

UNITED REGGAE

MAGAZINE
#17 - March 2012

BRISTOL ARCHIVE RECORDS
TAPPA ZUKIE
SINGING MELODY
REGGAE REGULAR
MR. VEGAS

*"An artist can't retire from
musical creativity"*

Burning Spear

ALBOROSIE
KONSHENS
MILLION STYLEZ
TAKANA ZION



Is the trend turning?

I’ve written about this many times before. I’m talking about the music business and the decline in sales that has been going on since the early 2000’s that saw the launch of file sharing services such as Napster and Kazaa.

But now, some people argue that the music business has started to recover and that the worst is over. In this issue we have an example that points in this direction. Mike Darby is the man behind the successful Bristol Archive Records. Thanks to the success of releases such as Bristol Explosion 1 & 2 he changed the direction of his other label, Sugar Shack, from British rock acts to contemporary British reggae. But that’s not all. Mike has also initiated Reggae Archive Records.

Experts say that the change comes from new digital streaming solutions such as Spotify and Deezer and the winners are labels embracing the change from acquisition to subscription.

That’s probably true, but you must also have luck and good distribution. But most important are quality products. Just look at Bristol Archive Records.

Cover photo by Christian Bordey

United Reggae Magazine #17 - March 2012
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Busy Signal Drops First Roots Reggae Album

by Erik Magni

Jamaican dancehall champion comes forward on April 24th with his first reggae album which bears the significant title 'Reggae Music Again'. It's a stark departure from the hardcore beats dominating his three previous albums. Each of the album's 14 tracks is described as "celebrating the uplifting spirit and tightly woven grooves that epitomize Jamaica's signature rhythm". And the album shows both Busy Signal's spiritual side and his sensual style, such as the first single Come Over (Missing You). "This album will shock many people who are used to me just as a deejay," declares Busy Signal in a press release, and continues: "But it shows my growth, versatility and the recognition of reggae as the origin of dancehall music. Being a Jamaican, I feel like it is my duty to highlight and contribute to reggae music, and with the encouragement of my management and musicians who played on this record, including Dean Fraser, it all came togeth-



er. This album is like a renaissance for me, a rebirth - reggae style." The one drop rhythms on 'Reggae Music Again' were created by some of Jamaica's most acclaimed musicians, including Robbie Lyn, Dean Fraser and Kirk Bennett, and were recorded live at Kingston's legendary Tuff Gong studios. "Dancehall music alone cannot sustain Jamaica's music industry," explains Shane Brown, the album's primary producer and engineer, and concludes: "Reggae has more substance and longevity and Busy is one of those rare artists of his gen-

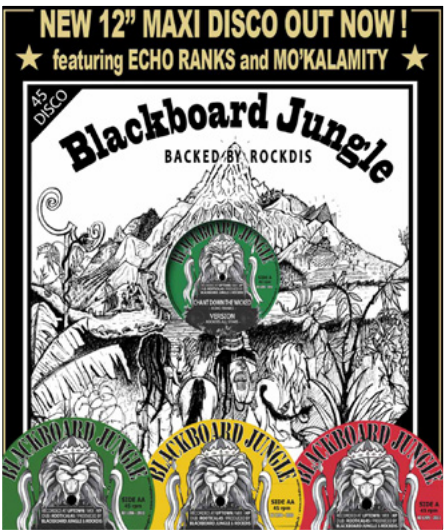
eration who can sing as well as deejay on authentic reggae rhythms."

In addition to the full-length album, VP Records will release a vinyl companion piece, entitled 'Reggae Music Dubb'n Again', available April 17th, special for Record Store Day on April 21st. The exclusive LP will feature extended dub mixes for six of the album's songs, which are all produced and engineered by Shane Brown and his legendary father Errol Brown.

Blackboard Jungle Chant Down The Wicked

by Karl Pearson

Multifaceted French collective Blackboard Jungle, who are one the country's heaviest sound systems to have played at the University of Dub in London and the Paris Dub Meetings sessions alongside the likes of Jah Shaka, Aba Shanti I, Channel 1, Iration Steppas and King Shiloh have just released their latest 12" vinyl 'Chant Down The Wicked' which features Mo'Kalamity and Echo Ranks on a riddim created by The Rockers Disciples (ROCKDiS). This is the fifth 12" from Blackboard Jungle who compose music in their own studio which they of course then promote through their sound system. Their past collaborations have included artists such as Afrikan Simba, Vivian Jones, Empress Rasheda, Lutan Fyah, Ranking Joe, Tony Roots, Earl 16, Michael Prophet, The Viceroy's, Christine Miller, Ras Mac Bean, Kenny Knotts and Murry.



Mungo's Hi Fi - Dutty Diseases Riddim

by Karl Pearson



Mungo's Hi Fi are getting the new year underway by launching a set of 7 inch vinyl's featuring vocalists YT, Daddy Scotty, Mr Williamz, Sister Carol and Daddy Freddy riding on their cut of the classic riddim Dutty Diseases.

The riddim has been a staple in Mungo's Hi Fi sets for the last year and the Mr Williamz cut Computer Age appeared on their 'Forward Ever' album, though here it is in a Duttiest mix. YT and Daddy

Scotty also appeared on this album, but chip in here with World News and Wicked Tings A Gwaan respectively. Sister Carol, who began chatting after a meeting with Brigader Jerry, gives us Cuture Mi Vote, while Daddy Freddy adds some ragga style on Dread Inna Armagideon.

If you're into your vinyl then visit Scotch Bonnet Records quick as there are only a limited number available.

Vibronics’ French connection

by Erik Magni

UK dub champions Vibronics have been vibrating the world with bass since 1995. And two years later they crossed The Channel for their first French shows and were making connections with the emerging Dub Scene. Vibronics latest album ‘The French Connection’ celebrates their French links through a series of 15 remix collaborations – one for every year they have been playing in France. ‘The French Connection’ offers a wide selection of top French Dub producers, from the electronic experiments of Lyon legends High Tone to the roots rocking of Bordeaux’s Improvisators Dub. The album is recorded in the usual Vibronics dub mixing style combining traditional analogue recording techniques with the latest advances in studio technology. The CD will be released March 26th on Hammerbass Records Paris, and Vibronics own label Scoops Records will be releasing three 10” vinyl singles with extra dub versions of selected tracks from the album.



