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NEWS 

The Rise Of Dancehall Culture In Pictures

A new website has just opened dedicated to the works of photographer and author Beth Lesser.

Beth along with her partner David Kingston first got involved with Reggae music and its culture when they started a fanzine called 'Live Good Today', for Augustus Pablo's organization Rockers International in 1980. The magazine grew and eventually became 'Reggae Quarterly'. As part of Beth's duties she took hundreds of photographs that captured the rise of Dancehall Culture.

Many of these pictures are now available to view at www.bethlesser.com where you'll find the artists like Gregory Isaacs, Eek a Mouse, Tenor Saw pictured in the streets, Sly Dunbar, Jah Thomas and Bunny Tom Tom at work in the studio, or in the case of Micheal Palmer and U Roy giving a live performance. Many of her photographs have also been used by major reggae companies for album covers, like on VP's recent 'Henry Junjo Lawes Volcano Eruption Anthology' plus gracing the covers of books and magazines, Reggae Explosion, Natty Dread, Reggae Vibes and more from all over the world. In addition to her photography she has also written books and was the first to write a biography on the producer "King Jammy" and the book depicting dancehall's story from its roots to its heights, "Dancehall, the Story of Jamaican Dancehall Culture" which was accompanied by the Soul Jazz Records album of the same name.

The site is well worth a look as there are some fascinating pictures to be seen and gives people a rare opportunity to dive directly in to the Jamaica of the 1980's for a feel of its fashions and colourful nature of the time.



Sadiki produces Monty Morris

Henry "Sadiki" Buckley Junior has been a busy renaissance man lately. As well as releasing two albums, the lovers rock set Lifeline and the Delly Ranks combo Fi Di Dancehall he's also been in the producer's chair - working on a new project.

That project is one other than the first full length album for foundation ska veteran Eric "Monty" Morris. It's titled The Living Legends Collection - Eric Monty Morris and comprises reworkings of classic Morris recordings such as "Penny Reel," "Sammy Dead," "Strongman Sampson," and "Oil in My Lamp". The first single, released today is a recut of Morris' Into My Beautiful Garden, which you can sample here. Buckley recorded, mixed and produced Morris (who, wearing yet another hat, Sadiki manages). Residing for much of his career in the USA where ska is viewed by the young as a homegrown invention Sadiki is very keen to bring back the beat as a Jamaican concern. "My hope for this release is that it helps to not only kick-start the fourth wave of the Ska music genre, but that it also helps to put some of the spotlight back upon traditional Ska music." 'The Living Legends Collection' - Eric Monty Morris is out on 29th March 2011.

Buju Banton Found Guilty

The news Buju Banton fans have been dreading has come to pass. A jury has found Buju Banton on three charges at the Sam M Gibbons Federal Court in Tampa, Florida.

The charges are:

- conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute five or more kilogrammes of cocaine
- possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug-trafficking offence
- using the wires to facilitate a drug-trafficking offence.

He was acquitted of attempted possession with the intent to distribute cocaine.

According to the Jamaica Observer, who have reported on location throughout both this trial and the previous mistrial, "Many of the artist's supporters left the courtroom crying. He has been detained and has had his bail revoked."

Buju's attorney David Oscar Markus is intending to appeal the verdict.

Free United Reggae iPhone app

United Reggae has just launched its iPhone app so you can read, listen to and watch United Reggae content on your mobile!

It features: Weekly news with audio samples / Interviews, reviews and reports on reggae music and culture / New reggae albums new releases / New videos / The monthly PDF version of United Reggae.

The app can be downloaded from iPhone App Store for free by searching for "United Reggae" or direct on itunes. It is also compatible with iPad and iPod touch and will soon be available on other phone platforms such as Google Android, Nokia OVI and Blackberry.

The Hills Man Riddim by Zion Gate Music

After the tough stepper Determination Rock riddim released last August, French label Zion Gate is back with a brand new roots & culture release called the Hills Man riddim.

The team have voiced veteran artists such as Vivian Jones and Danny Red, singjays Solo Banton, Ras Mac Bean, Anthony Que, Lorenzo, Anthony John and French singer Nas-sadjah. Stricly conscious music out soon on three 12". Note that the first 12" will be available in one month, second one month later and the third in two months.



London International Ska Festival 2011

Last year we reported on how London will be hosting an international ska festival from the 21st to 24th April 2011 at the Clapham grand theatre, 21-25 St John's Hill, Clapham Junction, London.

The full line up and what artist will be appearing when has now been announced and with over 30 bands and DJs from 11 countries performing and spinning some of the finest global ska talent from it's roots in America rhythm and blues, to the Jamaican originators and the progression into rocksteady & reggae, through 2 tone and right up-to-date with 21st century ska sounds at the event there is bound to be something for everyone. Each nights show starts a 7pm and runs through to 3am, with a club night after the bands have finished, except for Sunday which will finish at 2am.

To get things under way on the Thursday Mr Rocksteady himself Ken Boothe is to headline, while also on the bill that evening are the grammy nominated James Hunter, Italian combo Giuliano Palma & the Bluebeaters plus Maroon Town, who will be promoting their soon to be released new album 'Urban Myths'.

Friday night will see another of the original big names in Jamaican music as Dave & Ansell Collins reunite for the first time since the 1970's. Support is supplied by the suitably named Trojans, The Loafers and Hotknives, who both appeared at the first London Ska Festival, with European flavourings being added that evening by Belgium's The Caroloregians, Skaos from Germany and representing France Les Ejectes.

Saturday is the turn of the (English) Beat starring Dave Wakeling. The Beat were one of the 2-Tone era's biggest bands with hits including 'Mirror In The Bathroom', 'Too Nice To Talk To' and 'Hands Off She's Mine'.

Also on the bill are Dub Pistols, Intensified, Napoleon Solo, The Amphetameanies and Do The Dog's Jimmy The Squirrel.

Bringing things to a close on the Sunday are one of Jamaica's best loved male/female duo's Bob Andy & Marcia Griffiths, plus all the way from Japan The Ska Flames, Bim Skala Bim from the USA, and for the UK The Sidewalk Doctors and Cartoon Violence.

DJ line up is just as striking with on the opening night Rhoda Dakar (The Bodysnatchers/Special AKA) & Takeshi Okawa (Ska Flames) followed by a Club night of Tommy Rock-A-Shacka meets Clive Chin (Randys). Friday has DJs Jim Cox & Greedy G, with the Club night catered for by Gaz Mayall (Gazs Rockin Blues). On Saturday it's DJ Felix Hall plus at the controls for Club night are Lynval Golding (The Specials) & Wrongtom's Ska Revue. Finally Sunday has ex Radio 2 and huge 60's ska fan Mark Lamarr with The Tighten Up Crew ft. Champion MC while the closing Club night is played out by Dub Vendor All-stars with Papa Face & Oxman.

There are some big names on show and each night has the promise of being full of great entertainment, which organisers hope will lead to this becoming an annual event. So if you want to be a part of this dawning of a new era visit www.londoninternationalskafestival.co.uk for more info & ticket availability.

Amsterdam Reggae Festival 2011 - Winter Edition

Young and enterprising Dutch promoters 1st priority have announced that they are to re-stage one of the biggest European indoor reggae festivals, the Amsterdam reggae Festival on February 12, 2011 in the Heineken Music Hall.

Over The past two years the festival has

proved to be a great success with both events selling out and with a confirmed list of new reggae and dancehall acts such as Capleton,

Red Rat, Jah Cure, Mavado, KaliBwoy, Punky Donch and Mr. Vegas appearing on the night this one looks bound to be the same. Red Rat, Jah Cure, Mavado, KaliBwoy, Punky Donch and Mr. Vegas appearing on the night this one looks bound to be the same.

Tickets prices start from €45 and doors open at 18:00 with the show getting underway at 19:00.

For more details visit www.1stpriority.nl



Initial Artists Announced for the Sierra Nevada World Music Festival

The Sierra Nevada World Music Festival is Northern California's premier roots, reggae



and world music festival and is taking place this year between June 17th -19th at the Mendocino County Fairgrounds located in Boonville.

Organizers have just started to announce the names of the acts that will be appearing and the world of reggae looks to be strongly represented with renowned artists Steel Pulse, Toots & The Maytals, Horace Andy and Pablo Moses already confirmed. As well as these popular stalwarts the newer generation will be weighing in with the conscious dancehall sensation I-Octane plus one of the hottest names at the moment Romain Virgo, whose self titled debut was one of the albums of last year.

Along with these perhaps better known acts there will also be performances by some lesser known, but none the less exciting reggae protagonists such as Santa Barbara's top Cali-Reggae scene act Rebelution, Bermudan Collye Buddz, whose singjay style will be backed by The New Kingston Band, St. Lucia's Taj Weekes & Adowa and Southern Oregon's intergalactic reggae revolutionaries Indubious.

On the world music front artists will include Kora, a 5 piece Mori band from Aotearoa (New Zealand). Four of the band are brothers, and they will be bringing to the event their interesting brand of kiwi dub. From the Punjab region of northern India, by way of Santa Cruz, comes the vibrant sounds of Rupa & The April Fishes who combine Argentinean tango, Gypsy swing, American folk and Latin cumbias with Indian ragas.

The Original Itals Reunited

Out of Savana La Mar, Jamaica, the mighty Itals - Keith Porter, Ronnie Davis and Lloyd Ricketts - will reunite for the first time in over 20 years to tour the U.S. Known for their tight harmonies and uplifting songs, these reggae ambassadors have been touring strongly since the early eighties without Lloyd, who was unable to obtain a visa until now. After many years on the road, the Itals are living examples of the 'Rasta Philosophy' that brought them a Grammy nomination in 1987.



The Itals continue to champion the roots reggae sound they helped to create, beginning with Ina Dis Ya Time, one of the most enduring blueprints in Jamaica's musical history. The Itals are recognized as one of reggae's premier harmony trios, garnering international recognition that endures to this day. The idyllic seaside parish of Westmorland greatly influenced their laid-back singing style, and the righteous outlook on life often described in the Itals' music. In contrast to the violence and sexism that runs through much of dancehall's more recent tunes, the Itals' sound remains focused on positivity, love and harmony.

Kenyatta Hill's Tribute To Culture

On August 19, 2006 the Reggae music worldwide community lost one of its pillars when the great Joseph Hill of Culture made his transition. Culture, one of the greatest and

most respected groups in the history of Reggae, however, did not pass with him and instead, Hill's son, Kenyatta Hill took over fronting the group in his late Father's absence. In late 2007, the album 'Pass The Torch' was released which featured both elder and younger Hill on vocals and now things are taking a rather large and prominent step forward as Kenyatta Hill flies solo on 'Live On: Tribute To Culture' which is scheduled to be released on February 8 across the globe.

The album features Kenyatta Hill singing some of the great Culture songs from through the years such as International Herb, Two Sevens Clash, Iron Sharpen Iron and eleven more timeless pieces. Also, 'Live On' is actually produced by Dean Pond and his Rymshot Productions imprint. Pond is more known as a producer of Virgin Island Reggae talents [he produced 'Coming Back For You' in 2009, the most recent album of VI superstar Pressure Busspipe], but his skills are absolutely unquestionable, having worked with and developed some of the biggest names in the region, so these classics rest in mighty hands.

The masses of Culture fans around the world are sure to want to get their hands on this gem which also comes digitally via Zojak Worldwide.



Midnite's Standing Ground Dub



It's January so you know what that means! It means multiple releases from arguably the most active of entities in all of Reggae music, Vaughn Benjamin & Midnite. So, with 'Treasure', the latest vocal set from Benjamin, courtesy of Rastar Records, already in mind,

Midnite's incredibly passionate fans now also can take a look at a bit of a 'blast from the past' as an older album, 2008's 'Standing Ground' from Fifth Son Records, now gets the dubbed out treatment. The initial release was very much lauded, largely due to the fact that, with twenty-four tracks, it was a powerful two disc release which is rare even in Midnite's increasingly obese catalog. While the entire album isn't dubbed, more than half [thirteen tracks] are and for fans of Dub music, Midnite's music almost seems to inherently lend itself to Dub quite easily and 'Standing Ground' was clearly no exception. So, fill free to stock up on Midnite this month because 'Standing Ground Dub' from Fifth Son Records is in stores now on CD and digital from Zojak Worldwide.

Words Of My Mouth pieces gathered on one Rock A Shacka 12

Following their excellent (if expensive on import) Caribou ska reissue You'll Never Know, Japanese connoisseurs' label Drum & Bass records has released a new 12".

It features a modern deejay cut to the Gatherers immortal Words Of My Mouth by lead singer Sangie Davis and Culture Dan. The flip-side contains Sangie's revisit of his group's hit and a version by the 12 Tribes band. The label gave this history of the various elements of the release: "The original cut of this superb Rasta anthem was produced by Lee Perry and recorded in 1973 by the Gatherers.



In 2005 Gatherers lead vocalist Sangie Davis teamed up with 12 Tribes of Israel musicians to record this modern Roots reworking. In 2010, 12 Tribes bandmaster and Jah Love Muzik member Culture Dan cut this awesome DJ version, released now for the first time." Beautifully produced and executed, Words Of My Mouth is out now at Dubvendor and other selected stores.

The Youth Riddim

Certainly with all of the activity in the area, German Reggae, as a whole, isn't exactly starving as of late, but still here comes a pretty nice boost in the form of the Youth Riddim from the relatively 'youthful' and up and coming Urban Tree Music. Producers Foresta and Silentone have teamed up with Ganjaman (also an artist) to push out the lovely Roots Reggae composition and do so with a bag of very interesting and solid names aboard.



Wicked chanter from out of Aruba, Smiley, joins the likes of Uwe Banton, Junior King, Ephraim Juda, Vido Jelashe, Jennifer Washington as well as South Afrikan dynamo Black Dillinger. Also, German speaking fans get their own edition of the riddim which specifically features German artists delivering in German such as the aforementioned Ganjaman, Kimoe and Benjie.

The Youth Riddim from Urban Tree Music, which has had more than a little buzz surrounding it, is set to drop digitally on February 18 with a physical release soon thereafter.

The Tizita rhythm from Soul Of Anbessa

Following his well-received Shuttle, Swiss reggae polymath Marc Ismail has released two cuts on a second rhythm for his Soul Of Anbessa label.

Titled the Tizita (Amharic for "nostalgia") it's an early 80s style piece played by the Roots Radics and mixed by Fatta Marshall. The first cut is Maybe (One Day) voiced by Marc's old spar Prince Alla. The other, World Crisis, comes courtesy of the Tamblins – who also supply backing vocals on Maybe (One Day).

According to Marc, "More versions will follow: the wonderful Vernon "Maytone" Buckley, Danny Culture, and a young great Jamaican talent, Dwight Pinkney's protégée Jazzmine Black. Stay tuned..."

For the time being, Maybe (One Day) and World Crisis are out on 7" on February 6th.



Tiger Records Contest

Send an email to bestmixcontest@gmail.com and request a copy of Tiger's latest production, the Electricity Riddim and do your best

megamix of it. Submit it on or before February 12 and the winner will be selected by a jury consisting of Elmar from Sentinel Sound from out of Germany and Crossfire of Unity Sound.

What can you win? The winner of the contest receives any twenty songs from Tiger Records' library of tunes, which includes the dominant Cross Me Heart by Junior X as well as a whole heap of other winners from the past few years.

The challenge has been made - May the best man or woman win.

Two classic relicks from Stingray Records

London's Stingray Records has been busy recreating not one, but two reworkings of foundation rhythms. The first is a return for Delroy Wilson's Studio 1 side Run Run including pieces from veterans George Nooks, Luciano and Mikey General, as well as newer blood in Stevie Face.

Only A Smile is a revisit to the Paragons Treasure Isle recording, recently also revived by Curtis Lynch for Lloyd Brown's Goodbye on last year's 'Cornerstone' album. Stingray's outing, featuring Colin B, Sandra Cross, Peter Spence and Tenna Star is closer to the original than Lynch's hip-hop flavoured work.

The rhythms were recorded at Stingray's Big House studio and co-produced and engineered by Carlton "Dillie" McLeod. Both are out now for download from Stingray Records Online Store: <http://shop.stingrayrecords.net>

A vinyl release is soon to come...

Two New Releases from Trojan

Trojan has just released a 2CD collection of some of the best-known works by Gregory Isaacs, one of Jamaica's smoothest vocalists who sadly passed away late last year. The set

is titled 'Night Nurse' and highlights the Cool Ruler's rise from a virtual unknown to Reggae superstar by taking in an array of Seventies and Eighties Trojan and Island classics, a number of which make their Universal debut.

Also out is the next instalment of the popular limited edition 7" range of Ska, Rock Steady and Early Reggae tracks from the sixties and early seventies.



This time the year is 1966, with the disc coupling some vintage Beverley's Rock Steady in the form of the previously unissued 'Dancing Time' by the legendary Desmond Dekker & the Aces featuring Roland Alphonso and the Beverley's All Stars' instrumental 'Beverley's Special' (aka 'Nothing For Nothing').

As with all previous titles in this series, the single is only available via the Trojan Store with each disc pressed on heavyweight vinyl, and presented in a hand numbered Trojan sleeve.

Visit the Trojan Store at Universal Music for more details.

Rasta Love by Anthony B

You're sure to be quickly forgiven if you haven't noticed but - Reggae star Anthony B has recently (and very quietly) released a brand new album, 'Rasta Love'. The release comes without almost any substantial type of press and news whatsoever, but it is, ostensibly, a really big deal and clearly a great amount of attention has been paid to detail as the album features the likes of Peter Tosh, Gyptian, Ky-Mani Marley and others.

'Rasta Love' was an album first rumored to be released by VP Records in 2010, but it is now ultimately delivered to the masses via the chanter's very own Born Fire Music, where it becomes the very first release since 2008's very well regarded 'Life Over Death'. And it also features well known singles of recent times such as Love Is The Answer, Blame It On Yourself and even Sweet Jamaica.

So while no one else may be talking about you can start on things and have a listen to an album from a genuinely big artist in this very young year as Anthony B's 'Rasta Love' can be found in stores right now.



