and many packed clubs up and down the coast.

Rootz Underground's sound is an outgrowth of the classic roots rock reggae tradition, but thoroughly modern. The songs on their two studio albums, 'Movement' and 'Gravity', are political, spiritual, romantic, and always poetic.

The seeds of Rootz Underground were sown in 2000 among childhood friends and were cultivated to include the current band members: Stevie "G" Newland (lead vocals), Charles Lazarus (lead guitar), Jeffrey Moss (rhythm guitar), Colin Young (base), Paul (SCUBI) Smith (keyboards), and Leon (SonSon) Campbell (drums).



Rootz Underground Berkeley



Rootz Underground Reggae On The River





SNWMF night



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San Francisco



Horace Andy and Scientist in Paris by Franck Blanquin

Check these photos from Horace Andy in Paris accompanied by Scientist!

Horace Andy played at Elysee Montmartre in Paris on November 30. He was backed by The Homegrown Band, with Guillaume 'Stepper' Briard on saxophone and Jérémie 'Bim' Dessus on guitar while support was provided by legendary sound engineer Scientist.



Red Strip Bold 2010 by Steve James

I Octane, Tarrus Riley, Konshens, Lady Saw, Baby Cham, Bounty Killer and Vybz Kartel played live in New Kingston, Jamaica on December 12.

New Kingston came alive with Red Stripe Bold holding its free block concert last Sunday from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. Knutsford Boulevard was jam packed with thousands of patrons who came out to see their favorite artistes and they were not disappointed as they were all treated to complimentary Red Stripe beer throughout the event. Hosted by the lovely Kiki and DJ Jazzy T, the audience was treated to musical selections from Renaissance, Copper Shot and ZJ Liquid.

I Octane was the first act to perform and treated the audience to a number of his current hits such as Mama You Alone, Best From West and Lose A Friend. Though short, his fifteen minute stint was packed with energy and had the crowd all worked up for the next act.

Tarrus Riley followed and immediately went into high gear. He delivered songs like Protect The People, Human Nature and called on stage surprise act Konshens to do Good Girls Gone Bad. The light rain which began could not dampen the spirit of the crowd as thousands stood still.

Lady Saw hit the stage singing a number of her past and current hits including Its Raining, Sycamore Tree and others. Dressed in heels and wig to match she took them off in the middle of her performance declaring that age is just a number and she is still going strong.

Baby Cham who has not been performing in Jamaica in recent times thrilled the crowd with his vast catalogue of dancehall selections complemented by his awesome dance moves. The audience shifted in frenzy when he invited his long time friend Bounty Killa to do their hit Another Level and other hits.

The show was brought to closure by Vybz Kartel and his protégés Pop Caan and Shawn Storm.





Half Way Tree Live by Steve James

King Stur Gav Sound System at Half Way Tree Live on Wednesday with Ken Boothe, U-Roy, Queen Ifrica, Tony Rebel, General Trees, Beres Hammond and more.

Wednesday 15th December saw the first staging of Half Way Tree Live which was held at Mandela Park in the centre of Half Way Tree.

Each theme night the event showcased the different upcoming talents in our music, arts and entertainment. Comedy night saw Lovindeer telling stories to the young children and a host of comedian doing their 15 minutes stint.

The event including upcoming young talent from the Edna Manley School of Arts and even a rock band paying popular reggae hits. Vintage night pulled the most crowd as it featured the likes of Ken Boothe, General Trees, Little Twitch and U Roy's sound system, Stur Gav Sound selecting some classic hits.

Among the surprise acts that had the audience fully entertained were Queen Ifrica, Tony Rebel, veteran DJ Ranking Trevor and Dennis Alcapone who was visiting from the UK.

The crowd which included a large contingent of Brazilians students were well entertained. The next staging of Half Way Tree Live is scheduled for March 2011.





UNITED MAGAZINE REGGAE

Artists - News - Articles
Forum - Videos - Photos - Music

United Reggae is an online magazine created in October 2007 and dedicated to reggae music. It has the intention of offering a real international platform of information on this rich and healthy music. Our aim is to promote and spread the inspiring and healing vibrations of Reggae music and culture.

United we stand, Divided we fall... join us!

Conception, design and creation

Xavier Simacourbe & Camille Monchicourt

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Cover photography by Franck Blanquin