Tetrack Release Unfinished Business

by Angus Taylor



Last year the vintage harmony group Tetrack announced they had reformed after over 25 years with the release of single Dread Out Deh. On February 14th they issued their long awaited new album ‘Unfinished Business’. ‘Unfinished Business’ was sung by Carlton Hines

and Norris Reid of the Viceroy’s - a colleague from the days when both artists worked with Augustus Pablo in the 1970s. Original Tetrack member Dave Harvey was initially on board for the project but then left the group before the vocals were laid. The tracks were recorded at the Hines’ Artistic Studio in Kingston, with Carlton’s brother Jimi as engineer. Musicians included George Dusty Miller on drums, David Madden on trumpet and Robbie Lyn on keyboards. According to Carlton’s Myspace “The album includes tracks that were first rehearsed by Augustus Pablo e.g. ‘Some a dem’”. It also includes

songs that were originally produced by Pablo which were never released [“Nah give up” and “Shirley”]. These two songs however I have tweaked lyrically. The album also includes a track “Dread out Deh” from an album that Tetrack did for Gussie Clarke [Music Works label]. The album was not completed and Gussie gave that song to the Diamonds. He only changed the lead vocals. It appears on the “Real Enemy” album [Diamonds]. “Unfinished Business” is available for download via distributor VP Records. A CD issue may follow.

tion – out on April 3rd – collects a survey of contemporary original roots reggae riddims voiced by respected voices and rising stars in reggae today. Featured singers and deejays include Lutan Fyah, Pressure, Jahdan Blakkamoore, Tippa Irie, Lloyd Brown and Arkaingelle. The studio work is anchored by

Zion I Kings, a group of producers that comprises David “Jah David” Goldfine from Zion High Productions, Alfred “Tippy” Laurent from I Grade and Andrew “Moon” Bain of Lustre Kings fame. This trio has during the past years put out stunning albums from Jahdan Blakkamoore, Toussaint and Perfect.

Showcase Vol 2 by Abassi All Stars

by Erik Magni

The Abassi All Stars is a collective of musicians based around Zion Train’s front man and producer Neil Perch’s recording studio in Cologne, Germany. During the years this outfit has put out a number of significant 7” and 10”. The first batch was collected on the Abassi All Stars ‘Showcase’ compilation issued in 2006.

The second volume has recently been put out for digital download. It collects 17 tunes from up and coming alongside well established artists all produced and mixed by Neil Perch. The line-up includes singers and deejays such as Omar Perry, Dubdadda, Carlton Livingston and Fitta Warri.



Esoteric by Leaf-nuts

by Erik Magni

Jamaican-born Swedish deejay Leafnuts – of Chilly & Leafy fame – is back with a new al-

bum titled ‘Esoteric’, an album aiming to increase love and political awareness.

‘Esoteric’ is produced by some of Sweden’s top producers and features guest artists such as Million Stylez

and the late Sugar Minott, an old friend of Leafnuts and in whose studio he made his initial recording.

‘Esoteric’ hits the streets as CD and digital download on March 23rd.

Jah Praises by Revelation Rockers

by Erik Magni

Bristol’s Revelation Rockers was the first version of the band later known as Talisman. Up un-

til now no material had been issued by Revelation Rockers, even though they recorded five tunes back in the 70’s.

These tunes haven’t been heard for almost a third of a century when Bristol Archive Records was handed them last year. And this

material isn’t some rough demo tracks best forgotten, but a fully realized UK roots album.

Bristol Archive Records now aims to release them on March 5th on LP and digital download under the title ‘Jah Praises’.

Fashion Records Reissues

by Erik Magni

Late last year it was announced that Fashion – one of UK’s most successful reggae labels – was set to digitally reissue their catalogue during 2012. The first batch will hit the streets on March 19th and includes ten

albums, of which one is a new release titled ‘Fashion in Fine Style - Significant Hits Volume One’. Among the titles to be reissued in March are Frankie Paul’s ‘FP The Greatest’, Starkey Banton’s ‘Powers Youth’, General Levy’s ‘Wickedness Increase’, Nerious Joseph’s ‘Guidance’ and the Tippa Irie and Papa San combination album ‘JA to UK MC Clash Vol 2’. Further albums from the catalogue as well as greatest hits and remix packages will be put out over the next few months.



Necessary Mayhem Launches Trilogy Series

by Erik Magni

In late January United Reggae revealed a new album project from UK label Necessary Mayhem titled ‘Trilogy’ series. Now the first release in the series has been announced. It contains cuts from three familiar riddims relicked by producer Curtis Lynch – Police in Helicopter, Joker Smoker and Pirates. The only tune not previously released is a new dub from Da Grynch called Police in Dub. There is however also new mixes of Million Stylez’ Police in Helicopter, Da Grynch’s Joker Dub and the monster combination Champion Sound. The artwork is a special one and aims to make the series a collector’s item. When the full series are put side by side on the shelf, the spines will form a picture. Necessary Mayhem Trilogy series drops on March 13th on vinyl and digital download with slightly different track lists.

The Ethiopian by Leonard Dillon

by Erik Magni

With the untimely death of The Ethiopians lead singer Leonard Dillon in September last year another iconic vocalist would never to be heard again. But surprisingly enough Leonard “The Ethiopian” Dillon was working on a new album, an album now set for release on U.S. label Young Cub Records. The album is titled ‘The Ethiopian’ and was recorded together with veteran Jamaican harmony group The Silvertones and also features members of John Browns Body and 10 ft. Ganja Plant. The production was



handled by Craig “Dub Fader” Welsh, who has previously worked with The Aggrolites, State Radio and John Browns Body. The album features nine brand new, original roots and dub tunes and drops on 12” vinyl and digital format today.



Summerjam 2012 Line-up

by Gerard McMahon

This year’s 27th ‘Together As One’ SUMMERJAM reggae festival at Fuhlinger Lake in Cologne, Germany takes place between Friday July 6th and Sunday July 8th next. As in previous years the (initial) line-up covers the cream of the crop of reggae’s various strands. Topping the ‘roots’ selection comes Burning Spear and his Young Lions, whilst Sean Paul brings on the Dancehall dimension. Those looking for an all-round high excellence reggae ensemble can rely on Alborosie and his Shengen clan, whilst the all-important African angle comes

courtesy of Tiken Jah Fakoly. Marley-inspired SOJA bring their popular hit sounds from America, whilst Stephen Marley - fresh from his 2012 Grammy award for best album – maintains the festival’s Marley family link. Midnite and U-Roy represent the roots of reggae (and in the latter’s case the birth of ‘toasting’) as Nneka ensures that those addicted to hip hop soul will get more than their fair share of the festival’s high times. Both Danakil and Irie Revoltes will bring a welcome French sound to the setting, complemented by the German-Indonesian influence of Sebastian Sturm and Berlin’s Boom Orchestra. There’s much to look forward to at SUMMERJAM, where all tastes are catered for – and that’s even before the line-up is finalised!