The Message Riddim

After sewing up and delivering his the debut album for his cousin, Protoje, just a few weeks back, arguably the greatest Jamaican producer in the world today, Don Corleon is already



back at work and with another big riddim release early similarly Corleone chooses an excellent variety of artists to voice the Message. There're the more unexpected lights such as Ky-Mani Marley, Sophia Squire, Vital and Ika-ya on hand - And on the other he grabs more of the 'usual suspects' on his output such as Bad Gyal Ce'Cile, VI Reggae star Pressure Busspipe, the aforementioned Protoje, Richie Spice and even Vybz Kartel. Unlike some of the other releases, the Message really has a direction to it and most of the songs here are on a more social/cultural vibes.

Although already in heavy rotation, fans across the globe can the latest from the real big man, Don Corleon, when it drops digitally later this month.

Stephen Marley New Album

Reggae's first dynasty member Stephen Marley has just announced that he has been working on his forthcoming album titled 'Revelation Part 1: The Root of Life'.

It will include titles such as Jah Army (on the General Penitentiary Riddim) but also collaborations with Sizzla Kalonji, Buju Banton and naturally with his brother Damian 'Junior Gong' Marley. Meanwhile the singer has also just brought out a new single No Cigarette Smokin - a duet with Mélanie Fiona.



OMG Riddim

Penthouse Records presents its first production of 2011 following last year's Big Stage and Go Fi Her Riddims. It's a real pleasure to find Queen Ifrica here after a relatively quiet 2010. The Fyah Muma returns along with Marcia Griffiths for the formidable Round and Round.

Also on the OMG Riddim are regular customers of the label such as Torch on Wanna Know, Duane Stephenson, Busy Signal, Copper Cat and many others.

Keep The Joy by Smiley and Anthony B

Following an outstanding 2010 campaign which saw him release what was arguably the best Reggae EP of the year, 'Lively Road', Dutch Caribbean all star Smiley has gotten his 2011 started and he's done so with a very familiar set up for his big new tune, Keep The Joy which features Jamaican superstar Anthony B. Fans may recall one of Smiley's earliest

hits, Dem A Wonder, which also featured him alongside another Jamaican Roots veteran in Junior Kelly and just like that tune, the new sterling piece is a production of the reputable Al.Ta.Fa.An. on their cool Strength Riddim.

Want more irony? This isn't the first time he's voiced the Strength Riddim. The Trelawny native once did the sweet Don't Cry, in another combination - with the big voiced Mark Wonder on the same riddim.

Anthony B comes back and joins Smiley on the delightful and uplifting Keep The Joy for Love & Unity Music - Available around the globe digitally on February 18.

Lots To Look Forward To From Renegade Recordings

Renegade Recordings & Media have announced that they have added several new artists to their roster and will be putting out releases from these artists over the duration of the coming year.

First up will be some good old rocksteady and ska from Prince Blanco in March. His 5-track E.P, that even includes a ska remake of Elvis Presley's That's Alright Mama promises pure old school styles.

April will see the release of Earlyworm's 'Natty Droid' which we are told will be fantastic dub voyage complete with glitch & twitch dub styles.

May is the turn of Dubmatix, following on from last years 'System Breakdown' where various artists old and new voiced on top of his riddims. This time he is back with the second instalment of 'Dread & Gold' titled 'Vol 2 - Dub from the Crypt', which follows the path of the debut by including unreleased, B-sides and a few new tracks purely inna dub style.

As spring becomes summer in June Renegade bring you Ammoye 'Bad Gal', the Jamaican born singer who now resides in Canada. This power-house vocalist will bring her JA roots and soulful vibes to a fresh fusion of electro-dancehall-hiphop harmony.

Other releases are due out from Joint Chiefs of Staff and DJ Ironbelly in the summer and autumn respectively, though no titles or release dates are as yet confirmed.

There will also be an album of 'System Shake-down Remixes' from the likes of Irie Ites, Echo Beach and Renegade though again no confirmed details on that one. Still with all the afore mentioned it looks to be an interesting and varied year ahead from the Renegade label with plenty to look forward to.

Silly Little Things by Dub from Atlantis

Silly Little Things is the title of the new release from Bristol based collective Dub From Atlantis, who have been playing and promoting all styles of reggae music in Bristol since the summer of 2000.

This digital release, on Ranking Records, consists of four versions of the song the first of which features Celestine applying a dreamy soulful vocal a top this melodious hybrid of organic and digi sounds.

The second is a dub version with the saxophones of James Gardiner Bateman and Josh Archaleo given their chance to shine and expressing a style that harksback to that vintage studio one sound. Third up is a Cymatic remix produced by some of the most prolific and respected innovators in UK dance music Ruckspin, DLR, Quantum Soul and Chris Octane, as they take the songs breezy, jaunty riddim and flip it into a deep and ominous Dubstepper and back again. The final mix is from one of the new generation of Bristol producers Kähn, who applies more of a funky, 2- step shuffle,

club vibe that caresses around Celestine's vocal so neatly that the two become one.

So one song and four mixes that show it in different lights, but all giving it respect and doing it justice fusing classic dub foundations with modern production twists. Available now on iTunes.



The Reuben Rhythm

Nick Manasseh has been creating, producing and remixing reggae since the late '80s when with the aid of The Equalizer he dubbed the Millennium. Now he is bringing out 'The Reuben Rhythm', which is showcased on two limited edition 7inch vinyls plus the usual digital download option through Roots Garden records.

The riddim is a predominantly digital drum and bass with the beat having the feel of the Get A Lick riddim, made popular by Shinehead on 'Billie Jean'.

On the first single Manasseh has draped over the top of this two vocals, with London based reggae and soul artist Ruben Da Silva giving

the riddim a rootsy slant on Jah Reign and Cate Ferris, who is an acoustic artist similar to the likes of Dido giving an evocative performance on Minus 2 Degrees.

The second single is titled Good One and another London based artist Dark Angel this time brings dancehall, singjay chat to the song with a dubwise from Manasseh himself just to complete things and allowing the delicate pitter patter of the dancing keys more prominence.



Remembering Jah Woosh

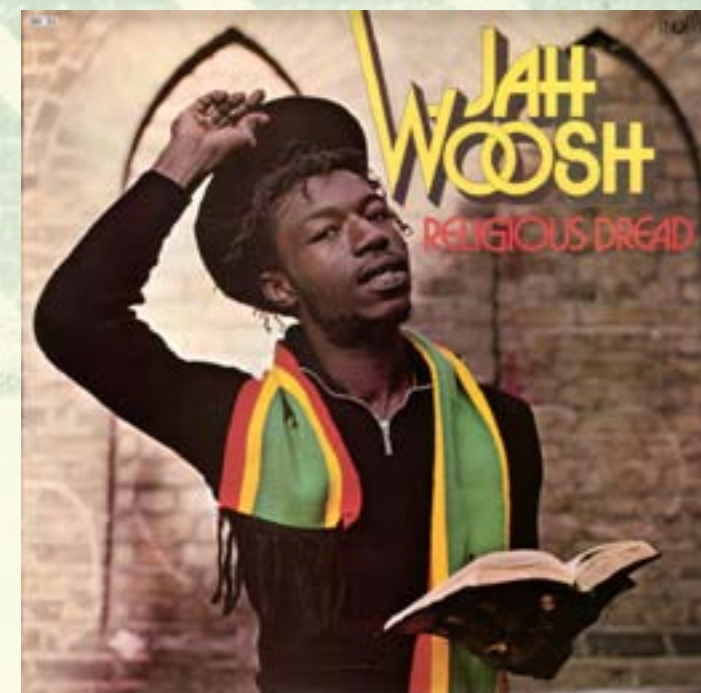
The Kingston deejay Neville Beckford AKA Jah Woosh passed away on 21st January 2011 aged 58. The cause of his death is currently unknown.

After gaining notoriety on Prince Lloyd's sound system, he released his eponymous first album for Rupie Edwards in 1974. A string of successful LPs followed, although he never crossed over into the non reggae market like U Roy, Dillinger and Big Youth.

Relocating to the UK at the end of the decade

he joined the Adrian Sherwood collective Creation Rebel. He would also reissue great material from Reggae George, Bim Sherman, Freddie McKay and many more on his Original Music label.

A true legend of Jamaican music, he will be much missed.





INTERVIEWS 



ROBERTO SANCHEZ
INTERVIEW

BY ANGUS TAYLOR

Spanish producer Roberto Sanchez made an indelible mark on the roots reggae scene last year with his deep roots showcase with 'Earl Zero And God Said To Man'. This year he showed he had applied the same historically exacting standards to the sounds of rocksteady and ska with the long-awaited third album for Alpheus, 'From Creation'. Roberto comes from a family of musicians with roots in Cuba – which may explain why Caribbean music is in his blood! Bob Marley's Kaya LP got him started, and he and his friends would make regular pilgrimages to London to buy Studio 1 or Black Ark records and studio equipment. When European producers with a love of old time Jamaican sounds try to go back to the so called Golden Age, the results can be disappointing. Yet Sanchez' assiduous recreations are so technically and sonically accomplished that one cannot but admire his works. And, likewise, where gifted and deeply immersed musical talents can be guarded and difficult interviewees, the soft spoken, humble Roberto was only too glad to share his story with Angus Taylor, speaking from his farmland studio in Santander...

You released one of the most critically acclaimed albums of 2010 with Earl Zero. Now you're dropping as anticipated an album with Alpheus. How did these projects get off the ground?

The Earl Zero project started when I met a Californian deejay called Ranking Forrest in Spain. We became good friends and he told me he was living next door to Earl Zero! He linked him and we made our first production on a rhythm I had voiced with Ranking Forrest. The song was called Root Of David. I started linking with Earl Zero more often and we started thinking of doing an album so I started sending him specially built rhythms. All the vocals were done in California and the backing vocals here in Spain. Now I'm planning to bring him here to do a little tour of Spain and France.

And Alpheus?

I met Alpheus in Bilbao when I was playing in a band from Valencia. Two people introduced me - the band leader, Nano Bravo, and Sergio from Heartical. He was the one who brought him to Spain. After we played Alpheus had to take the plane so we spent some time at home listening to Phil Pratt on Pressure Sounds. I said, "I could build a rhythm like that if you can sing on it". I had a shower and when I came back Alpheus had made a wicked song called Ultimate. He went back to London and I spent one week putting the musicians together for the Dirty Dozen rhythm. He came back in one month and I remember his face! I think it was at that moment that I started thinking of an album. I was already in love with his Studio 1 album because I had learned how to play its keyboards live. He was living in London so it was quite easy for us to get together. The whole album was made in my studio in Santander.

Do you think Alpheus has made the right decision to stop singing reggae and concentrate on rocksteady and ska? Or would you like to make a reggae album with him?

That's a deep question! He must stick to that sound because he is a real rocksteady man. He's a crooner, a soulful singer, like Ken Boothe. He's bringing back that feeling. I think he must maintain that style and work in that direction. But on the other hand, as you said, having set up a rocksteady thing he should get involved in original roots music as Ken Boothe did. Many artists went into that deep feeling of the late seventies and I think his voice fits it perfectly. So on the one hand I agree with him but I also think maybe in the future we should do some roots.

The original roots music, then, is the closest to your heart?

Totally. From '73 to '81. That's the music for me.

How does your rural environment inform your music?

I am a guy that loves nature and quiet – even though I am active. I tried to find a very quite place for the studio in a village close to the city – which only has 200,000 inhabitants. We are close to the sea and there are cows and horses all around. I think that helps quite a lot with my productions.



How does working with Earl Zero compare with Alpheus?

In some ways it is the same because they are both wicked artists doing their thing from the heart. But I would say my relationship with Alpheus is more intense. I was listening to every word of his lyrics in the studio. We were living the album while recording. Living his experiences through the songs. That made our re-

lationship and the album tighter and deeper. Zero is a good friend but we never met personally so it was a bit different musically but amazing in its own way.

Both records sound like an incredible amount of work went into them. How long does it take you to make an album?

It takes a long time because it's not just about making the rhythm. Sometimes when the singer sends it back you hear it differently. So then I start changing things like bass-lines and adding horns. Alpheus' album was recorded quickly but it took a long time to be mixed and prepared. We started in 2007 and finished in 2010. It was more or less the same with Earl Zero's album – the rhythms were built quickly but once I received the voice I worked on the backing vocals and arrangements before sending it back to him for more changes. Sometimes this can take a year – but this is because, thankfully, I have other work at the studio so I don't always have time for my own productions!

How much formal training do you have in music and studio engineering?

I did a two year course in engineering in Madrid in 2001 but by then I had released ten albums! I did it because I needed the degree to set up my own studio. All my family are musicians. My grandmother was a piano teacher in Cuba. My grandparents went there because of the Civil War between 1939 and 1941 and then came back to Santander, where my family has been for over a hundred years. My grandmother used to play really amazing things on the piano.

My father and my brother taught Spanish guitar. I had a piano at home from the day I was born. I started studying music at eight years old but at thirteen I started listening to reggae and just wanted to play football instead of piano and Beethoven!

You used to play with Inyaki from BDF. Tell me about what you both got up to.

I can say so much about him because he is a great musician, a wicked producer and a promoter of reggae music since the eighties. I was going to Bilbao in the early nineties for concerts and Inyaki was the one who brought Augustus Pablo to the city! He had a radio show in Bilbao when no one knew about reggae! When I was going to London to find records he was my guide. He was the one who introduced me to Dougie Wardrop of Conscious Sounds and to many artists and musicians. I learned from these people and Inyaki was the key.

Both you and Inyaki seem to prefer the old style of reggae. Would that be fair to say?

Yes, we both have the same kind of taste in producers and musicians. We really love the second half of the seventies. We used to sit in my car in London talking for hours about Augustus Pablo, Channel One, Phase 1, Joe Gibbs. He's like me – we really appreciate musicians, singers and the people who build the music.

Do you like any modern reggae? It doesn't seem to be present in your productions.

Some reggae made in England is so amazing. I really like the things coming from Conscious Sounds and from Russ D. I love his productions and his way of mixing and producing. It's really good and goes with the flow of the time. It's different from the real instruments thing but it's still got a lot of roots. They made it natural. They are icons in terms of production.

So you're not anti digital?

Oh no. Sometimes I work for different producers in my studio and they are involved in what they call UK digital roots. I enjoy mixing and programming for them. When I first met Dougie and saw him mixing in 2004 I finally understood that kind of production. Before that I

did not even want to hear a digital snare for 15 years. But for me, I like old school sounds. And the things coming from Jamaica now I don't like at all.

At what point did Jamaica stop producing music you liked?

I think it was a societal thing. Music there is part of their daily living. I think they turned to cocaine in the eighties and it changed the mood socially and politically and that changed the music too. Jamaican people are building new things again and again and Jamaican music is amazing always.

But for my taste, in terms of music and lyrics and flow, everything from the late sixties to the early eighties is great. Then they changed the message, the rhythms, the instruments, everything.



You changed your mind about digital sounds. Don't you think you might change your mind about modern Jamaican reggae?

I don't think so. There are some conscious artists doing reggae who I think are good singers but the musicians don't want to play like the Revolutionaries or the Upsetters, like Mikey Boo or Lloyd Parks - they want to play like American pop bands and that's the sound they are getting. It sounds like pop. It could be made in Miami!

But the rocksteady era was hugely influenced by American popular music. You don't mind that influence back then.

But the difference was pop music back then was amazing. If you look back to America in the sixties and seventies you get Motown, Marvin Gaye and Curtis Mayfield. Even though it was pop, it was deep. Many of the Jamaican artists wanted to be like Curtis. But if you look to America in 2011 the music is a pure commercial product. So if they look to rap or hip hop that's why they do that kind of dancehall with those kinds of lyrics, and if they look to pop they do that kind of poppy reggae.

Given the level of skill in your music and production – doesn't modern reggae need someone like you to help it grow? Would you consider making a modern sounding album?

I would love it if producers in Jamaica looked back to Gussie Clarke, for example. During the eighties he built some of the most amazing

rhythms for his label using Mighty Diamonds and Dennis Brown. They are living there. I am not going to move from here! They are the ones that have to do it because they have the key. I think the problem in Jamaica is the musicians. I honestly think people in Europe are playing better roots music than in Jamaica right now. As we are supporting reggae music more than them, maybe they should turn back to Europe for musicians. BDF is a wicked band – let's take them to Harry J to work with the Mighty Diamonds and the Viceroy's!

It does happen. The Handcart band has French members and recorded the DST riddim for DJ Sunshine in 2007.

Yes! I am currently mixing a session for Guillaume Bougard with Gregory Isaacs and Sly & Robbie and the Revolutionaries in Jamaica. That's what should happen. Otherwise we are going to lose that tradition – which is not my tradition – but I took it as if it is mine. I love that music and would love to keep it alive.



ALPHEUS INTERVIEW

BY ANGUS TAYLOR

Who is your favourite producer of all time?

Wow. I don't know what to say. If I had to choose one I would say Augustus Pablo. He was involved in Randy's at the beginning doing amazing things for the Chin family then he moved to the Black Ark doing sessions with Hugh Mundell and then he was at Channel One playing for various artists. I think as a producer, musician and active person on the late Seventies scene – he was the one. But then I also love Roy Francis who was really elegant with the Phase 1 label. Lee Perry, the Hookims in Channel One in '78-'79 – that was amazing!

Who is your favourite engineer?

That's much easier. Scientist! Scientist and Sylvan Morris. Morris did the previous mix from sixteen to four track before bringing the tapes to Tubbys so part of the Tubbys mix we hear is already made by Sylvan. He was the man at Harry J's for many years and one of the finest. But then Scientist's tricks during the year

1981 for his Greensleeves releases for Linval Thompson and Jah Thomas are perfect – nothing more to say!

Who's on your list for the next album? We need to know!

I've been talking with Milton Henry and we are going to start recording next month. It will be my next showcase and follow the same kind of style as Zero but it's not going to be focussed on the Freedom Sounds Greenwich Farm sound. I would really like to go back to that Wackies four track sound. Let's see what happens.

If you could work with one person who is no longer with us, who would that be?

Gregory because he is one of the great stars of late seventies Jamaica and now he has passed I cannot record him again. Many great artists, like Sugar Minott, who have passed. I would love to go back to then.



When United Reggae last spoke to Neil "Alpheus" Martin he had released his second album 'Everything For A Reason' on Special Delivery Records. Since then he's been in Spain working on his new third long-player 'From Creation'. Surprisingly (or not given that he cut his first album at the legendary Studio 1!) this record contains no reggae rhythms – only ska and rocksteady. Angus Taylor met Alpheus to discuss his change of direction and why he thinks his mentor Mr Dodd would be proud...

Tell me about your new album From Creation and your change of direction from singing on one drop rhythms to ska and rocksteady.

It's produced by Roberto Sanchez of the A-Lone label in Santander, Spain. It's basically about ska and rocksteady which is, I think, my best vein and where I should be singing – right there. Roberto Sanchez is so talented and knows how to create his own rocksteady as well as recreating the real great stuff so we went at that.

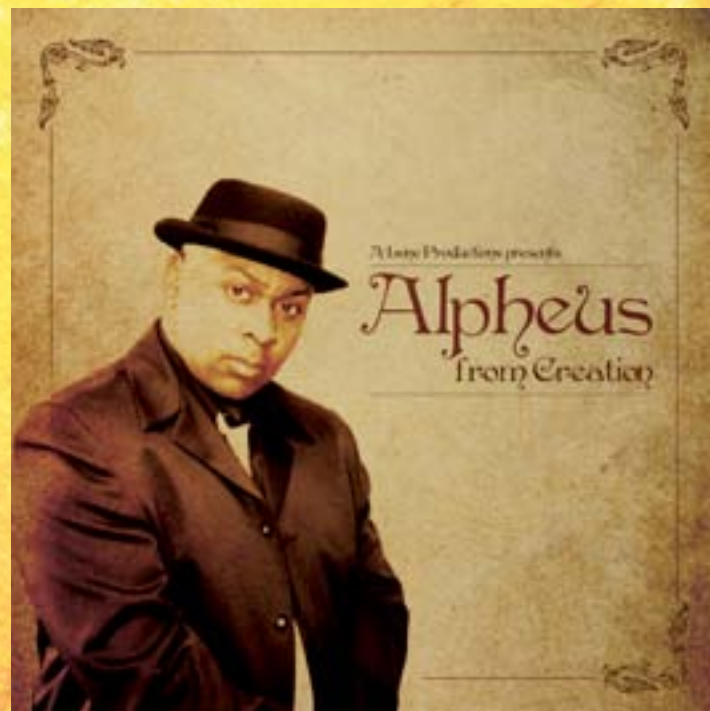
How did you link with Roberto?

I met him through Sergio Marigomez of Heartical Sound in France. He got me a gig in the Basque country and the band was Roberto's. I was impressed in the rehearsal by the band and the studiousness and seriousness of Roberto. He gave me a ride back from the Basque country to Santander airport and we got talking. He said he knew some guys that play rocksteady with a nice pick guitar and he would make a rhythm and see if I liked it. And when he sent it I couldn't believe it – I thought he'd got it from Studio 1! So he kept sending and I kept writing.

What were the vibes like recording in Santander?

It was all recorded in his little studio which is in between three farms. So we had to wait for all the chickens and that to stop making noise

before we could turn the tape on! (laughs) It was lovely though, really beautiful. Travel there and you'll love it. Roberto also mixed it and the musicians were his band Lone Ark Riddim Force. They just focussed on this for the last 18 months making sure everything was tight and feeling it right.



What was the difference between working with Sanchez and Special Delivery?

Good question. Special Delivery had these two rhythm kings Bim and Bost who in my estimation are the most talented reggae musicians of today's era born in France. They were making the rhythms and I was helping them construct them. Like the Dis Ya Time rhythm, which was my idea do and make sure we recreated it well and made some good songs out of it. They were more dealing with the today beat – the one-drop, the current sounding relicks of Studio 1 and it was good. But when I heard the stuff from Robbie Sanchez there was a difference. They're both talented but in their own place and his stuff was real retro sounding rocksteady where he'd got the sound so down pat that you can't say no to the rhythms.

How does he get that sound?

He focuses on his music more than anything and can play about eight or nine instruments and he's in it so deep. The ska basslines on the album are played by him on a very old standup bass to get the authentic sound. The horns he made sure were like fifty years old. The piano was a grand piano from his parents' house. When it comes to all the other stuff like the paperwork he's all over the place! (laughs) Because it's not him – he's a musician! Roberto's quite a spiritual person so if he thinks you're just making a song for the sake of it, he won't be into it. So I had to explain what each song was about and why I was writing it, to put him in the mindset. It was the same as at Studio 1. I've always used the same format since they taught me to write.

It's been three years since your last album Everything For A Reason but there was an even bigger gap between that album and the previous one Quality Time. Is that how you like to work or did circumstance get in

the way?

I don't think the right opportunity came after the Studio 1 album in 1999. The right opportunity didn't come and I wasn't putting myself in the way of the right opportunity. I wasn't meeting the people who were really going to make something with me and I don't think I was ready to make another album. I needed to learn more and go through more things to be able to write songs. I needed to experience more, learn how to sing better, so I still think the Special Delivery album came at the right time.

Everything for a reason...

(laughing) Everything happens for a reason man. Since the Studio 1 album I came back to Europe in 2001, I collaborated with Special Delivery and made some singles, went on some rhythms. Then I didn't even sing for two years



because sometimes your vibes get flat and I went through a lot of sadness. I went through a lot of personal woes and sometimes they just kind of knock you. I only write songs about experiences that me or someone close to me has been through and in that time I was building life experience.

What have you gone through that has affected your music and development?

Number one is death. I had a son when I was living in America who was 18 months old and he died. The next week I found myself in Florida with a friend because I needed to go and vibe and that was when I started singing – right then. But the thing is, if Xavier hadn't died I don't think I would have ever sung. I would never have been to Florida and met Tony Brevett. So bad makes good and good makes bad. And that's why everything happens for a reason – every single thing. That was a very low part of my life. Sometimes when I'm on stage or in the studio trying to find a note I think about the lowest part and it just comes out as soul. When misfortunes happen to good people you can turn bad into good.



Why did you decide to stop singing one-drop rhythms after Everything For A Reason came out?

I had some opportunities to make some albums and some singles with some really good people but I'd just had enough of it. I just feel I need to focus on where my voice suits best and make some longer lasting music that stands the test of time. So I was very fortunate to meet Roberto and we've just been working on these rhythms, going real deep, on this album you're about to hear. I think it's the best singing and the best work I've done. If I don't make another album after this or sing another note, I don't mind. I believe I have done the best I could do on this one.

It sounds like you're dissatisfied with modern reggae.

Yeah, I'm not going to hide it. One, I think you get more from Alpheus on rocksteady and ska because there's a feeling that comes out that I just love. And two, I just felt a lot of the one-drop stuff wasn't long-lasting. They're good, especially when they're made by people like Bost and Bim, but people would play them for 6-9 weeks and that's it. I would go back to reggae but it's got to be something brilliant that's going to stand the test of time.

Also rocksteady is a more appropriate place for love themes.

Yes, I've always tended towards relationship matters because they're every day stories. When you go home to your girl after this you will have a story. A good one, a medium one, a bad one – it's life and I just want to write about those things. And since going through these woes in the last eight or nine years I've been able to go deeper and write songs for uplifting the spirit. Topics like the title track of From Creation which is about how things should be from the start of time. Then there's a song called Inside Out which is about how I really

like this girl from the inside to out. She didn't have to beautiful or wearing the latest clothes – I just like that person.

And, with all the economic hard times people have been going through they need some uplifting, timeless music.

It's a good thing you asked that because I've only just thought that now. It is bad times innit and we need some upliftment here. I'm a very buzzy positive person and I've been writing uplifting songs just to counteract the feeling there.

I get tired of asking the same questions but you're another British artist who does most of their work abroad. Do you think there is a problem with the UK reggae scene apart from the general economic crisis?

It was having a hard time in the England even before the credit crunch. It's down to not having enough good media to project the music and keep it consistently flowing to the masses. A lot of the people that can determine the route of reggae in the UK aren't doing their jobs. To make it go higher, to make sure it is retailed correctly. Why does every other music have a chance but not reggae? Because the media and the structure take care of it. They keep the people that like that music in the know. It's sad because this is one of the homes of reggae. You'll find most artists when they come to England aren't even thinking about music – you just come here because you've got family. I only get serious about music when I cross the border.

Who are your favourite singers from the classic era – and have you ever met any of your heroes and heroines?

Definitely John Holt. We used to listen to him every Sunday. Alton Ellis who was like Studio 1's Marvin Gaye – that's how Mr Dodd saw him. Delroy Wilson: who I never really appreciated him until the last few years when I became

more mature and understood tones and how much soul he had. And Marcia Griffiths who is just fantastic. I remember when I was making my Studio 1 album I was singing on the Smile rhythm and Johnny Osbourne walked in! I recognized him and my voice started going but he said, "No, it's OK! Gwaan!"



But while a lot of these rhythms on the album are familiar some of them are new.

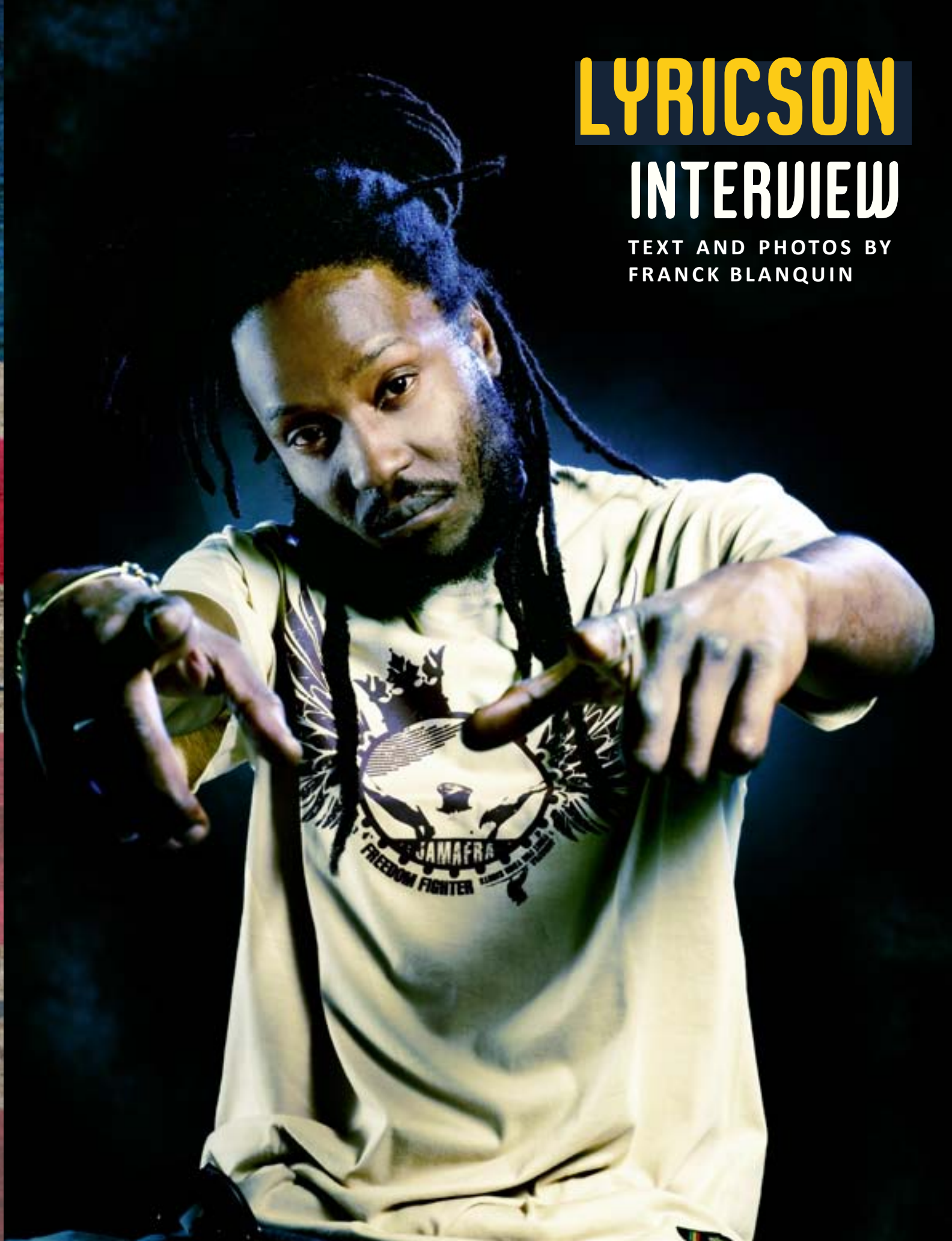
All of the lyrics are written by me and about 50% of the rhythms are originals by Roberto Sanchez. The others are recreations of great producers, two from Phil Pratt and four from the king, Coxsone Dodd himself.

Is there any Duke Reid on the album? Is this a partisan thing because you apprenticed under Dodd?

LYRICSON

INTERVIEW

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY
FRANCK BLANQUIN



(big laugh) I never realized that! Maybe I'm fighting a war against him! No, I'd do Duke Reid anytime. Duke Reid's stuff is a lot cleaner. I have this thing with ska and rocksteady. You send me a ska or rocksteady rhythm and I'll have the melody and a song within an hour. I love it!

Since you started at Studio 1, was your change of direction always on the cards?

Sometimes I think "Clement Dodd – why did he sign me?" What did he hear in me? I wasn't a pro singer and I wasn't trying to get a contract or anything. But he had such a good ear for tones and he must have thought, "Your voice fits on my stuff mate". He put me there and yet I'm going somewhere else. Let me stay. I'm going back to ska and rocksteady. I wish he was around for me to bring him Roberto Sanchez to see how this man recreates his rhythms as well as his own. I think he'd be proud I haven't sold myself and out and sang on any little thing.

Just to recap on our last interview – have you learned to play an instrument yet?

(laughs) Arrrrrghh! In Spain two weeks ago, Roberto had a go at me! He said, "Look man, why don't you learn an instrument? That way, you'll hit your notes quicker and stack your harmonies faster!" He told me to learn the piano. He said don't learn the guitar because my fingers are too big! I'm definitely going to do that.

Lyricson, a young singer from Guinea, living in France and known to the general public for having collaborated with Manu Chao and the hip hop band Assassin, presents his third record 'Messages'. It's out on his own label PJK. A new opus filled with love and hope, it focuses on the youth, in these times of crisis.

Your third album was released in November and for this one you have worked with various producers and musicians - who are they?

For riddims I have worked with various teams. First there is Bost & Bim (French producer, Soprano riddim ...) with whom I worked on my first album. I also worked with the Jamaican Fire House Crew known for their work with Sizzla and Junior Kelly...

Then there's a young composer who comes from Martinique, Foxx T (AK47 riddim, Arsenal Riddim) and Guyanese composer naming Patko, who worked with Tiwony Straika D. There are also riddims by T'N'T, Moolood...

For the mix I also work with the Jamaican Steven Stanley (Tarrus Riley, Sean Paul) with whom I'm already used to working, and Ghost my sound engineer.

How did you approach working with these different teams? Do you have a method you apply each time or you adapt yourself according to the producers ?

I work on instinct. I have no predefined recipe. It's all about feeling.

When I meet interesting producers, I ask them for riddims. Nothing is calculated beforehand - all depends on timing. Like with Patko Foxx T with whom I worked for the first time on one of my albums.

The most important thing is not to betray myself in my choices. I do things as I feel them.

Your music is full of different influences. Which are the artists who inspired you most?

My musical influences are numerous, ranging from, Hip Hop to Soul through African music, Caribbean music, they are manifold.

Artists like Bob Marley to Peter Tosh, Sam Cooke, Tupac (r.i.p)...



You were born in Guinea, What is your feeling about African Reggae?

When you ask to me of my influence, there is a South African artist that inspired me. This is Lucky Dube, murdered in 2007. For me he was the first who carried the torch for English African reggae. Not forgetting Alpha Blondy who is the founding father of the French African Reggae. There are many artists I appreciate. I respect the work of Tiken Jah Fakoly. I know that the Ghanaian, Nigerian and South Africa scenes are full of innovation.

In my country, Guinea, there is a young artist

who is full of talent, Takana Zion. I spend as much time as I can over there. I try to follow what is happening but when I'm not there, I miss a lot of things.

What did you gain from your collaborations with Assassin (French Hip Hop group) and Manu Chao, who are big names, which is rather rare in reggae circles?

It gave me a lot of things. On the one hand I could reach their audience and maybe direct them to my own productions. I also learned a lot about working arrangements, managing a tour, and gig management. I have taken nothing but positives.

How do you see the CD market in 2010, especially that of reggae music?

The market is currently very uncertain. I do not really know what the future holds for music. In fact, I listen to music most of time on my computer, but I will always go to buy the record of an artist who is really worth it. Someone who has more than three good songs on his album.

Which artists or producers you would like to work with in the future?

I thought a lot about the producer Bobby Digital with whom I would like to work.

In the new generation of dancehall, are artists like DCK or Stephen McGregor, the son of Freddie McGregor, who is on top now (he has produced the Redbull & Guinness



riddim). But I do not really follow trends.

There are many people with whom I wish to work, but I'll see how things pan out, and once I make my plans, I will knock on doors and see if the collaboration is possible.

I don't wait for things to fall from the sky. In reggae music it isn't the right attitude. **Why do you sing in English? Did it open doors for you?**

I have always sung in English, as far as I can remember. I was born in Guinea but grew up in Liberia. It is an English speaking country. I left Liberia due to civil war.

It is true that the English are a big part of the cultural landscape, in film and music. Today's English language was a little bit like the dollar. Speaking English when you are German or Chinese or French, opens doors today, but it is not something I calculate. It 's just natural.

What is the latest news about your crew Black Unite?

There are many projects in the pipeline. In the near future there will be a Chadness mixtape and an album later.

He also collaborated on my album with background vocals, and he was with me a lot during the making of this album.

All the soldiers from the crew work hard. For my upcoming shows we will try to bring the family on stage whenever possible.



CURTIS LYNCH

INTERVIEW

BY ANGUS TAYLOR

Curtis Lynch Junior was born in Roehampton, South West London and raised in Shepherd's Bush. He began as a jungle dj at age 15 before becoming a prodigious young producer embracing the reggae-dancehall sounds with which he grew up. After tasting mainstream success with Gorillaz and Alicia Keys, he started his own label Necessary Mayhem in 2006 and, along with Chris Peckings, is one of the few UK producers to cement an international reputation for excellence while defying the current specialist music climate with consistently healthy record sales. Recently he created a new roots based sister label Maroon, where he's been reissuing the works of his hero Gussie Clarke, as well as working with Etana on her second album 'Free Expressions'. Angus Taylor met Curtis at the Sensible Studio in Kings Cross to discover what makes him tick...