Building An Ark by Groundation

by Erik Magni

Groundation – the jazz influenced reggae outfit from California – unleash their new studio album ‘Building An Ark’ with Soulbeats Records on March 20th in Europe and on April 24th in the U.S with VP Records. On ‘Building An Ark’ Groundation is said to stay true to the essence of their sound – a mix of roots reggae, jazz, funk, salsa and transcendental dub. “We always want to challenge what we do and show progression in this music that is uniquely ours, and Building An Ark is the best this group has ever sounded on record. Ours fans will feel that rare explosive energy that is Groundation with a focus on sonic quality, clarity and words of strength,” says lead singer Harrison Stafford in a press release. Groundation has to date released over a nine albums independently – collaborating with reggae legends including Don Carlos and The Congos – and developed a international cult following with their progressive sound and live performances.

Return of the Raggamuffin by Skarra Mucci

by Erik Magni

Jamaican born singer and deejay Skarra Mucci returns with his fourth album, the follow-up to his crossover hip-hop effort ‘Skarrashizzo’ in 2010. ‘Return of the Raggamuffin’ collects 17 tunes, and collaborations with R&B singer U-Jean and dancehall deejay Kiprich. The production is handled by European producers such as Bizzari, Oneness, SoulForce and Weedy G Soundforce, who handled the production on the mighty Jah Blessings, a tune included on this set. Skarra Mucci, who calls himself



the lyric millionaire, has dedicated the album to “all those that paved the way for reggae dancehall and left way too soon and to the living legends that helps keep the real foundation reggae dancehall alive.” ‘Return of the Raggamuffin’ drops on April 13 on CD, vinyl and digital download.



Rebellion the Recaller Is In This Time

by Erik Magni

Gambian – nowadays residing in Germany – reggae and dancehall singjay Rebellion the Re-

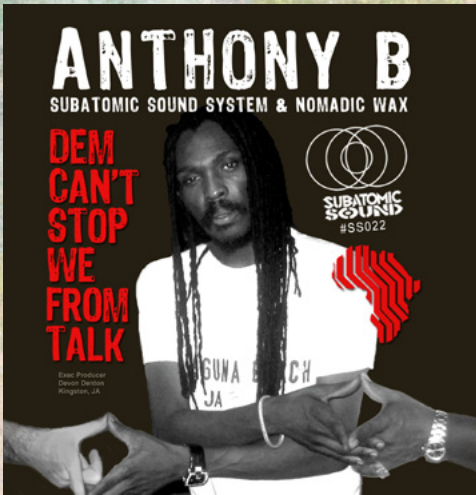
caller is set to launch his sophomore album ‘In This Time’, the follow-up to the 2008 released Bobby Digital produced ‘Moving On’, an effort that included the wicked Ken Boothe combination ‘Pure and Strong’. Rebellion the Recaller started his career in the late 90’s scored his first hit song with One for One, which entered the charts in his home country. Since his debut album he has toured several countries and also voiced a combination with German reggae superstar Gentleman, a tune included on his latest album ‘Diversity’. ‘In This Time’ collects 16 tracks and hits the streets on March 12th.

Dem Can't Stop We From Talk by Anthony B, Subatomic Sound System and Nomadic Wax

by Erik Magni

In late 2010 U.S. label Subatomic Sound System dropped the ‘NYC-2-Africa’ EP. The tough riddim included African drumming, dancehall energy and skanking horns laid over a hip-hop influenced beat with dubwise effects and a heavy bass line. The EP – produced by Emch from Subatomic Sound System and Benny Beats of Nomadic Wax – featured vocal cuts from Jahdan Blakkamoore, Bajah and Anthony B, and was recorded in Jamaica, Senegal and the U.S. Anthony B’s cut – Dem Can’t Stop We From Talk – was obvi-

ously popular, since it now has been remixed no less than twelve times. According to the press release it seems that Anthony B was on fire when it was recorded, and his delivery and lyrics are jam-packed with energy and anti-corruption statements. “When Anthony first heard the African drums, his eyes lit up and he and his crew began a classic African call and response chant to the beat. After listening to the riddim over and over on repeat, he demanded to go straight into the studio and, without a word written, delivered a blistering performance, waiving his lighter and literally jumping off the walls of the vocal booth while singing like a man possessed by inspiration,” states the press release. The reason behind his excitement might be the context it was recorded in. At the time, Kingston was a charged environment, with Tivoli Garden’s catching fire in a military raid sparked by the Prime Minister’s order to extradite a Don



known as Christopher “Dudus” Coke. While the original tune spanned three countries in its creation, the remixes are taking things even further coming from North, South, and Central America, the Middle East and Europe, including veteran and upcoming producers from the fields of cumbia, dubstep and tropical bass as well as roots, hip-hop and dancehall. This 15 track album hit digital platforms on March 6th.

Reggae Roast Records Announce First Release Of The Year

by Karl Pearson

Reggae Roast have announced that their first 12” vinyl and digital download release of the year will be ‘Love Light’ from UK sing-jay star Kenny Knots. Kenny has been a consistent vocalist on the British reggae and dancehall scene since the mid ‘80s when he released his debut single Watch How the People Dem Dancing. The release will also feature a version and a dub from Nick Manasseh plus a heavy dubstep remix by Belgium’s BunZero. The name Manasseh is probably familiar to many as he has been another stalwart

of the UK reggae scene since the ‘80s through his various releases, production work and of course the seminal radio show he presented on Kiss FM which ran for a staggering 12 years and was responsible for introducing many new people to reggae music. BunZero is touted as being one of the most respected purveyors of the deeper side of dubstep and his take on this jump up, stepping riddim is sympathetically done keeping much of Knots’ vocals and turning down the pace and tones a notch or two to give it that grittier feel. Reggae Roast are promising a fantastic year ahead with releases scheduled from artists such as Hollie Cook, Linval Thompson, Earl 16, RackNRuin and Congo Natty and if they keep this kind of quality up then no one will be able to say they didn’t keep to it. ‘Love Light’ is available from usual sources today.



Food / On My Way by Nazarenes

by Erik Magni

Nazarenes – made up of Ethiopian brothers Noah and Medhane Tewolde – is set to drop their fourth full-length album ‘Meditation’ on April 10 on Virgin Islands based label I Grade, the label’s first project with an African group. But the double single ‘Food/On My Way’ – complete with exclusive dub versions – is already available on digital platforms. And it is said to “reflect the Tewolde broth-

ers’ multi-cultural experience, incorporating elements of pop, dub, reggae and rock.” Food, with lead singing by Noah Tewolde, is produced by the Zion I Kings and mixed in Jamaica, while Medhane Tewolde handles lead vocals on On My Way, with production work by Tippy I, who is also responsible for dub mixing. Noah and Medhane Tewolde were born and raised in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to parents of Eritrean descent who later settled in Europe. The Tewolde brothers originally followed separate musical paths. Noah signed with Virgin Re-

Nazarenes



cords in the 1990’s, while Medhane toured Europe with Culture Knox and other reggae acts, and in 1996 they formed the Nazarenes.

Cast-A-Blast Presents Blend Mishkin - Mama Proud Riddim Remixed

by Erik Magni

In late January Athens’ based producer Blend Mishkin dropped the Mama Proud riddim on his label Cast-a-Blast. It’s a fine slice of intense contemporary dancehall with an underlying dubstep production. Now Cast-a-Blast unleashes a remix version of the riddim album with workouts from ten European producers and remixers. The Dirty Dubsters, Palov, JStar, Grant Phabao, Jazz K Lipa, Motagen, Turntable Dubbers, Balkan’s Hi Fi, Cut La Vis and Max Rubadub show their talents on this release covering dubstep, dancehall, futuristic dub, skankin roots and drum and bass. The ten tracks are now available for free download



#Liberation by Ziggi Recado

by Erik Magni

Last year Dutch singer Ziggi Recado dropped his third album, an album where he launched a new funk/rock/reggae/pop sound. Now he’s back with a new six track EP titled ‘#Liberation’, his first independent project following the split with his former label and management Rock n’

Vibes. “What I knew I wanted for sure was to give the people music. In the end that’s what it’s about,” says Ziggi Recado on his website, and continues: “That’s why this EP will be for free for a limited time. I intend to put out more music than before, always felt that was something that would be great for me.” ‘#Liberation’ is produced by four European producers – Silly Walks, Bost & Bim, Oneness and Rootdown – along with Ziggi Recado himself. It can be downloaded on his website. And the new EP will be followed by another set of projects in 2012. “This will be my ‘EP year’ as an EP with Curtis Lynch (Necessary Mayhem) and Decko (Dredda Records) is also in the making,” states Ziggi, and concludes: “Feeling liberated and definitely motivated like never before, I’m sure you’ll hear it in the music.”

Dust and Dirt by The Black Seeds

by Erik Magni

New Zealand’s reggae and soul band The Black Seeds return with their new studio album ‘Dust and Dirt’ on April 10th, via Easy Star Records. It follows the band’s latest album ‘Solid Ground’ released in 2009. ‘Dust and Dirt’ contains 13 tracks and has taken two years in the making and included new ways of approaching



Bob Marley: Rememorised

In 2010, after ten years of painstaking research, archivist, Bob Marley obsessive (and United Reggae contributor) Emmanuel Parata started a website dedicated to the king of reggae: BobMarleyArchive.com. Therein, those who shared Emma-nuel’s enthusiasm for

writing and recording. “Working in our own studio gave us the freedom to get the best out of ourselves over a longer period of time, and to trial new techniques and tones with our own Mike Fabulous at the controls,” says singer and guitarist Barnaby Weir in a press release. The Black Seeds formed in 1998 and are led by vocalist Barnaby Weir and Daniel Weetman. Their sound is a fusion of dub, funk, afro-beat and soul, mixed with vintage reggae.

the great man could find a wealth of videos, concerts audio, interviews, photographs, newspaper clippings and meditations on his life, legend and music. On October 21st 2011 some choice material from the website was collected for a digital book entitled ‘Bob Marley: Memories Of Jah People’ featuring rare photos and recollections by Roger Steffens, Donald Kinsey, Kim Gottlieb, Mike Van Der Linde, Esther Anderson and many more. But having devoted so much time to the project Emmanuel was not about to rest on his achievement. He and United Reggae have teamed up to improve the book, re-fashioning the layout and adding 4 new stories and some exclusive photos, shot in France, from his archives.



Life Is Not A Bed of Rose by Peter Ranking

by Erik Magni

Brazilian producer DubMastor’s latest production is a new showcase album from veteran Jamaican deejay Peter Ranking, who dropped the General Lucky combination set Jah Standing Over Me in the early 80’s. ‘Life is Not a Bed of Rose’ contains six vocal cuts followed by its dub version, and it’s now available on digital platforms.

Reggaeville Riddim

by Erik Magni

Reggae news site Reggaeville has teamed up with German based producers Oneness Records for the one riddim compilation titled Reggaeville Riddim Selection due in late May. The riddim is a relick of The Paragons’ Riding On a High and Windy Day and produced by Oneness Records from Munich. Among the included artists are Sizzla, Etana and Ray Darwin. The first single is Love Mi Fi Me by Skarra Mucci & Kiprich – also available on Skarra Mucci’s upcoming album – and it hits the online streets tomorrow.

Sizzla In Gambia

by Erik Magni

In mid February Sizzla dropped his latest album ‘The Chant’, an album inspired by his visit to Zimbabwe. Only one month after the release of ‘The Chant’ Sizzla puts out another set of songs influenced by his latest visit to Africa. The difference between the albums is that ‘Sizzla In Gambia’ – as the upcoming album is called – was partly recorded in Gambia. It was however produced in Jamaica by Karim “DJ Karim” Thompson. The album collects twelve tracks and its cover art is designed by Nesta Garrick, son of Neville Garrick, graphic designer responsible for several of Bob Marley’s most recognized albums. ‘Sizzla In Gambia’ drops on March 19 as CD and digital download.