You've said "the good music is the poor people music" - were you poor growing up?

Yes. But being poor was in a funny kind of way like being rich. It brought people together musically and culturally. We didn't have a lot but what we had was enough. I only realized I had experienced poverty at an older age. You start to see how other people live and think, "Wow, we don't really have things like that". Music brought people that didn't have much together - and still does. There are so many countries with people that are not necessarily as well off as us but music keeps the vibes, keeps them going and helps them aspire to great things as well.

What was your first experience of music?

(thinks) Cracking question. There was a John Holt album, A Love I Can Feel, which was one of the first albums that I can remember studying the artwork and the writers and the musicians. Then obviously there were the house parties and the big speakers - those were my first memories of the music.

You started as a jungle/drum'n'bass dj in

your teens. Was this a teen rebellion against the reggae of your parents?

It was that reggae was too easy for me. I'd grown up listening to it but the music that moved me more at that time was definitely drum'n'bass. And it still moves me - I still love it. It was different to traditional reggae but I liked it because jungle kept elements of the reggae in this new form of music which was highly charged. I've always loved the harder bass kind of tracks and you don't get much better than jungle and reggae samples together.

The strange thing about jungle in the 90s is that it got a lot of non-Caribbean people back into reggae yet some mcs say it pretty much killed off reggae sound systems in the UK. Where do you stand on this?

To me reggae was never going to die so I never really looked at it that way. For me it was more about the music. I felt I was part of something within the drum'n'bass scene rather it being a hindrance to the reggae. What I would say about jungle is it did get a lot of people involved and trying to find where those old reggae samples came from. And in so-doing, it's almost a branch of reggae as far as I'm concerned. Every genre of music has to evolve for the next generation. The next generation has to feel as though it's their music. I always listened to reggae but I felt that jungle was more my music rather than my mum and dad's music.

What made you move back into reggae and dancehall?

The jungle scene was very hard to get into. It's like the Knights of the Round Table - if you know one of those Knights then it's OK but if not it's going to be a hard road! At the time I didn't know any of them but later one of my best friends to this day was Adam F, but by then I already had my niche in the reggae industry. I always looked at reggae music as a fan and it's only in the last few years that I've stopped be-

-ing that fan so much. Don't get me wrong – I'm still a fan of reggae music – but I used to look at certain musicians with that "wow factor". Now it's like, "No, I am part of this now". Now I aspire to be like the best producers and musicians whereas before I was happy for them to be at the forefront and me to be behind.



What does your jungle background give your productions?

Jungle is a part of reggae to me and a part of it evolving. So when I produce my tunes now I do have that jungle influence because it is part of me. In terms of the bass sound, certain samples I use and how I chop samples up, it's had a huge influence on what I do. Even my Police In Helicopter rhythm – if you stripped it and put a jungle beat underneath it, it would be jungle. But then I've got so many other influences like hip hop. I was in a sound system when I was

younger and all I used to listen to was reggae and drum'n'bass and the other members of that sound had hip hop and R&B. I wasn't into that vibe before they came in but then I listened to Biggie and Tribe Called Quest and then on the R&B side Mary J Blige. Being in England we are one of the most eclectic countries in the world in terms of having access to music. We've got indie, rock, R&B, hip-hop, but then there are sub-genres within. All these things influence us and help with the production of music because anything can inspire. It might sound crazy but I'm not a huge fan of dubstep. I do think dubstep is how jungle was in my time so now for people that listen to dubstep – this is their music. The next generation of people that produce reggae or hip hop will have influences of dubstep in their music. I don't think it's terrible. I do appreciate it – and the big bass-lines I can definitely appreciate.

The role of producer has changed in reggae over the years. It used to be that the engineer did a lot of the work and the producer just gave the thumbs up if it sounded like a hit. Now in the computer age the producer makes the beats. Tell me about your role and day to day duties.

I started off as a sound engineer so I learned how to make a great cup of tea, wrap wires, and a lot of it was watching and not taking part as much as I wanted to! Now I make all of the music for my tracks, I play most of the instruments and I'll mix as well. Sometimes I'll write songs, I sing backing vocals and guide the artists lyrically and vocally depending on how good or bad they are a certain aspect of their job. I'm pretty much an all-rounder. I also run the label so my day to day duties are crazy at times. Sometimes I just want to make music so I won't answer my phone, just be making beats, some days I'm just mixing and some days I'm just vocal-ing – but it's all scheduled and mapped out. Things are crazy different from when I first started out. Like you said, the producer was the person that bankrolled the project. They would

hire in the best musicians for the job and get the best out of that project. Now you look at it and think, "Was Coxson Dodd the producer [at Studio 1] or was it Jackie Mittoo?" Was it the person in the studio who was responsible for the hit or the person who paid that person for that hit? It's a grey area but it's a conversation that's always fun after some beers! (laughs)



The producer is often cast as the bad guy in reggae history books. Is this fair?

No, and I'm not speaking with regards to myself, I'm speaking about other producers I know in the industry. Producers are funny characters. You don't really see producers out living it large in the finest clothes. Most of the time they're either in the office or the studio, so the way we spend our money compared to the way an artist does is completely different. We always look as if we're loaded but that's because we don't

have time to do anything but live in a studio. An artist will take an hour or an hour and a half of their time, sing a hit tune – and it is a hit tune! – but then they can go out because work's done for the day! Whereas we're still in the studio mixing it, making sure the marketing is done and so on. So I don't think producers are the bad guys. People need to understand the amount of work that goes into making a record – especially if it becomes a hit. We then have to be the driving force to pay the TV and the radio to get it advertised. So when the money does come back numbers might not add up but they don't because we had to spend in other areas.

Which producers do you admire most?

My favourite producer without doubt is Gussie Clarke. For me he is the bridge between the old style and the new. His catalogue is amazing because a lot of the old things I loved I then realized he did as well. One of the best deejay albums of all time is Screaming Target by Big Youth – I mean you don't get much better than that! His ear, to this day, is so sharp and clinical. He might tell you to move a tambourine but when you move it, all of a sudden it does sound like a hit. He was the first person I knew that would have two singers on a track and a deejay – Home T, Cocoa T and Shabba! The songs were wonderful as well – he brought a team of songwriters in – backing vocals were tremendous, the mix was by one of my favourite engineers of all time, Steven Stanley – master engineer! So when you have all those ingredients, music production at its highest is definitely Gussie Clarke. I'm a huge fan of Joe Gibbs as well. You just know a Joe Gibbs record from the way Errol Thompson would engineer and mic the drums that everything is in its right place.

And outside Jamaican music?

I would say Quincy Jones is a huge inspiration. Again, his engineer with Michael Jackson, Bruce Swedien, was so clean, so beautiful the way they all worked together. There are so many

producers I like but Quincy is definitely one. My favourite drum'n'bass producer of all time is DJ Zinc. He is one of the reasons why I produce.

The UK reggae scene gets a bad press. But people like you, Peckings and Gappy Ranks have had big success both here and abroad. What's the secret?

I think that music does the talking. I think as long as the right people are doing the right music with the right production and marketing it to a high standard, I don't think it matters where you come from. Especially now when some of the biggest reggae artists aren't from Jamaica and some of the biggest hip hop artists aren't from America. It's a lot easier to make music now and a lot easier to get it out so as far as worrying about a territory like the UK or Germany goes, as long as you're making good music within yourself and your production team, it will get to the right people.

Rodigan has been saying that Jamaican reggae is in decline. You are the most featured name on his new mix cd for Fabric. Does that feel good?

It feels fantastic. And it's simply because I still do reggae the way I heard it when I grew up listening to it. Obviously I've added some new things, my own personality and my jungle vibes and other genres. But as far as I'm concerned it's still reggae the way it should be. So to a man like David, it would make sense because that's what he's used to as well. We're not saying it can't evolve but some of the things I hear that come from Jamaica, I'm surprised by. I think we had more choice of reggae from Jamaica before and it seems we have less choice now. If you wanted slackness you could listen to slackness but if you didn't there were plenty of artists that were giving a good vibe. There were almost different sections of dancehall whereas now it seems it is in decline because there are fewer options.

Is this affected by mass filesharing? How does this impact your music?

Put it this way – there are bodies out there that can help stop filesharing being as rapid and rampant as it is. However, in a funny kind of way, if you look at filesharing sites and your tunes aren't there you feel kind of offended! You could look at filesharing people as people that are never going to buy records anyway or you could look at it as generating interest – if people download two or three things illegally then they might see your album and buy it. It's all part of a bigger picture. It is annoying and it would be cool if it wasn't there but then piracy in some form has always been there. People have always copied videos, tapes and cds, and it's on a mass scale now because we're more aware of it.

Tell me about your label Maroon and how it differs from Necessary Mayhem. Why did you name it after the Maroons?

The Maroon label is a tribute to the Maroons – the first slaves that were able to escape, set up their own community and not be dictated to. But it was also set up because I looked at certain artists I had on my label who were not Necessary Mayhem artists. I thought there was much more of a seriousness about them which needed a more serious label. Brinsley Forde, as far as I'm concerned is not a Necessary Mayhem artist but he is a Maroon artist. I took myself back to when I used to buy records at Black Market or Dub Vendor and if I bought a tune on a label that wasn't like the other one before I might be disappointed and not buy into the rest of the label because it was so helter-skelter. So the Maroon label is roots with great messages and I'm really proud of it. I put out No Exit No Entry by Augustus Pablo that Gussie Clarke originally produced. That came about because loads of people like Russ at Dub Vendor and my artwork man, Jack, told me I should do it. So I looked into it and Mr Clarke was only too pleased, and it's been one of the biggest sellers of the year. I never thought I would press a 12-inch

record and at times it was selling like a 7-inch.

You've been working a lot with Etana on her forthcoming album - what's she like to work with?

She's one of the best artists I've ever worked with. She listens, she's always learning, and I think what it is, is we trust each other in the studio. I would ask her to do a whole backing vocal layered with different notes and ranges and if it didn't work I'd be like "Etana, it's not going to work" and she'd be like "OK, cool". I love her energy. When we did August Town I didn't expect her to choose that backing track. I knew she was coming to the studio and had several tracks lined up – I was pretty nervous actually! – and she chose that one and started talking about something that had just happened. The song is a true story. I remember Mr Clarke having a conversation with her saying, "Maybe you shouldn't attack it so much. It's quite political" and her saying, "No. We're going to do it this way". It was put down in no time – in half an hour. She had it all in her mind.

You sing on the new Lloyd Brown album - is this a first?

(laughs) Oh no! I did backing vocals on a lot of the Etana stuff. But this is the first thing that I haven't been able to hide behind! It was a demo. I'm a big supporter of Manchester United and we lost that day and any time I feel sad I find myself in the studio. Alcoholics drink, smokers smoke, I end up in the studio! So I did this song, it all came to me, and I sent it to Lloyd because he was working on his new album and said, "Look Lloyd, there's a guide for you". But he said, "No, no. I like it. I'm going to use it", and I was like, "Aw, you're only joking" but he said, "I'm not. I'm going to sing around you". I thought he was only joking right up until someone else told me they heard I'd sung on the album! It's flattering coming from such a great singer but it's not something I'm going to do again. I do demos

but I'm critical of the way I want things when I'm recording. I don't please myself vocally.

You have a new lovers rock project The Love Directories in the pipeline. Tell me about it.

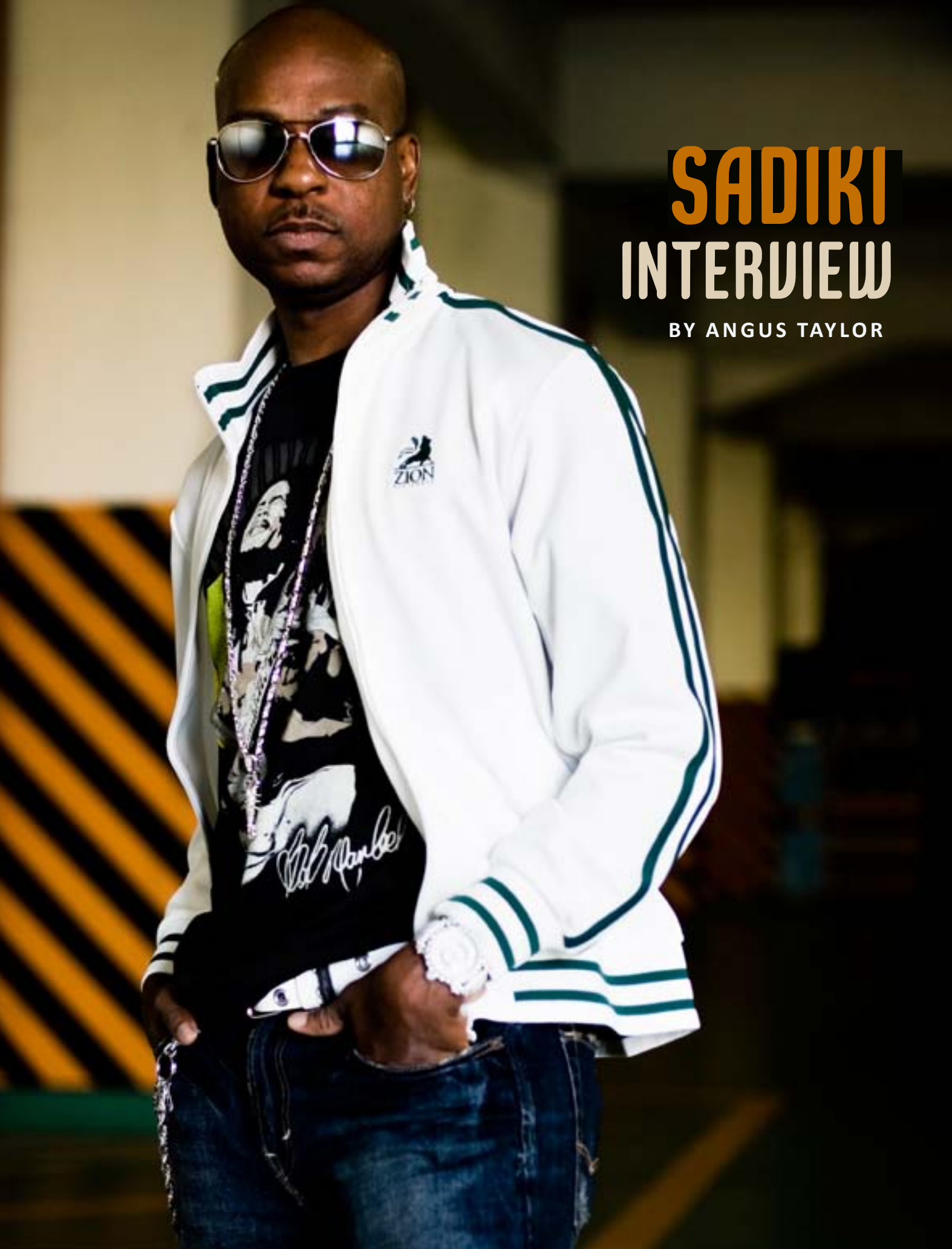
Over the last year I realized I've got a lot of lovers rock songs I should put together and the way the market is, I don't trust it to be put out in singles. I think it should be a body of work because traditionally lovers rock fans have always wanted a body of work rather a single here and a single there. It's mostly new artists and that's where I'm at with the music right now. 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. There are some established artists on there but there are some young fresh wonderful singers who are full of vibes. We've got Chantelle Hernandez, an artist who I signed in Jamaica, Tony Curtis and a lady called Angel in a duet, a lady from Japan called Masoko who sings in Japanese and English. We're the next generation to take the music forward for you to continue writing about. No disrespect to the older artists – everybody knows I work with more established artists - but now I have established Necessary Mayhem, Maroon and myself as a producer, we have to build.

Who's on your list to work with?

Shabba. I want to work with Shabba Ranks, Supercat and Shaggy. I think I'm really close to getting Shaggy! It's not just artists – I want to get in the studio with Dean Fraser to play some horns. (thinks) You've caught me off guard! Good question!

Describe yourself in one word.

Mischievous. Always full of mischief. You can even hear it my music. There's always something weird or crazy that goes off in my music – like a horn for no apparent reason but it makes ME laugh!!! (big laughter)



SADIKI INTERVIEW

BY ANGUS TAYLOR

Henry "Sadiki" Buckley Junior is an artist who has stayed under the hype radar while building up an impressive body of work. He's a singer/producer in the tradition of Beres Hammond (with whom he recorded and toured early in the last decade) who has travelled between Jamaica and the United States in the course of his career. His father was both a songwriter to Judy Mowatt and - recalling the musical/policing path of pioneering producer Duke Reid - was conductor of the Jamaica Constabulary Force band. Henry Junior left his father behind and moved to Chicago in his teens, where he was inspired by hip hop and local talent like the then burgeoning R Kelly. A 1997 album as Pancho Kryztal for Mercury subsidiary, Scratchie records (run by Deadly Dragon's Jeremy Freeman), was not supported by the parent label due to corporate politics. But Buckley was undaunted: moving back to Jamaica, changing his name to Sadiki and, ten years later, becoming literally "big in Japan" with his debut under the new moniker 'Morning's Come'. Last year he released the well-received lovers album 'Lifeline', which yielded a BBC World Beat number one song in African Queen. Angus Taylor spoke to this affable, reflective artist in the run up to his February 8th release 'Fi Di Dancehall' with Delly Ranks...

You've given your lovers rock fans an album Lifeline with Joe Fraser Records, now you're about to drop a dancehall combination album with Delly Ranks. How did you link with Delly, and what's the thinking behind these different sides to your music?

Delly and me go back to when we both dropped a track on the Red Bull & Guinness riddim. Then we recorded a song together called Girlfriend that was on my Morning's Come album and from there we held that connection and had a good vibe musically. As an artist I think it's important that you don't just paint in one colour. You wouldn't look at a great painter and expect him to paint in black and white. With my music I look at it the same way: whatever

I'm feeling, the people need to be exposed to it whether that be reggae, dancehall or R&B. I'm just getting the colours out there for the world.

I know you have some opinions on the whole reggae vs dancehall thing. Does the divide really exist?