Rototom Sun-splash 2012 First Artists Announced

by Gerard McMahon

The good news is that the 19th ROTOTOM reggae festival will take place yet again. Recently relocated to the sunny seaside town of Benicassim (~ 85 km north of Valencia) in Spain, it promises to be yet another epic event, running from August 16th to 22nd next. Though there’s still about 5 months to go, a host of top acts has already been announced for the SUNSPLASH. Alphabetically listed, these include Alborosie, Bitty McClean, Derrick Morgan, Ernest Ranglin, G. Palma & The Bluebeaters, Jah Mason, Linval Thompson, Max Romeo, Michael Rose, the Mighty Diamonds, Monty Alexander, Muchachito Bombo Infierno, Obrint Pas, Pablo Moses, Protoje, Sly



and Robbie, Tanya Stephens and Zion Train. A fascinating feature of the festival promises to be the goodwill free performance of the legendary Diamonds, Moses and Thompson in the heart of the city on August 15th. Thereafter between the Spanish-oriented Obrint Pas, Ranglin and Alexander’s jazz influence, McClean’s vocals, Alborosie’s antics, Sly and Robbie’s rhythms, Romeo’s extensive back catalogue, Palma’s Italian orchestral suite, the politically-aware Stephens, Protoje’s ‘modern’ reggae, the diverse fusion of Muchachito, Morgan’s ska to rocksteady roots, sinjay style Mason and the trance in-

ducing Zion Train, it seems like the audience are in for quite a ride! One of the greatest features of this festival - which could legitimately lay claim to the top ranked status of reggae festivals worldwide - is that in addition to the excellent music furnished every evening, there are a wide range of supplementary activities on offer to cater for all tastes. So whatever you’re into, whether it be music, seaside sports, art, photography, the circus, tribal villages, holistic ‘well being’, political, social or cultural (incl. reggae university!) debates or good food and drink, this is the event to be for the helpless reggae-addict!

Broussai In Jamaica

by Steves James

Broussai, the French reggae band was in the island recently to celebrate Reggae Month and to record tracks for their upcoming fourth album at Harry J's recording studio in Kingston. According to band leader Eric Waguét it was their first professional album outside of France. The album which is slated to have twelve tracks has the input of some of Jamaica's finest musicians such as bass player Axeman, guitarist Bo Pee and percussionist Sticky Thompson. It is being engineered by Stephen Stewart who has worked with some of reggae's finest in the business like Burning Spear. There is also a very catchy song called Kingston Town which is done by the group and local band Dubtronic Kru. The song reflects love at first sight as on the moment of visiting Kingston the band had fallen in love and have great memories of the town. According to Eric Waguét, "We calculate and analyse a lot of things in Jamaica and then work off the vibes and first impressions".



Final Move by Cornadoor and Kabaka Pyramid

by Erik Magni

German singer Cornadoor and Jamaican hip-hop/roots reggae singjay Kabaka Pyramid have a new single together. They hooked up on Facebook after hearing songs from their respective album 'Without Restrictions' and 'Rebel Music EP'.

More Axe 3

by Erik Magni

UK writer Ray Hurford has recently put out the third edition in his More Axe series, a series which includes basic designed books containing interviews with a who's who in reggae music. 'More Axe 3' includes chats with Junior Byles, Justin Hinds, Ijahman Levi, Culture, Prince Hammer, Trevor Hartley and the late and great Augustus Pablo. Available now from selected record shops and Ray Hurford himself.

More Axe 3



By Ray Hurford



Both liked what they heard and decided to do music together. The single Final Move is the result working over the Internet, and the tune was sent back and forth by e-mail after each artist had changed bits and pieces. Final Move is by produced by Swiss Weedy G Soundforce and drops on April 13th on vinyl and digital download.

Rainfall Riddim

by Erik Magni

Jamaican label Sajay Productions – led by legendary producer Henry Lawes' nephew Roymane Alexander – has just released their latest riddim Rainfall, a dancehall riddim with six cuts from artists such as Kiprich, Bugle and Vybrant. In an interview with Jamaica Star a spokesperson from the label reveals high hopes on the new riddim, and especially an artist called Vysionaer, who compares himself with Bob Marley and Peter Tosh. "It's more of a crossover type of rhythm. I know it will do well because it has an international appeal, that type of flavour," says Latoya McKay of Sajay Productions to Jamaica Star.

New Releases From KarnaTone

by Karl Pearson

KarnaTone records have two great new releases to shout about. The first, released last month, is a 7" vinyl single from Dubheart Roots Reggae Band We Chant featuring the vocal talents of French born MC Tenja. Originally from south Paris Tenja now resides in one of the UK's hotbeds of reggae Bristol where he has become something of a main stay as one of the regular vocalists with Dubheart. Whilst here he has also worked on solo projects and with other artists in Bristol and across the UK. The cut contin-

ues KarnaTone's tradition for classic heavyweight roots and dub reggae and features Ianis on backing vocals with Mark 'Red Eye Lion' Shepherd on bass, the keys of Dave 'Daddy U' Mountjoy, Richy 'Bad Bwoy' Ramsey guitars, Stevie 'Countryman' Parsons on bongos and KarnaTone founder Gavin 'Fullness' Sant on Drums. The second release is to be a 12" EP due out on Monday 2nd of April from Paul Fox titled Be Careful with Walk With Jah on the flip. Both of these cuts appear to be something of a family affair as they feature Helen, Eleanor and Joel Fox on backing vocals along with Fullness Horns, the flute of Charlie Clark plus Annikabyheart on harp and Bongos



by Kehru Jahman Dan. Completing the EP are a dub versions of each cut. As already stated We Chant is available now in many stores worldwide and is distributed by Dubwise in the UK, Ernie B in the US and Dubstore in Japan with Be Careful / Walk With Jah soon to follow.

149 Records #1

by Erik Magni

French label 149 Records has over the past three years dropped the excellent riddims Datta, Brighter Day and Speaker with strong cuts from artists such as Carl Meeks and Queen Omega. These riddims have now been collected on a compilation along with cuts on five other riddims – See Dem Grow, Warzone, Dis Race, Freebird and Warshine. The album collects a total of 20 tunes, of which no less than twelve are previously unreleased. A CD is available direct from the label. Digital release is scheduled in late March.



Gentleman's Dub Club Open Our Eyes

by Angus Taylor

English nine piece reggae fusion band Gentleman's Dub Club have released their second EP on Ranking Records. 'Open

Our Eyes' collects original songs with remixes of their track High Grade by Ruckspin, Tymer and Vibronics. According to their press release "Since their conception in 2006, Gentleman's Dub Club have cemented their reputation as one of the first live acts to experiment with the cross-pollination of Dub, Dubstep and Ska. The band have brought together respected fans ranging from the Clash to Fat Freddy's Drop and even David Rodigan MBE to become one of the most sought after live bands on the circuit." Last week 'Open Our Eyes' had already gone to number one on the iTunes UK Reggae chart.



Final Chapter Riddim

by Erik Magni

Trinibagoan label Jah Light Records is set to put out their first release of 2012. Final Chapter riddim follows the label's Pass-

Over riddim, released in September last year, and collects six vocal cuts from up and coming artists, including Vybrant, Prince Levi and Nefta. This one drop riddim drops on April 3rd and will be available in digital stores worldwide.

Perfect Giddimani's Journey of 1000 Miles

by Angus Taylor

Globetrotting singer-deejay Perfect Giddimani certainly likes to travel. So it makes sense that his forthcoming sixth album be titled 'Journey of 1000 Miles'.

It continues his recent trend for working with producers in the USA. Where previous set 'Back For the First Time' was voiced with Californian collective Lustre Kings, here production is helmed by MG and Dan of Seattle's Dynasty Records. Recorded in Jamaica and Seattle, its press material promises a record of great variety, claiming "such a diverse collection of his

Out Of Many: 50 Years of Reggae Music

by Erik Magni

Reggae powerhouse VP Records is set to release a 3CD boxset celebrating Jamaica's 50th year of Independence, writes Jamaica Observer. It's titled 'Out Of Many: 50 Years of Reggae Music', and is scheduled for release in late July. 'Out Of Many: 50 Years of Reggae Music' includes Trinidadian singer Lord Creator's Independent Jamaica, a song released in 1962 to mark Jamaica's Independence from Britain in August that year, and 49 other songs, one for each year. The compilation will also include immortal classics such as Hopeton Lewis' early rocksteady hit Take It Easy, Dave & Ansell Collins' funky Double Barrel and Culture's apocalyptic Two Sevens Clash as well as newer gems such as Sean Paul and Gyptian's more recent smash hits Get Busy and Hold You.

talent and versatility had never been featured on one work until the release of Journey of 1000 Miles". The nattily attired, critically-acclaimed St Ann's raised vocalist is known for his embracing of international reggae and for his uncompromising roots messages. 'Journey of 1000 Miles' is scheduled for release in May 2012.

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TAPPA ZUKIE

Interview by Angus Taylor

In the third in our foundation deejay and producer series we have the privilege of speaking to David Sinclair AKA Tappa Zukie. Born in 1955 Sinclair started as a drummer in a local jazz band before becoming a child chanter in Kingston. The young tearaway, who used to run with a gang called the Zukies, was sent away by his concerned parents and mentor Bunny Lee to live in England in 1973. There he recorded his first single Jump and Twist for London label Ethnic Fight and then debut album 'Man A Warrior' with producer Clement Bushay for Click Records. Yet Tappa's deejaying skills were not recognized on his return to Jamaica so after a period of time spent as Lee's bodyguard he set up his own production outfit and imprint Stars where he would record a variety of artists from the Greenwich Town area and beyond including Prince Alla, Junior Ross, Knowledge and Horace Andy. Returning to London in 1976 he found 'Man A Warrior' and follow-up 'MPLA' had become

hits - attracting the support of Patti Smith, Don Letts and other luminaries in the burgeoning punk rock scene. Better still, he began to break out in his home island too with the singles Oh Lord and She Want A Phensic, leaving the former rude boy and political activist in the enviable position of being a star on both sides of the Atlantic. A deal with Richard Branson's Virgin records brought him into contact with the Sex Pistols' Johnny Rotten - in many ways a similarly larger than life character. But his acrimonious split from the company at the end of the 70s and a dissatisfaction with the lyrical and musical direction of the 80s led to the curtailment of his deejaying to concentrate on production. Now he has returned as an artist with a new longplayer using exclusively old rhythms entitled 'X is Wrong'. Angus Taylor spoke to Tappa Zukie at length just before the PNP's election victory and the first part of their discussion follows detailing his latest album and his early years in England and Jamaica...

Why did you decide to make your first album since 2004's Cork and Tar with Bunny Lee?

Because the production kept me away from myself. So now I have decided to lay back on the production. People have been asking me why I'm not doing anything, because I'm a good artist and should be making albums. So I decided to do some work on myself.

The concept is an interesting one - tell me what "X is Wrong" means.

The concept of X Is Wrong is just about thinking back on the things they taught me in school. They taught me that when I do something wrong they give me an "x" and when you do something right they "tick" you, right? But it's always bothered me for the last couple of years: why do you have to make an "x" to vote? And it's worldwide. Does that mean they are telling us that we're doing something wrong? Because we know "x" is wrong and yet to uplift another man and give him power we have to make an "x"? So that's the concept of the album, and you know, Malcolm X put an "x" beside his name because he did not accept the name that he was given by the country because those are supposed to be business names.

The elections are coming up in Jamaica. I know you have been involved in politics in

the past. Do you vote yourself?

No, I have never voted from the day I was born. When I was little I used to run about because when I was small I used to run away from home. I used to go and sleep over by the political headquarters because that was where I could get some sleep in the night. That was the PNP headquarters on Spanish Town Road. And the big boys would send me out and they would give me change which to buy food. So I used to go there to get support when I'd leave home.

On Cork and Tar you rode on digital and live instrument rhythms. Was the decision to use vintage rhythms only an important part of the concept for X Is Wrong?

Nowadays most of the reggae's going digital and computerised and the melody is not there. It's taking away the originalness from the reggae music. It's more hip hop - and hip hop came from reggae but now everybody's basing back reggae on hip hop. I am an original reggae artist and I started on real reggae rhythms. I don't feel comfortable working on the digital and that's why I don't make a lot of albums recently. It's too straight. It's like you are drawing a line. The melody is not moving and grooving like the original. The most wonderful time I used to have was when I was making a rhythm in the studio and I was there

with a lot of experienced musicians to discuss the rhythms. Five-six-seven people all talking about how best to make the rhythm for even an hour or two - how it should go from G to F or from E Minor to C flat - was a wonderful feeling in the studio. And when the song was finished it would have a great melody and long-time livity.

Many producers are turning to old rhythms these days - like Peckings in England - why is this? Do you think changes in the industry mean people can't afford the musicians - or are the great musicians not around? Many of these guys are still playing.