I think if you're an authentic Jamaican who understands the culture then the answer to that question would be "yes". But if you asked the rest of the world they would tell you probably "no". As far as I'm concerned it all boils down to Jamaican music. As someone who comes out of the culture, reggae is a slower vibe whereas dancehall is more of an uptempo, electronic sound. But growing up the States and going to school they wouldn't even talk about "reggae" or if Shabba was doing dancehall or not - they'd just say, "That's that Jamaican shit!" (laughs)

The whole reggae/dancehall/conscious/slack thing is complicated for a foreign person. Jamaican recorded music has always been showcased in the dancehall - and someone like General Echo was doing his thing years before the new sound went international. Also slackness is as old as mento. There were even a few quite obscene tunes in the 70s...

I was on YouTube the other day watching a song called [Soul Sisters] Wreck A Buddy. I was shocked because the lyrics sounded like what you'd typically hear on a so-called dancehall type of vibe! So there really is no divide - people sing what they feel over whatever beat. It's complicated but it's also simple. What makes it simple is it's a part of the culture. So when people try to neglect certain parts of the culture and embrace other parts, that might be great for the world to see, but many people understand that's just part of the culture. If you go to parts of the world where people are living outside naked some people in those countries are like, "could you put some clothes on before the people with cameras come?" (laughs) But that's a part of

the culture and for some people that's something they'd go to that part of the world to see!

Does dancehall need cleaning up as some high profile artists have said?

Who is going to clean it up? When I grew up in the States listening to hip-hop older people would say "That's crap". When you get to a certain stage of maturity there is a point where you start looking at what the younger people are doing and it's "crap" because it doesn't apply to you anymore, and a lot of people in positions of power right now might be at that stage in life. But going back to your question, I'm not really into censoring people from saying what they want to say but if there are lyrics that are directly inciting violence against innocent people then I'm definitely against that. The media and broadcasters have done well in the last couple of years to put a stop to those lyrics in areas where children could pick it up.

You know your way around a studio but you're also happy to let others produce and co-produce. Would you say you're a collaborative person, and who is your favourite producer to work with?

Yes, I'm collaborative all the way. I have no issues with taking a backseat and let other producers come with fresh ideas. I've worked with a really great cast of producers: Tony Kelly who I did the Pancho Kryzta! album with, Dave Kelly, Computer Paul, Beres Hammond. From a knowledge and hands on perspective Tony Kelly surprised me the most while from a technical and lyrical standpoint it was Beres Hammond. But if I had to choose one person it would be Tony.

You hit the BBC World Beat number one with African Queen. That must be nice given lovers rock began in Britain. But you've also updated it with Delly as Jamaican Queen for the new album...

It felt great. the funny thing about it is that

song went to number one and I didn't know about for a month! I was on Facebook talking to DJ Warm n Easy from the BBC saying, "how's that song doing?" and he was like, "It's been at number one for a month". I was like, "What????". We'd always had the concept of doing some different remixes and Delly Ranks appeared around the same time, so I thought, "while this song's doing well outside of Jamaica I really want to push this song and open it up there" and so far it's doing really well. I don't know if it will be another number one but God is God, you know? (laughs)

You also finally released your Santa Claus tune [out on radio in 2009] for Christmas 2010. A lot of Christmas songs are quite sugary but you went deep with this one. Do you celebrate Christmas?

I am a believer in Christ so I celebrate Christmas. Santa Claus is not your typical Christmas Carol! It's one of those reality tunes asking Santa if he's going to come to the Caribbean soon because of what's going on with violence in a lot of our islands. I would compare it to the Santa Claus Tommy Cowan wrote where he asked Santa, "Do you ever come to the ghetto?"

Your father was in the police but also a musician. How did he feel about your decision to follow him into music?

Yes he was the conductor and musical director of the Jamaica Constabulary Force band for about ten years but he was also a singer and songwriter. He wrote Silent River for Judy Mowatt as well as Emergency Call. So he did the policeman thing and then he had his night job! Growing up my father never actually wanted any of his children involved in the music business. He pushed us far away from that. But what he failed to do was turn off the radio stations with all the music, so we were exposed! (laughs) When we moved to the States we were separated for about ten years and I did not see my dad until he moved to New York. He was

sick at the time so we went to see him and that was the first time he became aware that I was involved in music to that level (because at the time I was signed to Mercury Records and releasing by debut cd) and he was very pleased. Coming from him that was a real compliment.

When the album didn't do as well as you expected, how did you decide to start anew as Sadiki?

Music is a part of my fibre. My music wasn't dependent on that album - or any project - succeeding. After the Pancho Kryzta! album didn't work out I had some good connections through Tony Kelly and Dave Kelly so I decided to go to Jamaica. The name change came about through Computer Paul. That was in about 1998 or 99. At the time there was a deejay using the name Pancho who was starting to make some waves and I didn't want people to get confused. Computer Paul came up with the name and said it means "the great one". But I said to Paul, "I'm just coming up so I don't want that name deh!" (laughs) But I did some research and found out it actually means, in Muslim culture, "one who is faithful" so I thought, "I can work with that name!"

How did your album Morning's Come get so big in Japan?

We did a mixtape called the Sound Killachi which was just a street thing. Then I went and did a four or five city tour on the strength of that mixtape and a label approached us and decided to give me a deal. The scene in Japan is really active. Every time I look at what's happening I feel so good as a Jamaican because our culture is affecting so many people. It's the same worldwide but I say Japan specifically because of how far reaching it is and the number of people emulating the culture.

There's been a lot of concern in the Jamai-

can media about this phenomenon lately. Fears that foreign countries now have their own reggae and that Jamaica is being left out of the worldwide reggae market.

Reggae music will always be a Jamaican art-form if Jamaicans embrace it. And not just embrace one side of it but all things within the art-form. We can even speak about ska in that regard. I was talking to a couple of different people here in the States and when I mentioned ska as a Jamaican art-form they were surprised! I think for us as Jamaicans, instead of looking and debating so much about how the world sees us we need to start thinking about how we can push our music forward and embrace it more. Because if we don't do that, other people are going to do that for us. You can't blame someone for stepping in and doing what needs to be done. This is an art-form that is supposed to spread through the world. Japanese reggae, French reggae, UK reggae - I think it's great. It moves the culture, the people and our country forward, so long as we as Jamaicans own up and take ownership of the music. Stop worrying about how the world is viewing the thing and grasp it!

Finally, you've done a lovers album, you've done a dancehall album. Is Sadiki going to drop a roots album?

(big laugh) That's a very good question! Keep checking the pages of United Reggae and the iTunes store! I have a whole heap of things to say and I haven't even started speaking my mind! Trust me! It's funny because someone said on iTunes about Lifeline that I can't have a song like Here I Am To Worship and a song like Make Up Sex on the same album - I don't agree with that. Maybe there will be a more rootsy album - to be quite honest the tracks are already there! But whether or not I choose to make them all one type of album or just put them among various types of tracks, we'll see!

Courtney John, a retro-modern balancing act

INTERVIEW

BY TOMAS PALERMO



When Angus Taylor interviewed lovers rock reggae singer Courtney John for United Reggae in April 2010 he was riding on the success of his album 'Made In Jamaica' and the Peckings-produced hit single Lucky Man. Since then interest in Courtney John has only increased. The singer and producer formerly known as Yogi whose uncles Boya and Beres Hammond introduced him to the music business now has a solid international following. One of those global links is with California's Itation Records who are promoting Courtney John's new single Never Keep You Waiting, which features sparkling music arrangement by the Tune In Crew. With both a love of Jamaica's rocksteady sounds and modern international music of all sorts, Courtney John balances a career based on quality over quantity. He spoke to United Reggae about his recent recordings and how to be a successful artist in 2011.

When the album didn't do as well as you expected, how did you decide to start anew as Sadiki?

Music is a part of my fibre. My music wasn't dependent on that album - or any project -

Your new song Never Keep You Waiting on Itation Records will be released on Valentine's Day. How did that session come together?

Well, Facebook gets the credit (laughs)! One morning I was online and saw Itation [Records] pop up (in chat) and he says he has a project he wants me to be involved with. So I said 'Alright, send through the riddim'. It didn't take long for me to come up with something on it. Normally the riddim dictates what I'm going to sing or write. I don't set any boundaries as to what I'm going to sing, and that song just came out. I have a studio in Jamaica so I recorded the vocals here

What's the song's message, what were you feeling when you were recording it?

Most of my songs are about man-woman relationships because, you know, that's just my thing. This particular song is about a man and a woman and the woman is not too sure where she is in the relationship. The man is just trying to reassure her that he's not gonna keep her waiting. Because a woman can get worried after the relationship goes on for a while and there's no marriage and maybe she's getting pressure from her family... So this tune is saying, that's not gonna happen, the guy is never going to keep you waiting, and telling her all the great things she means to him. It's like, even though at times a man is out there hunting and gets distracted, he still knows that she means everything to him.



Did you know it was going to be Valentine's Day release?

[Itation] told me they wanted something geared toward the ladies. Normally though certain instrumentation and sound [on the track] will draw those things out. The music really determines if

I'll do a song that's socially conscious or about man-woman relationships or something else.

You also have a great song on the new Strictly The Best Vol. 42 compilation called "Love Is" based on the Treasure Isle hit "You Don't Need Me" by The Melodians. When did you record that track?

Lloyd Campbell from the Joe Fraser label produced that one. He contacted me and said he had this track and that my vocals would make magic with it. I recorded the song late early summer last year at my place in Kingston. That tune is doing great right now, it's number one on a few charts and is one of those songs that keeps building and building. Lloyd Campbell definitely has to get big up on that one!

The good thing about what we're doing now with the retro-tracks, is reminding people where the music was back in those days. It meant something; it was special. Sometimes people abuse the privilege of how powerful reggae is. So we wanted to remind them that there are still people who respect the artists who came before. The Melodians did the original track [that "Love Is"] is based on. A lot of young people who are Courtney John fans now will research where that track came from. It might be the first time they've heard the Melodians or the Super-sonics, who were the session band for Treasure Isle. Then they learn that Duke Reid was Coxsonne Dodd's biggest competitor. So you put a fresh face to it and try and keep it memorable. But all the other genres of music do it too. For instance, even now you have rock bands trying to sound like the Beatles or the Rolling Stones.

Your voice definitely reminds me of great Jamaican singers like B.B. Seaton from The Gaylads and Pat Kelly or Slim Smith from The Techniques and of course I hear the Curtis Mayfield and Marvin Gaye influence too. What were you listening to as a youth and how did you come to appreciate the old time sounds?

My uncles were both professional musicians – Beres and Boya Hammond. Boya is the one that got Beres into the music business and he got me into it as well. Back then, because of our economic status, we didn't have TV and them thing so the radio was the highlight of the house. We had two radio stations – JBC and RJR. We got music feeds from the BBC – rock 'n' roll and them kinda vibes, and then we have reggae and Motown -- Jackson 5 and Supremes and all of that was important. I grew up listening to a very eclectic batch of music. But I am sucker for the classic rocksteady era – Alton Ellis, The Paragons, The Melodians – I'm big fan of sad love songs! Those artists to me are the icons because they delivered that soul that lives on. Like when you go to a Rae Town dance [in Kingston] on a Sunday and it's almost like you're instantly reminded of that period. I grew up on the classics listening to the radio. But I'm still a fan of what goes on today too because I have to represent this generation.

When did you learn that Jamaican music was a truly international phenomenon?

I really have to give credit to Bob Marley and Bunny Wailer. I remember in 1986 I was watching a concert with Bunny Wailer playing by himself in Madison Square Garden! And I'm like, woah! That thing was powerful. From there I realized that reggae was impactful. In terms of media coverage [of Jamaican music], we have to give Bob [Marley] and the Wailers the credit.

What have you taken away from your experiences touring outside of Jamaica?

It reminds me of how special that our music and culture is and some times it's very humbling. The music [business] can expose you to a lot of things – I've met presidents of countries and billionaires of companies and for me it's like, I'm just a lickle youth from the country who sings some songs and that allows me to be in the company of these kind of people. But [also] you can be a part of things that can

change people's lives. That to me is the biggest draw of this whole thing. Obviously, to be able to take care of your family is an added plus.

Do you think we're coming out of a DJ phase in Jamaican music and back towards singers?

No, the DJs will always be there, whether its Yellowman, Brigadier Jerry or U-Roy or Mova-do. We have to start embracing it. We are Jamaicans, and Jamaicans are capable of doing lot of things. The next big hip-hop star might come off the Rock, you know? But I think now people are moving to a different vibration, they might want to hear singers a lot more because sometimes singer can be a lot more comforting in times of [economic] recession. But when money start run again and people start live good then it'll go back to DJ you know? Music speak to what people are going through and everything goes around in cycles. I grew up listening to a lot of DJs. I used to sneak out and go see Supercat, Silverhawk (Sound System), General Trees, Sasafrass and Charlie Chaplin and it spoke to me at that age. The youths are always going to find the cutting edge thing.

Outside of Jamaican music, what other styles of music do you listen and are styles we might not expect you to like?

I listen to anything that sounds good. Right now I'm listening to a lot of modern jazz instrumental music fused with hip-hop. I'm getting ready now to start another album so I'm trying to draw inspiration from all the different genres. I'm the type of artist that listens to everything, I have no biases toward good music – it could be country, rock, whatever. Obviously Jamaica is the root, the foundation, and I don't forget about that. It's easy in Jamaica because [the music] that we package and sell is something great and I get that sound every day. But I do explore music all the time; I'll go on the internet and listen to some music from India, some African music or Brazilian music –

keep the brain fresh and up-to-date with a different vibe that's going on around the world.

In your opinion, what does it take to be a successful artist in 2011?

Gone are the days when you could just sit at home and be an artist. Now you need a team to be successful. The people that you have and how they guide you governs the business that you do. To try and balance the music business and artistic headspace can be tedious for an artist. But the business side of music is so important now. [An artist needs] the right people who can make sure that your vision resonates with as many people as possible because ultimately [reaching fans] is the success of an artist. Not in terms of monetary expectations -- most times that's just the by-product. Fortunately or unfortunately the money 'a come in a it to where people make a lot of money off the success of their music and they become miserable! (laughs) Money doesn't make a difference!

I noticed you're up with all of today's technology -- Facebook, Twitter. As an artist what's your opinion on these tools?

It's a sign of the times. But ultimately I don't think it does much because in this day and age when we can reach out so easily to people, we're still seeing music sales go down and artists are playing to less people in the venues. In retrospect it seems that when we nah 'ave these technologies the music used to have a bigger profile. But for an independent artist like myself I do embrace the technologies but there's only so much I do with them because I feel that still it's the songs that are reaching people.

Jamaicans in general have really embraced new technology, right?

I was reading a report the other day that said Jamaica has the most BlackBerries per capita than any other part of the world!



Benaïssa INTERVIEW

BY ERIK MAGNI

DUTCH SINGER BENAÏSSA SCORES A HIT SONG

The Netherlands is really coming strong in the reggae market with great singers, labels and producers.

One of the most successful is singer, label owner and producer Benaïssa. His roots are in Surinam and he is part of the JahSolidRock label responsible for acclaimed efforts from Chezidek and Apple Gabriel, both albums were released last year.

Recently he scored a hit single with Yu Faya – a duet with Kenny B – in his home country. It has reached the number one spot and Benaïssa is proud and cheerful over this achievement.

“It feels great to have people really enjoying the song in my home country. I feel embraced by my roots”, tells Benaïssa.

RELATE TO THE LYRICS

Benaïssa believes that it’s a combination of things that has made Yu Faya such a hit tune.

“One of the things that I think people can relate to is the lyrics; you can tease each other by singing the hook ‘Yu Faya’ which means ‘you’re busted’”, he explains.

He met up with Kenny B on previous shows in Holland and it turned out that he was already working with production crew Not Easy At All, who are partners JahSolidRock.

He didn’t produce the song himself, but it was released on his other label 33 Creations.

“Yu Faya is produced by Joost ‘Houston’ Jel- lema, a promising all round music maker from Holland”.

BROAD REPERTOIRE

Yu Faya isn’t necessarily the type of reggae that I know Benaïssa for. To me he is a roots singer responsible for big tunes such as African Blood and Sodom and Gomorra. Even though he did cut the sun drenched EP *Voodoo & Coconut Water* in 2008.

Yu Faya is certainly a cross over tune, and it has obviously made an impact on the charts.

“Indeed Yu Faya is kind of a zouk. I feel free to sing on anything that feels right to me. I don’t care what it is. But this year I actually intend to drop a real roots album on JahSolidRock”.

NEW ALBUMS

Apart from releasing cross over hits, Benaïssa has plans to release several well produced roots reggae albums on JahSolidRock, with artists such as Zamunda, Lloyd De Meza and veteran singer Earl 16 this year.

“It also looks like I’m going to drop a cross over album in English and Surinamese with my friend Kenny B in 2011”.





Shauna McKenzie chose the name Etana because it meant "The Strong One" in Swahili – and strength is something she has had to rely on throughout the early stages of her career. Born in August Town, Jamaica and schooled in Florida, she joined the girl group GIFT at the start of the last decade but became dissatisfied with the direction her life was taking. She returned to Jamaica to start an internet café business, but her huge voice was soon in demand, leading to a stint singing backing vocals on the road with Richie Spice in 2005. Determined to defy the lurid expectations for female singers with a self-assured yet modest image, and fusing roots reggae with US soul, she released her highly acclaimed debut album 'The Strong One', in 2008, including the tune Wrong Address, which dealt with the prejudice faced by ghetto people trying to make their way in life. Now she is back with sequel 'Free Expressions' – which, despite its sweet soaring sounds, doesn't shy away from the harsh realities of Kingston life, boasting the international hit single August Town on Curtis Lynch's Inner City Lady rhythm. Angus Taylor spoke to Etana while she was in the USA, following the release of her empowering new video People Talk.

Tell me about what your album title Free Expressions means to you?

It's saying things how you want without being too concerned about the opinions of anyone. Just writing freely and saying it how it is.

How do you think this album progresses from the last?

For the first album I was a little bit cautious about the things I would write, even with the love songs. I had seven love songs on the first album and it was hard for me to do some of them because I didn't want to be so emotional and some of them weren't written by me. I only wrote one or two of them. For this album I did at least twelve songs on my own so I'm more comfortable as a writer.

You spent time in America and Jamaica - has this had an effect on your music?

Even with the first album The Strong One I did a fusion of R&B and blues - I think this is why some people consider my music as world music, besides reggae. I think the rhythm and blues comes from my experiences and my musical experiences here in America.

You sing what you call soul reggae but on the track I Got You you sing a pure gospel soul track. Who are your favourite soul singers?

Wow... I would say Gladys Knight and Stevie Wonder. When Gladys Knight sings her tone is just unbelievably warm to me and it goes deep in your bones. It goes to the bones when she sings. Stevie is the same in that you can hear the emotions from way, way deep and the lyrics take you far and beyond anywhere you are, from your own reality to somewhere else.

And on the other side, your two favourite singers from Jamaica?

Wow... Bob Marley - I have to say it! It sounds like something that just anyone would say but I have to say him first. And the next one, as a singer's singer - I have at least two or three more - but I'd go for Beres.

When did you first discover the power of your voice?

Being on the road with Richie Spice in 2005. Not that I wasn't singing before because I was always singing in high school doing the American national anthem but after being with Richie Spice people were requesting I come up and sing.

What do you think are the ingredients for an artist from Jamaica to succeed in America and the rest of the world?

Etana
INTERVIEW

BY ANGUS TAYLOR

I think you have to have an idea of the business as well as knowing what you want. You have to be very serious about it to go the extra mile to get where you need to go. And then be real with yourself.

How do you think Jamaican artists are perceived abroad?

Reggae is huge! I've seen people cry or pass out when they've seen their favourite artists. In any case, with any genre you will get critics as well as lovers of the genre, the music or the artists, but to me reggae artists are well received.

You just did the video for People Talk - tell me about the concept.

People Talk was written by Carol Dexter and myself and produced by C Specialist and a young producer called Rohan Dwyer. It's basically about people saying negative things about you to discourage you or bring you down, and saying never let people get you down, live your life how you want it and be happy living it how you want to live it.

How do you personally stop other people's criticism from bringing you down?

(laughs) I just keep going. I keep smiling. I pay no attention to it. Because I know that everyone will have their own opinion so I can't allow so many people to steer my direction or I'd be completely lost and confused.

Tell me about working with Curtis Lynch, who you did a large portion of the album with.

Curtis is really cool. We both listen. We both hear each other's opinions. If he hears a note that he doesn't like he may change it but otherwise he allows me to work freely and just sing it like I feel it. As long as I'm comfortable then he's comfortable.

What do you think of UK reggae?

I love it! I'll tell you why - I think that Europeans (not just the British but everybody in Europe) go really deep with reggae. They sometimes know even more than Jamaicans and that's being honest as far as I've seen. Some people - if not most - know a lot more about reggae than even Jamaicans right now, especially the younger generation. Especially when it comes to the real roots reggae and dubwise. They really go in and can give you the history of it all. When I perform in America and Canada I often find people singing back the songs but when I go to Europe people ask me to sing songs I have done that are not even in my setlist. They know all of them. So performing in London to me is crazy - they sing everything and are into the music really deep.

I know you've spoken out on your twitter about some of the music you hear playing on the radio in Jamaica. What would you like to see change?

Oh my god! You read my tweets! (laughs) I would like Jamaican djs and Jamaican people to appreciate reggae music. Yes, I have done some fusion myself with other genres but I think we are going too deep into hip hop and forgetting about the real bass line and the real drums in the reggae - the things that speak to the heart. For me right now, not everybody is a singer yet anybody can do a song and get it played on the radio if you have the right money. In America there is a lot of payola and thousands of dollars are spent on it from R&B to rap to whatever you can think of. However, the radio doesn't allow any music to be played on the mainstream radio if it's not up to standard. They won't even take the money to promote a song that's completely trash. Maybe once in a while something that may slide, but why does it always have to slide in the Caribbean?

Unlike other cultural artists I've spoken to, your criticism seems to be more about the

quality of the music than the lyrics. I guess I shouldn't be surprised given your album is called Free Expressions!

Yes, because even if you listen to soca music which has been very, very popular for years in different Caribbean countries, they talk about some of the craziest things! Sometimes in parables and sometimes out straight and the kids are singing it all the time! To me, people look to reggae from all over the world and it's so popular. Then there's the difference between reggae and dancehall which sometimes gets confused. For some reason it's very important to Jamaicans and people all over the world that reggae is supposed to be clean and music of the heart, like Bob Marley or Bunny Wailer's music. However, yes, we agree that reggae may evolve and people may come in with different ideas and try something else. But when it comes to trashy lyrics and tracks that are barely produced in a studio by a five year old or something then placed on the radio - people around the world are listening to them on one of the biggest stations in Jamaica and hearing some crap coming out of it every day. It doesn't say much for the dj or for reggae in general.

There's been talk of getting payola outlawed. Can that ever happen?

I don't think we'll be able to get rid of payola. Jamaica is a small Caribbean country and if they can't get rid of it in America I can't see how they can get rid of it in such a small place. Jamaican people are fighters, they are warriors, they are unruly sometimes but they can also be the sweetest people in the world depending how you look at it. I'm just saying there has to be some kind of standard. When I come to England, Europe or anywhere else, I hear reggae music playing on the radio that I don't hear in Jamaica and would love to hear. It's crazy because this is the root where it all comes from so why can't we hear more Peter Tosh on the radio? Why must it be on his birthday alone

that we hear music from Dennis Brown? Anyone who does great music like Marcia Griffiths - we don't hear those songs on the radio at all. It has to be a "throwback day" or some other special day. Instead you hear stuff that irritates you after half an hour.

How has your life changed since you stopped being in a group in the US and became a solo artist in Jamaica? What have you given up and what have you gained?

I've given up the ability to see my son every day. (laughs) I've given up some of my own personal time because I'm always working either on the road or recording. But I've gained a lot of young hearts - especially young girls who thought that the only way to do music was to talk about their sexual body parts and to wear nothing or maybe just underwear. I think I've changed that a lot. I've gained a lot of young hearts and true honest fans.

On My Name Is you speak specifically to women. Which women in history do you admire most and what do they all have in common?

Nanny of the Maroons, Oprah, Portia Simpson Miller, my mother and my grandmother. My grandmother the most of anyone in the world! (laughs) Will, courage, survival, inner strength.





Lloyd Brown

INTERVIEW

BY ANGUS TAYLOR
PHOTOS BY SISTA IRIE

Lloyd Brown is surely the single most consistent force in reggae - British or otherwise - with a string of hit songs and critically acclaimed albums over some 28 years. He first broke through in the harmony group Sweet Distortion, played Otis Redding in the groundbreaking musical *Black Heroes* in the Hall Of Fame, and carved out a career in the nineties as one of the biggest names in male Lovers Rock, alongside the likes of Peter Hunnigale and Don Campbell. Next came a shift in a roots direction, inspired by Buju Banton's own transformation via 'Til Shiloh, with the tune Power Of Jah on Saxon's relick of Fabian's Prophecy rhythm. Since then he has begun producing himself, cleverly using vintage samples, nicely-produced digital drums and live instruments from friends to avoid the usual sound compromises forced by budget. His 14th longplayer *Cornerstone* hit stores this November and it's his most diverse and special-guest-heavy yet. Angus Taylor spoke to him at home in Essex about the new record, why he doesn't like being labelled a "UK reggae artist" and much more...

You seem to be alternating between very "reggae" albums like *Silver* and *For Your Consideration* and more eclectic albums like *Brownie Points* and *Cornerstone*. Is this deliberate?

Yes, by way of waking people's ears up to what I do and my influences. Although I love reggae I love other genres as well. Anything goes so long as it has an emotive quality. If it warrants a reggae relick so be it. If covering something in a reggae style will take something away I'll record it in its original form.

Why does *Cornerstone* have such an enormous number of guest combinations?

It was very organic by nature. I didn't want to put this many songs on the album but my creativity doesn't let me be. I always end up with 15-18 songs because I like to fill up a cd.

It wasn't an orchestrated thing - a combination was just the natural way to go on a lot of those songs. It didn't even come to my attention until I read numerous reviews that said I had 11 collaborators! That even shocked me! That's got to be in the Guinness Book of Records or something!

Your previous four albums were co-released with Cousins records. This is the first album put out by your own company Riddimworks alone. What led to this decision?

There was nothing acrimonious between myself and Cousins. They truly respect me as an artist and my ambition and direction. But the way the industry is moving with the whole digital revolution and also with me working in America for the last three years, the one criticism I had with my last album *For Your Consideration* was nothing to do with the content - just its availability. From the dj's perspective it was hard to get a copy of the whole album. But even if the album was distributed properly in America, you still have to be a tangible entity by being there in person so they can get to know you by seeing you perform rather than just hearing a song on the radio or mp3 player. People like Tippa Irie have been in the US market for quite some time with Pato Banton, The Black Eyed Peas and Jurassic 5 and I saw what he was doing and thought, "there's nothing to stop me from doing it right now". No disrespect to the UK but they were spoilt by the amount of material they were receiving from me but with the world not receiving it as well.



Let's talk about some of your many guests on the album by starting with Curtis Lynch. You've released his voice on a lead vocal for the first time ever - is that right?

Curtis is one of the most prolific young producers we have right now. I've admired him since a while back and the respect has been mutual. We'd always wanted to work with each other but due to our commitments it was not to be. Then he did a remix of Stress with Tippa Irie on the General rhythm and I wanted him to collaborate on For Your Consideration but he was working with Etana getting her album together. So for this album I phoned him and said, "I want you to be on this album and it won't be released unless we collaborate so you've got my career on your conscience!" He sent me rhythm tracks for my approval and I heard one with him singing guide vocals where it so happened that the lyric was "the stone the builder refuse shall be the head cornerstone" when I already had Cornerstone as the title of the album! So I phoned him up and said, "I'm using your vocal tracks" and he said, "No! No! No! It's a guide vocal!" but I said, "I don't care, I'm using your vocal tracks and it's going to be a coup for me because it will be the first time you've sung on anything you've produced!" I can't pass that up!

Then there's the roots track No Thank You, on the Punky Reggae Party rhythm, which has the biggest number of combinations. Nereus Joseph is an old friend, Matic Horns you've been working with for a long time, but how did you get General Levy, Top Cat and Macka B all on one track as well?

It's just through mutual respect. We'd meet up at events, exchange numbers and say "we must do something... blah blah blah." But the way I make my albums is organic and I wanted to put a real rockers-steppers tune on the album. I'd already relicked Aswad Warrior Charge on my album Against The Grain, and another I always wanted to do was Bob Marley's Punky Reggae

Party. There are two versions - the three minute thirty and the nine minute forty-five second version where you hear Bob scating and you really hear the blues influence through that man. It also paid homage to the punk movement which really walked side by side with reggae in the mid '70s. So I wanted to bring the rhythm to a 2K10 vibe and for the horn line Matics were the first and only choice. And because of the richness of that track it didn't make sense to have any new artists - just veterans from my era. Nereus, General Levy and Top Cat all came to the studio but Macka B was about to leave for Jamaica so he just sent me the vocal and did an "e-session" with me.



You use Bob Marley samples in very creative ways on your albums. It's like you're saying, "Let's embrace Bob but use his music to create something new".

I would agree with that. I'll say on record that out of all the Marley children I really rate Stephen Marley in terms of his production skills. When he did the Chant Down Babylon album the reviews were kind of mixed but I really loved the concept of taking Bob's vocals and putting them in something surreal while still staying integral to his message. The collaborations went from Lauren Hill to Stephen Tyler from Aerosmith and that just showed me the versatility and open-mindedness of Stephen's production. It wasn't that I copied him but I just found myself not wanting to go down the route of just reproducing "Bob Marley" tracks or having a "Bob Marley-esque vibe". I just wanted to do something fresh and inspire: not only to honour Bob - as you should - but to give my take on his influence.

You held an informal online poll for which songs your fans wanted to hear you cover. As usual there are quite a few cover versions. Which did your fans suggest and which were your own decisions?

There were so many but the one that featured the most was [Cliff Richard's] Miss You Nights. But the strange thing was I already had that one recorded so I was just trying to feel people out and find out where their heads were at. One fan on Facebook suggested

that song because her mother liked it and that was good enough for me! Some of the songs were very predictable in terms of very soulful artists like Luther Vandross, who I rate and admire, but my influences are bigger than that. There are certain songs that I won't cover because they're so good and produced so well that they just cannot be bettered. Like some Marvin Gaye songs. I tried covering Inner City Blues and it was a nice version but after I listened to that deep album [What's Going On] again and heard that final track I thought, "It doesn't make sense to cover any of Marvin's songs". He nailed it and he nailed it with improv - you can't emulate improv from an artist like that.

What else do you look for in a song to cover?

I don't cover songs that other people have covered more than once. I love Sting's Fields Of Gold but I won't cover it because it's been done and Maxi Priest has done it from our end. Sharing The Night was the exception! I thought it was a Delroy Wilson tune and when I heard the Dr Hook cut I thought, "Let's do it properly now!" No disrespect to Delroy, his version is good, but he repeats the second half of the first verse through the song which is wrong. When you hear the original version of a song with the original lyrics you try to do as good a ver-

sion as you can.

Only in a Lloyd Brown interview could we be talking about Delroy Wilson versus Dr Hook! You have incredibly broad taste. A typical fan of Punky Reggae Party would not be a typical fan of Miss You Nights yet here they are on the same album.

Yes, I have no fear. With 28 years under my belt I think my artistic licence warrants it and I try not to limit myself to the reggae genre. I heard the Dropleaf rhythm came about when Don Corleon wanted to relick Maxi Priest's Wild World and that's why the chord progression is similar. But the Dropleaf created the resurgence of the one-drop in Jamaica - something that has existed in the UK for years. It would have been no different if Peter Hunnigale had sung on that song but because it came from Jamaica it had a lot of credence. My thing is, a good singer is the best friend a song can have and vice versa. Whatever song has an emotive quality and gets into your consciousness, it's got to be positive whatever genre. It's not just reggae that brings consciousness to the world. People like Baba Maal and Youssou N'Dour, even though they speak in their native tongues they're singing about consciousness as well. I like to sit down and eat Stew Fish and Rice but if I have it every day I'm going to get sick of it.

(laughs) If I released an album and only two people downloaded it I would think there was something wrong with me. What's happening in the news with Wikileaks and Mr Assange, that's the ultimate level of filesharing, and Lloyd Brown releasing an album doesn't really compare. But in answer to your question, it's sad that music doesn't hold its value but it doesn't hold its value for everyone - Bob Marley, Madonna, The Beatles. Once people download it from iTunes and put it on their computer it's there for the taking. And the younger generation who are brought up on computer chips and binary numbers don't have a purist view on it. If you show them a 7-inch single they'll be like, "Do I eat off it?" They can't be blamed for that. I Googled myself and saw "Lloyd Brown torrent" and thought "I must be popular for people to want to download me" so I take it as a sweet and bitter thing.

It's been a sad year for reggae. Sugar Minott, Sonia Pottinger, who gave you the rhythm for Another Sunday to use on the album, and Gregory Isaacs have recently passed away. How did you feel about Gregory's passing?

It was like losing my father all over again. With Sugar Minott it was like losing my brother, but with Gregory it was like losing my father. Every first generation immigrant from the West Indies knows him and his works and that's a huge achievement. We've been losing artists with alarming regularity and it's only then that you truly realize just how many songs he made. I'm not saying that all his songs were really good. I'd say on record that some left a lot to be desired. But songs like Soon Forward, the first song released on the Taxi label, was a milestone for me. You don't have enough time for me to answer this question. You should have just asked this first and let it fill up the whole interview! But losing Gregory was like losing my dad.

Album 15 has already started. What can we

expect?

It's going to be part of my 30th anniversary because although it will be released next November it will follow through into 2012. It's a big year for me for more than one reason because it's Jamaica's 50th year of independence, it's the Olympics and it's my 30th year in the business. It's exciting and it will be a special album based on where my headspace is right now. I feel I have the right to make the music I want to make, irrespective of genre. It's reggae-based but I want to break new frontiers.



REVIEWS



Culture at Joe Gibbs



In 1976 Joseph Hill got together with Kenneth Dayes and his cousin Albert Walker to create one of arguably Jamaica's finest harmony trios. They were originally known as the African Disciples but it was as

Culture that they would make their everlasting mark.

Their songs, in the roots tradition, quickly became a part of the vibrant, politically charged reggae scene of the day and when in 1977 they released their debut album 'Two Sevens Clash' its success, especially with many disaffected youths in the UK, brought Culture to the attention of the mainstream and introduced them to wider international audience. Reggae was on the zenith of a golden period and Culture, despite a few personnel changes, rode that wave, with Joseph Hill constantly at the helm, further than most as they were constantly touring and continuing to spread their message right up until his sad passing in 2006. Now VP records are releasing a 4CD collection that reassembles three classic sets from that early period, all produced at Joe Gibbs and adds a forth disc featuring many tracks that are appearing on CD for the first time.

Now having just given 'Two Sevens Clash' a mighty entrance I was surprised to find that CD1 is in fact the following years follow up 'Baldhead Bridge'. That said this album did consolidate Culture in the position as one of Jamaica's premier roots rock reggae vocal groups and is packed full of Rasta anthems including the joyous Jah Love, Them A Payaka, the dread nyabinghi of So Long Babylon A Fool I (And I) plus of course the title track with its nursery rhyme style chorus helping to emphasize the exultant mes-

sage.

CD2 is 'More Culture' and is the one that almost got away. It was released at the dawn of dancehall in 1981, but Culture weren't having any of it and were sticking to their roots, thus at the time it was somewhat overlooked. Of course as time passes and styles come and go this stunning set is now looked back on as a bona-fide roots & culture classic. Rasta anthems like Innocent Blood, More Vacancy, Play Skillfully and Callie Weed Song made that original and its limited release a much sought after album among collectors.

Time for CD3 and 'Two Sevens Clash', the title was taken from a Marcus Garvey prophecy about chaos erupting on 7/7/77. This powerful debut was the must have reggae accessory for any self respecting music fan in the UK, back in that long hot summer of '77. Musicians on the album read like a veritable who's who of reggae with Sly Dunbar on drums, Lloyd Parks - bass, Robbie Shakespeare - Guitar and a horn section that consisted of Vin Gordon, Tommy McCook, Bobby Ellis and Herman Marquis supplying the riddims for their forthcoming anthems like See Them A Come, I Am Not Ashamed, Natty Dread Taking Over and the prophetic title track.