The computer has taken over the feel and made a one man feel like he can make a rhythm so it waters down the rhythm and the musical part of it. One man can go in the studio and make ten rhythms for the week or a couple of rhythms for the day and that's it. It's made quick and it just leaves out of your head quick so every week you can look for ten new songs. The long stay is not in it. It's just like a demo, most of the computer music is because most of the time they'd use a computer to make a demo. Most of songs out on the road are like demos. If you listen to the dancehall now it's just a continuation of the same rhythm. It's the same rhythm going over with a little different guitar melody. One rhythm

going over and over and over. Not much creativeness is in it.

Let's go back to the beginning of your career - what was the music that first inspired you?

I started out listening to jazz. Because where I used to hang out as a youth other than the PNP headquarters was a record store owned by this man who came from America and he played jazz right through the day. That was where I started. He had a band and I was even playing drums in the band as a little boy. My first venture in the music business was starting to play drums. Leroy Horsemouth was the bigger drummer there. When he wasn't there they used to let me play the drums and sometimes when he didn't come they would let me do the rehearsal. He would come and say that every time he'd leave he'd have to change the drums because I was so small and had to readjust the seat. So at his time to play the drums he'd always say I always change up the thing. He'd try to war with me over it so I'd just leave him with it because he was the senior player there.

You have called yourself the first child deejay - tell me how you started.

It's all about that PNP HQ. I used to go over there and they used to have these political meetings that they'd advertise in the van. I'd go and they'd give me the mic and I'd sing a little

thing and gwaan when they'd keep their parties. They'd put me on a beer box. I used to love to talk over the mic - I didn't even know if it was something good or a little stupidity but they seemed to like it! So it became a part of it until I started following them to dances and they'd always give me the mic - and that's where it started. I was around eleven-twelve.

Bunny Lee was a family friend right? He knew your brother. Why did he and your family send you to England in 1973?

Bunny Lee and my brother started out. My mother, father and brother knew him. At the PNP Headquarters I used to go around with the bad guys. Because it was the PNP stronghold of the area and it was politics and I used to run around with them. And when the political things were over we used to go around to the dances where I used to play on the sound system and all of my little friends used to follow me around. My family thought I was getting too I-rated, getting in bad company so when I did start getting in some trouble they did decide to send me away to England.

What was it like when you first arrived in England?

When I first arrived it England it was a change. I came to Ladbroke Grove but I was in Harlesden first. So in that year I was in Harlesden, Shepherd's Bush, Willesden, Kilburn, Ladbroke

Grove. It was a different thing from what I used to experience in Jamaica. Because when I was in Jamaica it was only in court and going to church and funeral and thing that I would see people wearing a suit but when I got to England everybody was dressed up in a suit. It's not like now when you see everybody trying to look like a ragamuffin! Everybody was in a suit looking like lawyers and doctors in England. This was before Bob Marley burst out and Burning Spear started to sing about culture. Then people started wearing military and khaki and things like that. People were dressing up in those times.

Did you experience racism there?

No. When I came it wasn't much racism. When I came to England I started to find out and see people who loved people more. People were a bit more loving in England when I came there. The race thing was about but it wasn't pouring out on the street. Just like how even now it is there but it is not pouring out on the street.

You did your first recording there with Larry Lawrence from Ethnic Fight.

The third night after I came there Bunny Lee carried me to a U Roy show and said he heard I used to play sound system and the people in Greenwich Town said I was a good little deejay



upon the set so to go and hold the mic and show them what I could do. So they put me on the stage and I went and rapped a couple of songs and when I came back he introduced me to Larry Lawrence. Larry Lawrence said he was taking me to the studio the following Sunday - and that's how it started. I came out with Jump & Twist then Clement Bushay came along and that's how Man A Warrior started.

Did you know U Roy from before that night?

Yeah because back in Jamaica U Roy was the top deejay and

when I used to play the sound people used to say I was good like U Roy and Dennis Alcapone. Big people in the dance used to hold these conversations. U Roy was the deejay who started it off and got it rolling because he had three number ones. He was the one who we used to hear on the radio most and he used to record for Bunny Lee so I used to see him around Bunny Lee. I also used to go the dance and see him around the mic.

You went on to produce him yourself in the late 80s.

Yeah I produced an album with U Roy. I'm putting it up on my

website. You know I have my own website with my shop on it - the official website of Tappa Zukie. I've put up that U Roy album - it's on it now anyway.

Let's go back to the album with Clement Bushay. What inspired the lyrics to Message To Pork Eaters for example?

Well in those days I was lyrical. I had so many lyrics that I'd make lyrics off anything I'd see going by. When I'd leave the political arena - because when I'd run away from home I'd have to go where I could get something to eat - I would always find the



Rastaman, the dreadlocks Rastaman, and go amongst those. Because in those days Rasta was loving and giving - not like now when Rasta is more taking and trying to be rough. Rasta was a bit loving so as a little youth now I would go among them, sit down where the Rastaman is and them organize. And they would ask me “Youth? Are you hungry?” and when I’d tell them “Yes” they’d give me food. So I used to hang out enough round the Rastaman them. They wouldn’t eat pork and when I’d eat pork they’d tell me not to eat pork! (laughs) I used to smoke their chalice as a little youth and if you eat pork you can’t lick the Rastaman chalice! So those lyrics would just come from them lividity there because I would make music mostly from the living and to go on on the road.

When you came back to Jamaica you did some recording for Lloydie Slim and then Yabby You and a couple of songs for Bunny Lee. But mostly you worked as Bunny’s bodyguard for a while.

When I first went to England I didn’t really see myself as a musician. I didn’t want to make music - just loved to play the sound. I did my first recording in England and even when I left England there were only around one or two songs released. I used to play people’s sounds in England also. So when I got back to Jamaica after Man A Warrior I wanted to get in the music business, to make myself available in the studio and trying to be around Bunny Lee at all times. And if

anything rough stuff would come up I would deal with it! So I automatically became his bodyguard.

Was Bunny Lee supportive of your musical ambitions?

No. I didn’t do much recording for Bunny Lee at the time. I don’t think Bunny Lee really saw me as an artist. He knew that I had musical ideas because I would have ideas when he was recording. I was like a vibes man around him and as I told you if anything came down rough I would deal with it so he would have me around as a protection. He wasn’t encouraging me that much in the studio.