Bringing things nicely to close on CD4, 'As Hard As The Rest', VP have rounded up 17 non-album Joe Gibbs sides from Culture, including their debut Belmont single This Time and eleven dub versions, credited to the Mighty Two and Joe Gibbs & The Professionals. It is here that we hear the skills of Thompson and Gibbs at the mixing desk as they prove they can knob twiddle with the best of them. Versions of Informer and I Am Not Ashamed are as mad as any Upsetter dub, with the latter throwing down effects from car horns to running water and ringing telephones. Whether you are a long time fan of Culture or just making your first inroads on the reggae path then this, along with VP's 2008 'Culture & Friends - Culture and the Deejays at Joe Gibbs', showcases what is probably regarded as this trio's finest work, a collection of classic roots, rockers from the golden age of reggae delivered by one of reggae's truly golden bands.

Review by Karl Pearson



Free Expressions

'Free Expressions' is Jamaican songstress Etana's sophomore album, and the follow-up to her acclaimed debut album 'The Strong One', released some three years ago.

On her latest effort – that hit the streets February 8 – she has penned 12 of the 14 tunes and collaborated with a variety of producers – ranging from the master of smoothness Kemar "Flava" McGregor to the somewhat tougher Curtis Lynch.

Several of the tunes have already been released, for example slick productions I Know You Love Me and Happy Heart. 'Free Expressions' also contains a bunch of great new tunes, and include highlights such as War and the gospel infused I Got You,

produced by duo Alborosie and Specialist.

There's no doubt that this album offers great quality, but there are two songs that lowers the overall impression. The 'N Sync influenced My Name Is and the schizophrenic Venting should have been left out.

'Free Expressions' offers danceable riddims and soulful singing. It's all in all a strong follow-up album from a singer that will hopefully get her big breakthrough very soon.

Review by Erik Magni



Steely and Clevie - Digital Revolution



Steely & Clevie are two of the most gifted musicians and producers coming from Jamaica. They are responsible for numerous hits spanning over three decades and their musicianship has been utilized by producers such as King Jammy and Augustus "Gussie" Clarke.

Now VP Records has bestowed them with a three disc compilation containing 42 of their own productions and a DVD with almost two hours of material. Steely, who sadly passed away in June 2009, and Clevie, have been in the music business since the 70's. Their first recording together was

Hugh Mundell's classic Africa Must be Free (by 1983) produced by Augustus Pablo. Afterwards, Steely & Clevie went different ways – Steely joined the famous Roots Radics band and Clevie joined In Crowd, led by producer, singer and song writer Fil Calender. They met up again in the mid 80's and from then on they've played on countless of hit songs coming out of Jamaica – both as session musicians at King Jammy's studio as well as on their own after they opened their own facilities in 1988. The 42 songs on 'Digital Revolution' showcase an era in reggae, an era when technology and computers reigned in the studio and in the dancehalls. And Steely & Clevie were masters of handling drum machines and keyboards. Their innovative style paved the way for digital, percussion driven and groundbreaking riddims such as Punany, Duckand Cat's Paw. 'Digital Revolution' includes plentiful of hits spanning over growling deejay Tiger's Whenand soulful singer Garnett Silk's Love is the Answer to more contemporary sounds in Sean Paul & Mr. Vegas' smash hit Haffi Get da Gal Yah (Hot Gal Today). Steely & Clevie's importance in reggae music cannot be exaggerated and this anthology certainly shows the minds of geniuses.

Review by Erik Magni

Hi Kee - Self Reliance

Jamaican singjay Hi Kee recently dropped his debut album 'Self Reliance' to etailers worldwide. It's 15 contemporary one drop productions and a ska tune from a variety of producers from all over the world – Finland, New Zealand and Jamaica are just a few of the countries represented.

Hi Kee first recorded in 2004, but his first single Woman of Virtue didn't hit the streets until 2009. From then on he has voiced a bunch of riddims. Most memorable is probably Fire Blaze on the mighty Prison Break riddim produced by Bassrunner Productions. He has also tried his hands on the ska flavoured Kokoo riddim and the sweet Tek A Train riddim.

Most remarkable about Hi Kee is his deep melodic voice and its resemblance to Prezident Brown. It actually sounds like they're the same person, particularly in the deejay parts on some of the tunes.

I'm a huge fan of the Prezident, so this is my cup of tea, especially Babylon Your System Collapse, a duet with Luciano and legendary deejay Brigadier Jerry, and Give Jah Thanks and Praise, with some nice melodica.



Swiss-based The Scrucialists did a great job with Mykal Rose in 2005 when they released Catch up di Fire. Included on 'Self Reliance' is a duet with Hi Kee and Mykal Rose on the same riddim. Unfortunately Mykal Rose's voice is tortured with auto-tune. A shame really.

With such a diverse range of producers you would assume 'Self Reliance' to be a schizophrenic effort. But it's surprisingly consistent and if you like the usual Eurocentric one drop it should probably belong in your record collection.

Review by Erik Magni

Curtis Lynch and Various Artists - The Love Directories

UK Uber-producer Curtis Lynch Junior continues in his 2011 lovers direction with this aptly named compilation on his Necessary Classics imprint. The follow-up to January's EP by Jamaican powerhouse Chantelle Hernandez is a serene, stately dubby set of romantic sides, both released and unreleased, featuring a mixture of veterans, fresh and non-reggae talent alike.

Singles buyers will be familiar with many tracks like the late Delroy Wilson's Lynch remake of Worth Your Weight In Gold: the Gussie Clarke produced title piece from his 1984 Burning Sounds LP using rhythms from 1978. Toni Stylez, who appeared on Curtis' 2006 collection The Experience, then supplies a dreamy cover of the Impressions I'm So Proud, while ex Aswad singer Brinsley Forde's 2007 cut of Bubblin (on Lynch's retread of the General rhythm) boasts lovely crisp but soft horns and a little dub mix on end.

Next we go minor key on the Baltimore-like Thinking by Tony Curtis and Angel, before Poison, the first of two helpings from Chantelle's EP. Yet Curtis can't stay out of dancehall for long and lifts the mood with UK top ten star Michie One and Mayhem mainstay Blackout JA's deejay duet over another Gussie Clarke inspired tentpole, the mighty Rumours.

Soul singer Glenn Lewis reprises his hit



Don't You Forget It reggae style on 2008's bass-weighted Shank I Sheck, then it's the gruff Blackout again dueting with veteran Nadine Sutherland on the classic Brown Sugar track I'm In love With A Dreadlocks. After that comes a truly perfect pairing: an unheard Gregory only mix on Lynch's relick of Clarke's Inner City Lady base, also revived by Etana for August Town. One of the strongest new showings is Right Here by genre spanner (and The Streets collaborator) Kevin Mark Trail. Finally Masako from Japan gives a bilingual vocal to the Worth Your Weight In Gold rhythm - bringing the set to an almost palindromic close.

Released for Valentines Day this is aimed more at the lovers album market than Curtis' usual eagle eyed legion of dancehall fans. But if you're any kind of fan of good reggae these bottom heavy, drifting platters should be on standby for romantic situations in years to come.

Review by Angus Taylor

Love Letter by Cen'C Love



'Love Letter' is rather rooted in contemporary R&B and hip-hop spiced with some dancehall and jazz vibes. The first single Casanova gives a good view of how the album sounds – mellow, electronic and intimate, at times almost hymn like.

Cen'C Love's laid back singing also contrasts nicely to the mild bombastic beats.

It may not be reggae, but if you like neo soul with some added Caribbean flavor then you should definitely check this album.

Review by Erik Magni

In recent years several children of legendary reggae musicians have entered the stage – Omar Perry, Tarrus Riley and Queen Ifrica to name a few.

Now it's time for ex-Wailer Bunny Wailer's daughter to drop her debut album entitled 'Love Letter', containing 13 songs with themes such as love and everyday life.

'Love Letter' is not as I had imagined it. As a daughter of a legendary roots singer, you would think that Cen'C Love would travel the same path. But no. This is not a roots album. Actually it's not really a reggae album.



The Bristol Reggae Explosion

Black Roots are one of my all time favourite UK reggae bands. Their sound is in the same great tradition as Aswad, Misty in Roots and Steel Pulse – heavy as lead bass lines, groove and clear melodies. And Black Roots were apparently part of the Bristol reggae scene, a music scene that is now put on wax by Bristol Archive Records.



'The Bristol Reggae Explosion 1978-1983' is according to the label the first and only attempt to document the local reggae scene from the late 70's and early 80's.

According to Bristol Archive Records none of the tunes – except for the Black Roots tunes – have ever been reissued and this is their debut in digital format.

It was certainly a long overdue deed. This is a historical document that includes great music and very informative liner notes about the Bristol reggae scene and the bands and artists that appear on the compilation.

Roots reggae dominates the 14 tracks by eight bands and artists and there are several highlights here.

Four Point Plan, by a band called Restriction that only released one four track twelve inch in 1983 mixed and engineered by Mad Professor at his Ariwa Studio in London, is a deejay lead masterpiece with some nice dub echoing going on.

Black Roots and Talisman are represented by three tracks each; two of Talisman's are live recordings. All six are classic UK roots with solid brass arrangements.

Sharon Bengamin's Mr Guy is lovers rock in the Janet Kay tradition and keeps things sweet and smooth.

Today DJ Stryda of Dubkasm keeps the Bristol reggae flag flying high, and this compilation shows that he has a firm foundation to rely on.

Review by Erik Magni

ARTICLES



Rebel Salute 2011

“The darker the sky, the brighter the stars”... Persian proverb

Each year, Tony Rebel celebrates his birthday in a crowd of 20,000-30,000 fans. On January 15, 2011, Tony Rebel and Flames Productions once again brought to the quiet little seaside village of Alligator Pond, the 18th annual Rebel Salute, which this year landed exactly on his special day. Deep in the countryside, close to the seaside and always on the conscious side, Rebel Salute brings together many of Jamaica’s finest singers and players. Rebel Salute is a cultural showcase carefully crafted to emphasize the positive side of reggae and attracts music lovers from all over the island while continuing to grow in international fame. Rebel Salute has become the premiere stage show, to many of the island’s music loving tourists, due to its old time roots atmosphere laced with positive vibes and Rastafari lividity.

I always arrive a day early to take in the austere beauty of Alligator Pond located on the border of St. Elizabeth and Manchester Parishes. Cruising past the bustling town of Santa Cruz, one sees a jagged mountain ridge eventually leading down to the smoky dark green sea. The bumpy silhouette of the mountain distinctly resembles the back of an alligator, sloping gracefully into the image of a forested green snout resting lazily on the water’s edge. In reality, there are no alligators in this area, only crocodiles, laying quietly in the watery morass and lazily sunning while watching for a quick meal. Pockets of fishermen congregate along the beach, while clouds of crystal white birds circle above worn wooden canoes. Alligator Pond is known for quickly changing weather. The first day was a hedonistic, joyful experience, full of sun, swimming and relaxation. Late the next afternoon, a darkened sky broke into heavy rain. A few hours later, the rain fully retreated at dusk leaving a glowing red, gold and green rainbow painted across the alligator mountain, a radiant symbol of Jah’s magnificent handiwork.

After the skies cleared, Rebel Salute began early in the evening, maintained a well organized pace and ending hours past dawn. Tight band changes transitioned the night, highlighting the talents of premier players from Gumptian Band, Live Wyaa, Ruff Cutt, Harmony House, Black Soil, and Toots’ legendary Maytals. Newer singers were mixed between legendary artists making it risky to arrive late or leave early. The line-up, shorter than previous years, offered a comprehensive history of reggae evolution, emphasizing magical moments from early reggae to the latest trends. Old time legendary favorites included Carl Dawkins known as “Mr. Satisfaction,” “Johnny Dollar’s” Roland Burrell and long time favorite Ken Boothe performing a solid history of foundation reggae. Lone Ranger and Dennis Alcapone delivered an outstanding primer of early Jamaican dancehall riddims.

Dazzling appearances included Beres Hammond, David Brooks (aka Mavado), I Octane, Tarrus Riley and Queen Ifrica. The audience worked into a frenzy, waving flags, blowing horns and craving more with each appearance of these Jamaican favorites. Beres Hammond connected hard with the women in the crowd and ran through favorite tunes such as “Rockaway,” “I Feel Good,” “Tempted to Touch,” along with the “A” Class sounds of the Harmony House singers and players. Beres remained true to his reputation throughout, undeniably demonstrating his legacy as one of Jamaica’s most beloved singers.



I Octane artfully revved up the crowd followed by David Brooks aka Mavado, singing a strictly cultural set including “Jah Jah is Coming Soon,” “Hope and Pray” and “Messiah.” The crowd roared throughout Mavado’s set begging for it never to end. Queen Ifrica may well be reggae’s most respected artist. Her stage presence commands respect from all, dancehall and roots lovers alike, delivering critically potent messages and urging a consciousness that could truly change the world. Queen Ifrica is undeniably a force of nature, her intellect and talents combined into an undefiable presence.

Other notable performances of the night include golden girl, Nadine Sutherland who was energetic, sexy and entertaining. She looked wonderfully stylish, clad in tight golden pants, high heel shoes and beautifully styled hair. Her voice remained sweet and alluring while taking full charge of the stage. Chuck Fender and Fantan Mojah performed a stylistic dancehall clash although not allowing for the full talents of each artist to be recognized.

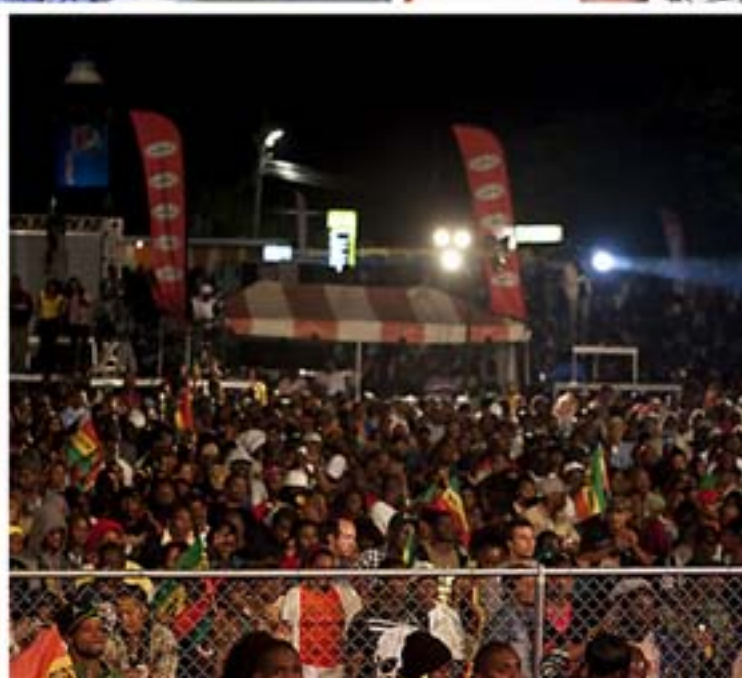
Qshan Dia was one of the special surprise performances of the night, fully appreciated by the crowd noting his remarkable Luciano quality voice. Many of the foreign media commented

on a desire to hear more from this extremely talented artist in the future. Romain Virgo, Jack Radics, AJ Prown, Spanner Banner, Little John, Tristan Palma, Stevie Face, Bryhan Art, Sister Carol, and Professor Nuts rounded out the night with musical excellence.

Massive respect goes out to all the newer artists such as Brimstone, Binghami Fiya, Jah Cutta, Hopeton James, Junior X, Major Lloyd, as well as Tony’s Rebel’s son and daughter who contributed to the night’s ambience.

The adage that it takes a village to raise a child, holds true with “it takes a village of artists to create a magnificent and successful stage show.” Tony Rebel’s professionalism, talent and never failing commitment to continue Rebel Salute in the light of incredibly difficult economic times should be noted by the governing leaders of Jamaica. There is little doubt that reggae music may likely be Jamaica’s most viable natural resource, one that should be promoted world wide and invested in on an ongoing basis as a cultural treasure to be protected and supported. Cultural reggae music in its most conscious form can lead the youth, provide hope and faith to the oppressed and educate the world about the power of the music.. for when it hits, you feel no pain.





In The Spotlight: Bob Marley's 66th Birthday Bash

MARLEY MUSEUM CELEBRATES

The official celebrations took place on Sunday, February 6 at 56 Hope Road, the home where Bob lived and worked, now become the Bob Marley Museum. The spirit of Bob filled the entire yard, as the Nyabinghi drums and chants began the day's celebrations of musical praise and tribute to the Most High JAH RASTAFARI.

The throng of Rastafari brethren and sisters in colourful traditional dress, exchanged greetings of Peace and Love, while IRIE-FM – the great reggae radio station – broadcast a live link of interviews with the many musical and Rastafari personalities present. A breakfast feast was served by the Legend Cafe, with aromatic Marley Coffee and fresh juices. A cake was cut.

The Nyabinghi drums rested, then Earl 'Chinna' Smith led his Inner Heights band and lead singer Sangie Davis, into live Marley music and the Marley legend showered blessings on all present. Artists such as Dean Fraser, Cherine Anderson and Tarrus Riley performed live in the space outside the famous house, and the grounds rocked with the joyousness of the music and the spirit.

MARLEY RINGTONES

The Marley Birthday tribute had begun days earlier, at a special event also held at the Museum. There popular cellphone company DIGICEL launched a contract to enable downloads of Marley ringtones on their phones. This is another coup by the company which also has promotional links with Olympic superstar Usain Bolt and stunning Miss Uni-

verse runner-up Yendi Phillips. Signing of behalf of the Bob Marley Foundation was Marley Museum Director Jacqueline Stewart and Donisha Prendergast of the Marley family.

A massive concert at Trench Town Culture Yard on the Saturday night, at which a host of artists paid tribute to Marley in the inner-city ghetto where he lived and made music. Other events included a massive free concert on Marley's birth night at Emancipation Park.



MARLEY – NATIONAL HERO!

The mood of this year's celebration was heavily elevated by a new campaign for Marley to be declared a National Hero, this time led by IRIE-FM's 'Running African' radio show, whose host Andrea Williams has renewed this issue, particularly in light of controversy surrounding the recent naming of a new Jamaican aerodrome after the English author of the James Bond books, while Marley has received no similar national recognition.

Therefore the media and public comments about Marley circulating over the days leading to his Birthday focused on the many ways in which the Rastaman has earned the national tribute of Hero. By mid-morning of Bob's Birthday the Minister of Culture Olivia Grange joined in the chorus and announced she would spearhead the public effort to have her government give Marley the honour he deserves. About time!!!

REGGAE FILM FESTIVAL NEWS



By popular request of fans of the Reggae Film Festival, the month of February will not pass without a taste of Reggae films. As such, the Jamaica Film Academy will host a REGGAE FILM FESTIVAL PREVIEW at the Bob Marley Legend Cafe, 56 Hope Road, on February 25. The event will show trailers of films already entered in the film festival, scheduled for May 23-27 at the Whitter Village, Ironshore, Montego Bay.

From the JFA archive labelled 'The Best of the Reggae Film Festival', COUNTRYMAN is a classic film by Jamaican director Dickie Jobson. A small plane flown by a young American couple crashes off the Hellshire coast and the police begin a hunt for what is assumed to be a ganja escapade gone awry. The couple are rescued by Countryman, a native fisherman and mystic, whose fire-cooked meal of Jamaican food he prepares for the couple has become a classic of

reggae film scenes.

Jamaica Film Academy chairman, actor Carl Bradshaw does his usual good job of playing a major film role, this time as the police chief and will answer questions from the audience in the CineChat session after the screening. Young Jamaican digital animator Reinardo Chung will showcase his film BAD INFLUENCE and talk about his film art.

BBC-TV ENTERS REGGAE FILM FESTIVAL

The Jamaica Film Academy is proud to announce that BBC-TV has entered its first film in the Reggae Film Festival with REGGAE BRITANNIA, an exciting new documentary spotlighting some of the genre's most influential and greatest artists. Part of the highly successful and critically acclaimed Britannia series for BBC Four, Reggae Britannia explores and celebrates the



impact of reggae on British music and culture from the Sixties through to the mid-Eighties.

The documentary delves into the world of reggae, examining everything from the music, the bass lines and the spliff, to black kids speaking brummie or cockney, the romance of Jamaica and the smell of British streets in the Seventies. Travelling through the years, the programme talks to the performers who brought their music to the UK from Jamaica, discusses how reggae helped forge Rock Against Racism, showcases the New Wave bands of the Eighties who were influenced by the genre and explores how the genre became a part of the British mainstream by the mid-Eighties. Directed by Jeremy Marre, the programme hears from The Specials, Dennis Bovell, Chris Blackwell, UB40, Paul Weller, Janet Kay and Carroll Thompson, Dennis Alcapone, Boy George and many more.



his history as a DJ who introduced dub music to British clubs and radio. Historical footage and good interview.

EVERYDAY SUNSHINE is a surprising feature documentary about US rock band FISHBONE, who included reggae in their avant-garde, dynamic and revolutionary music that influenced such bands as No Doubt, Black Eyed Peas and more. Fascinating footage and story narrated by 'Matrix' star Laurence Fishbourne are certain to capture interest and viewer votes.

The Reggae Film Festival is a project of the JAMAICA FILM ACADEMY, a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) that is funded by private sector sponsorship

Text by Barbara Blake Hannah

OTHER DOCUMENTARY ENTRIES

The BBC entry will face stiff competition for the Best Documentary Honour Award, as it will compete with such films as HOLDING ON TO JAH, the long-awaited documentary tribute to Emperor Haile Selassie 1, and INTENSIFIED, the story of the British band that made Ska a popular musical phenomenon in the UK long after it was no longer the music of Jamaican reggae. The surprising renewal of interest in the brass-bound, big band music of the Jamaican 50s that was revived by INTENSIFIED, provides historic interviews, stereo-recorded soundtrack and an inside look at some of the people who love reggae music, even though they were not Jamaican, or even Black. Directed by Spanish film maker Jep Jorba, whose film on Rico Rodriguez was an entry in the 2008 RFF, INTENSIFIED tells their interesting story.

Another interesting documentary entry is SUPERSTONIC DUB about film maker Don Letts (DANCE HALL QUEEN, Bob Marley videos) and

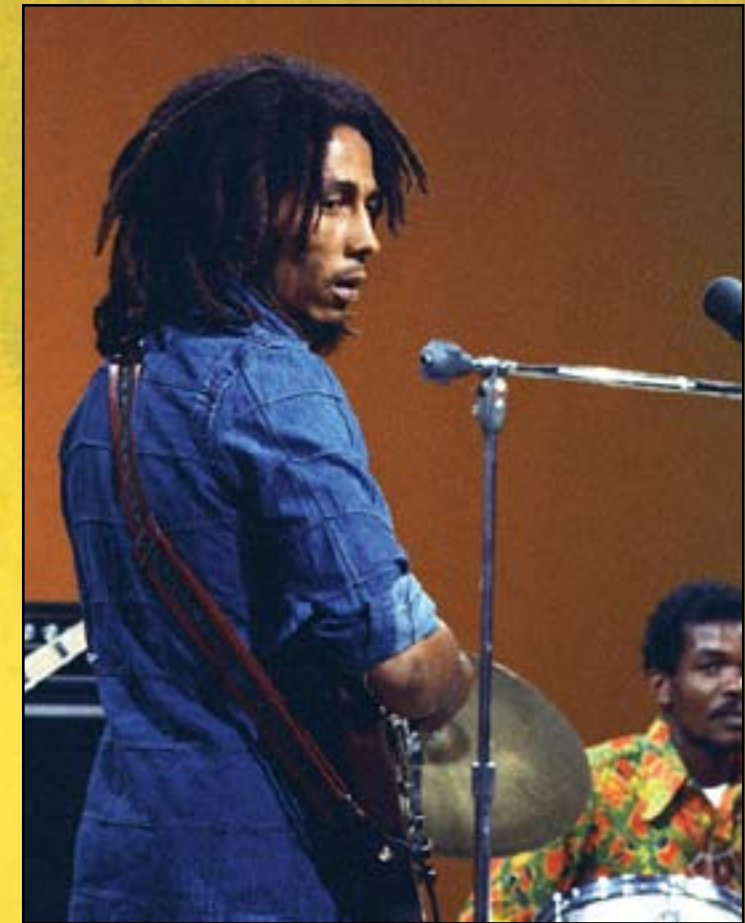
Could you be Loved? Human and Divine Love

BOB MARLEY WAS SOMETIMES PLAGUED BY DOUBTS ABOUT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH JAH RASTAFARI.

Despite his unwavering faith and the popularity that Bob Marley enjoyed, he was sometimes plagued by doubts about his relationship with Jah Rastafari. This apprehension took many forms and became even more pronounced after the attempts on his life. The unwillingness of his listeners--sufferers--to wake up to the message of liberation preached by visionaries such as Marcus Garvey and the corruption that he witnessed in Caribbean and African leaders was a constant source of disappointment. Although he faced many challenges, Bob never gave up hope and throughout his career, he was willing to explore his doubts and faith through his songwriting and interviews.

As a devout Rastafari who was opposed to Babylon and as a musician who had gained enormous wealth from Babylon, Bob tried to reconcile his beliefs about the oneness of humanity with the contradictions he observed and to maintain balance between his materialist ambitions and spiritual goals. For while he actively courted the adoration of his listeners, "Play I on the R&B/ Want all my people to see/We're bubbling on the top 100/ Just like a mighty dread," ("Roots Rock Reggae"), Bob was acutely aware of karmic balance: "For every little action/There's a reaction" ("Satisfy My Soul"). This tension is evident in a comparison of "Waiting in Vain" where Bob declares, "It's Jah love that I'm waiting on," and in "Zion Train" where he combines Proverbs 16:16: "How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver!" and Mark 8:36: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" to create the remarkable lyric: "Don't gain the world and lose your soul/ Wisdom is better

than silver and gold ." The pull of the divine and the lure of the earthly surfaced many times in Bob's life, and in "Could you be Loved?" Bob transformed personal anguish into a psalm of redemption.



Bob begins by repeating the question, "Could you be loved and be loved?" By repetition and his interchangeable use of the word "loved," it's as if Bob is turning the question in his mind about divine love and earthly love--with all its implications for the fraternal and erotic. This seems entirely plausible when one considers the central tenet of Rastafari: the awakened individual ("I") realizes his oneness with the community and the divine (the Higher "Iya" man) or InI.

From this viewpoint, Bob issues a warning, which is rooted in the Manichean vision of Rastafari:

**Don't let them fool ya,
Or even try to school ya! Oh, no!
We've got a mind of our own,
So go to hell if what you're thinking is not right!**

A careful listener to Bob's music will notice that when he uses the second person "you" as in "You running and you running, and you running away," ("Running Away") he is often talking about himself. Also any statement from "they" as in "They say we've got to fulfill the book" ("Redemption Song") or "dem" as in "Dem say we free again" ("Trench Town Rock"), should be viewed with a healthy dose of skepticism if not disbelief. From Bob's perspective, "they" and "dem" are a part of the "Babylon System" of enslavement and downpression from which the sufferahs through their own volition must free themselves:

**They say what we know
Is just what they teach us
Thru political strategy
They keep us hungry
When you gonna get some food
Your brother got to be your enemy
("Ambush in the Night")**

As a "son of light," Marley identifies himself as a spiritual man as opposed to the materialist "dem":

**But I say: we no know how we and dem a-go work it out:
Dem a flesh and bone!
We no know how we and dem a-go work it out.
("We and Dem")**

It is also interesting to note Marley's use of the rhyme "fool" and "school." This is a recurrent theme in Jamaican/Caribbean music. From the Mighty Sparrow ("Dan in the Man in the Van") through Peter Tosh ("You Can't Blame the Youth") through Julian Marley ("The Master has Come Back") and Stephen Marley ("Mind Control"), the government uses state sanctioned education to perpetuate ignorance: "Brainwash education to make us the fools" ("Crazy Baldheads"). Or as Bob stated, "We don't have education we have inspiration; if I was educated I would be a damn fool. (Time Will Tell). Bob's plea for his listeners to follow his example of "Resisting against the system" ("One Drop") is taken from the biblical junction in Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."

For if an individual persisted in conforming to Babylon, he would be on the path to hell. And what is

hell? Again, the Rastafari concept of InI is useful. Hell is created when an individual ("I") thinks that he is separate from the community and the divine ("nI"). By exercising free will, he becomes one of "dem." It was from this insight that Bob wrote "So Much Trouble in the World": "Men sailing on their ego trips/blast off in their space ships/ no care for you/ no care for me." The individual, who has willfully cut himself from human and divine connection, drifts in a world of despair.

However, in the midst of the struggle of light and darkness, there is always hope:

**Love would never leave us alone,
A-yin the darkness there must come out to light.**

In the Iniverse of Rastafari, one is never alone even when "The road of life is rocky and you may stumble too." Yet while enduring the tribulations, one should avoid judgmental labels for, "While you point your fingers someone else is judging you." The "someone else" could also be the "Iya man" or conscience as Bunny Wailer sang in "Pass it On":

**What your hands do,
It's your own eyes that see,
So won't you judge you're actions
To make sure the results are clean.
It's your own conscience that is gonna remind you
That it's your heart and nobody else's
That is gonna judge.
Be not selfish in your doings,
("Pass it on")**

Judgment as an act of the ego also cuts off the individual from the community. From the first song Bob wrote, "Judge Not," to one of the last songs, "Forever Loving Jah," he warned against judging by appearances:

**They say we're going wrong to all the people we meet;
But-a we won't worry, we won't shed no tears;
We found a way to cast away the fears,
Forever, yeah!**

**We'll be forever loving Jah. We'll be forever!
We'll be forever loving Jah. Forever, yes, and forever!
We'll be forever loving Jah. There'll be no end.
("Forever Loving Jah")**



Labels and judgments are limited. In "Judge Not," Bob strikes a cautionary tone for anyone who persists judging others: "Judge not/ If you're not ready for judgment." But there is a way out. Again, Bob offers a way out of the hell of separation and judgment by urging his listeners to "Love your brother man."

Love passes over judgment and repairs the seeming disconnect between the human and the divine. And while one may have doubts (unawakened human love is fickle), the love of Jah is constant:

**Many a time I sit and wonder why
This race so - so very hard to run,
Then I say to my soul: take courage,
Battle to be won,
Like a ship that's tossed and driven,
Battered by the angry sea, yea-eah!
Say the tide of time was raging;
Don't let the fury fall on me, no, no!**

**Cause I know
Jah will be waiting there;
Ain't it good to know now:**

**Jah will be waiting there.
("I Know")**

And if we love our brother man, we love Jah. In the world of Rastafari, man and God are one: "Almighty God is a living man" ("Get up, Stand up").

In the next stanza, Bob returns to the theme of succumbing to Babylon. This time, however, he rhymes "change" and "rearrange" to speak about life choices and alignment with "dem":

**Don't let dem change ya, oh! -
Or even rearrange ya! Oh, no!
We've got a life to live.
They say: only - only -
only the fittest of the fittest shall survive -
Stay alive! Eh!**

This is the life-affirming message of Rastafari that Bob repeated throughout his career: "Stay alive." For New World Africans whose history, according to the textbooks (written by "dem") began as chattel on the auction block (owned by "dem"), the idea that "Life is your right," is part of the redemption song that Marley sang with Peter Tosh in "Get up, Stand up":

**Most people think,
Great God will come from the skies,
Take away everything
And make everybody feel high.
But if you know what life is worth,
You will look for yours on earth:
And now you see the light,
You stand up for your rights. Jah!**

Bob knew for many of the sufferahs, survival is at best tenuous, and it easy to become one of "dem" by giving into desire. As Bob confessed, desires of the ego have led many, himself included, off the path: "My only vice is having many women" (Bob Marley im Interview mit Patrick Barrat).

As someone who had been in love many times and who had written about the highs and lows of erotic love, Bob warns about the insatiability of desire: "You ain't gonna miss your water until your well runs dry/ No matter how you treat him, the man will never be satisfied." But with help of reggae/rockers Bob issues a challenge to himself to write songs that "say something." This was a commitment that he voiced many times:

**Oh Lord, give me a session
Not another version!
("Mix up, Mix up")**

For although Bob had written a fair amount of love songs, "Me have to sing love songs" (Talkin' Blues), reggae/rockers was ultimately not just about writing songs that said "Baby, baby I love you." Bob wanted to write music to "free the people":

**We come from Trench Town,
Come from Trench Town;
We come from Trench Town.
Lord we free the people with music (sweet music);
We free the people with music (sweet music);
We free our people with music,
With music, oh music (oh music)!**
("Trench Town")

And not just "his people" from Trench Town, but all people: "Me speak to all the children. Me speak to everything that moveth and liveth pon the earth" (Talkin' Blues). To the extent that Bob poured his personality into his craft is testament to his longevity as a cultural icon and may explain why so many people from different cultural backgrounds can identify with his songs. And while some chose to divide humanity on the basis of race/class and become "dem," Bob would have none of it: "Yeah. I've come to realize se dem really divide wi in classes. Yes, and is true. Dem try fi divide wi in classes weh mi don't agree with. Because is wickedness. Yuh cyaan divide people. How can yuh divide the people? Some ah dem nuh have four foot?" (So Much Things to Say). Bob didn't just "believe" in the oneness of humanity; he knew it in every fiber of his being:

**One love, one heart,
Let's get together and feel alright.
("One Love")**

Ezra Pound once said, "Literature is news that stays news" and the same could be said about Marley's songs. For even as "they" plunge into the future with ideas of progress and securing material comforts, the sufferahs should remember that at the time of composition of "Could you be Loved," Bob was surrounded by material comforts, the love of many women, and the adoration of the Idren. Yet in the midst of all this, he could still raise the question

about his love, our love for ourselves and each other (InI): "Could you be loved? And be loved?"

**Text by Geoffrey Philp, Photos by Kim
Gottlieb-Walker**



PHOTOS





**Protoje, Pressure, Don Corleon, Peetah and
Mojo Morgan, Mad Cobra and Diana Rutherford
in Paris**

Protoje, Pressure and Don Corleon just began their European tour. For their first date at Cabaret Sauvage in Paris on February 2nd they were joined by Morgan brothers Peetah and Mojo, Mad Cobra and Diana Rutherford. Check the photos from the show.

Review and photos by Martin Monchicourt



Mo'Kalamity and Lyricson go Acoustic

A brilliantly conceived show took place on February 4, 2011 at the New Morning in Paris. The concept: hearing artists from the reggae scene in an acoustic setting. The backing band (Acoustic Club Band) consisting of a guitarist (Kubix), a saxophonist / pianist (Bost, from the duo BOST & BIM), a drummer (Nico) and a bassist (Manu) offered the New Morning massive the back catalogues from adventure seeking pioneers Mo'Kalimity and Lyricson, two artists living in France native from Africa. Mo'kalimity -born in Cap Verde- is the rising roots female singer of French reggae scene. She released her second album 'Deeper Revolution' in 2010. Lyricson born in Guinea is one of the most talented singjays of France for more than 10 years now. His last - and anticipated - album 'Messages' has been available since November 2010. Performed acoustically, the songs took on their own form and found their true essence. As a bonus some dancehall queens (with the dancer Amzone) took to the stage and some covers of Bob Marley were performed in duet by Mo and Lyricson. Finally Lyricson put his own mark on the Jamrock riddim.

All in all, a beautiful evening that should be repeated several times a year. Just two words: Big Up.

Text and photos by Franck Blanquin



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www.myspace.com/franckphotograph



Bob Marley 66th birthday at Emancipation Park

Emancipation Park came alive on February 6th as several artists performed to celebrate the 66th birthday of the King of Reggae, Robert Nesta Marley. The event which was held in the afternoon was the finale to the earlier cutting of the cake that was held at the late king's 56 Hope Road residence. The fun-filled free concert featured the likes of upcoming singer Romain Virgo, Etana who recently released her sophomore album 'Free Expressions', Freddie McGregor, Judy Mowatt, Spragga Benz, Inna Di Yard Band and several more. Every artist was mandated to sing at least one song from the vast catalogue of Bob Marley. The I Threes, minus Rita Marley did their own tribute which had the crowd on their feet. It was a great start to several events that are scheduled to happen during Black History month to celebrate the life of Bob Marley and also the Crown Prince of Reggae Dennis Brown.

Text and photos by Steve James



UNITED REGGAE

MAGAZINE

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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[HTTP://UNITEDREGGAE.COM](http://UNITEDREGGAE.COM)