How did you get into the production side of things?

Really and truly the production side of things was through Robbie Shakespeare, Earl Chinna Smith, Santa Davis and Augustus Pablo. They were the musicians who said they liked my voice and liked my vibes because they were the musicians around Bunny Lee. I was in the studio with them and I had a whole heap of ideas so they said I should leave the rude-boy business and come in the music business. They said they were going to make me some rhythms to take me off of the street so that’s how I started as a producer.

Who was the first artist you recorded?

The first artist was Junior Ross with a song named Liberty. I recorded Junior Ross exclusively up until today. Then Prince Alla, Lynford Nugent. Those three artists. And Frankie Jones.

You still maintain the links with your artists from that time. Prince Alla guests on the new album.

Yes and I still maintain the relationship with Junior Ross. Because right now I am getting an album together with him. I have about eight songs and I’m getting it ready to be released. I haven’t really picked out a title yet.

Alla told me you loved to use a lot of horns in your productions - why do you love them

so much?

Because the horns have this melody and sound. For instance, when horns are in a song you can hear it from miles away. When my time was coming up I used to listen to sound systems and they used to have a tannoy and you could hear the horns from very far away. I loved to hear the sounds of the horns and the horns make the sound fatter. I used to use Tommy McCook, Vin Gordon, Bobby Ellis, Deadly Headly, Marquis and a couple more.

The horns are a thing that many producers and promoters say they can’t afford any more.

Yeah because of what you were saying earlier on. They watered down the reggae that much now and the computers made it so cheap and easy for the promoters and the company owners and people in general so they don’t want to spend money for the producers to make the real reggae. They get the computer one so cheap and easy they don’t want to pay for it. So if you want to stay in the business you have to make the little “book-book-book”. The big players in the business, the company people, the A&R people, they force the computer music on the people. And also the people who play it on the radio as well. It’s reached a stage where they’d rather pay for the computer than the acoustic.

You initially went back to England in 1976 to promote your label but then your deejaying music really took off there...

I came back to England because I had become a star. When I was in Jamaica I wanted to be a producer more than an artist. Because even in England with Clement Bushay I was actually doing the production myself. So I came back to England to put out [Prince Alla] Bosrah and [Junior Ross] Babylon Fall and a couple of other songs like Black Princess Lady with Lynford Nugent to give to Klik Records. I had my album MPLA too. But there was only one song they took out of the whole batch of records and that was MPLA and I didn’t even get any money. So I went back to Jamaica and in six weeks to a month’s time they sent back for me and said MPLA was mashing up the place and they wanted me to come and they would pay me back. So I came back and the song went to number one so I put out Pick Up The Rockers as another from the same album I was giving them and it run off. Then they released the album and it run off and then became the album of the year. So I became the artist of the year and that’s where everything started. Up until ‘76 I was just doing what the people expected of me and doing shows all over England.

For part two of our chat with Tappa Zukie Angus Taylor finds out about how he became a crossover success with both punk rockers in England and with record buyers in Jamaica. We also hear about his reasons for leaving Virgin Records, his work with the group Knowledge, his decision to concentrate on producing the likes of the Mighty Diamonds and Beres, and more on why he decided to become a recording artist again...

Tell me about how your links with Patti Smith and the punk movement started.

Where it all started was when I was at home one day round at Militant Barry's house because that was my home away from home when Militant Barry got a phone call. It was Don Letts who used to run a punk clothes shop down in the west end and he said he was playing one of my records - I think it was Don't Get Weary - and this lady came running in the shop and said "I know that voice! Who is that voice?" When he said "Tappa Zukie" she said "Do you know him?" and he didn't but he knew somebody who knows me, which was Militant Barry. So she said "Tell him to get a message to him to get himself down to the Hammersmith Odeon in Shepherd's Bush". So I went, Don Letts came with Barry and we met at the Hammersmith Odeon. That's where it started.

You mixed Militant Barry's Green Valley for Keith Hudson - tell me about your friendship with him and this cult album.

I was just helping out Barry as my friend. He was the man who was on the road with me from when I started. When I came over to England he was there. He came over on his own. He was like my mc, my road manager who carried me on the road and everything. So I forced in him the studio and said "You haffi do something man - that's how it go!" I named him Militant Barry and encouraged him in starting to be an artist.

He talked about Sid Vicious and the death of Nancy Spungen on his song Pistol Boy. Do you remember how that came about?

(laughs) I don't remember half of it but it was because of the punk thing. A couple of things were going around about Sid Vicious. We used to make lyrics about was going on at the time.

How did you get signed to Virgin?

Virgin signed me when I was in Jamaica. They came down there and wanted to take two whole albums from me. That was the first deal. It was the time when they came and signed up everybody. After they took two

albums from me and gave me some money they said they wanted to see me again. And when they came back again they said they wanted to sign me up so I referred them to my manager who was Vic Kerry and Rob Hollett who were living in England at the time and they took from there. I signed as an artist whereas most of the other artists only signed an LP deal. Because they signed me as an artist that was why I was on the road.

You mentioned the boom for major record labels signing reggae artists. I believe Virgin employed Johnny Rotten in an advisory capacity to do this. John is a big fan of yours. How well did you know him?

I met him when Virgin came to Jamaica to sign me and sign up the others. When I got signed up and thing Don Letts took him down, called me up by the Sheraton and I took them to Trench Town with me. Johnny Rotten enjoyed himself there. He was excited to be there. He was actually a rootsman really. I think he liked ghetto people. It was exciting for him. I think he was a lover of reggae. He was a lover of Jamaican people and he liked Jamaican music. He was the one who encouraged [Richard] Branson to work with the Jamaican artists I think. He was like a roots guy but in a different ghetto. A roots guy but living in a different ghetto.

Did you enjoy the punk music you heard at the time?

Well... I like all music as long as it makes me rock and move. I loved to hear some of them. I didn't have a favourite. I'd just enjoy when I went out and it was playing. It's not a music where I'd say I had a favourite.

Then while your name was getting big in England you hit big in Jamaica with Oh Lord and She Want A Phensic.

Yes that was when I did Oh Lord and it took off and was like 10 weeks on the number one spot in Jamaica. Then it came off and went back again. It was nice to be a big success in England and Jamaica with different songs.

How did you link up with Horace Andy who you would collaborate with as both an artist (Natty Dread A Weh She Want) and as producer.

When I was the bodyguard for Bunny Lee some of the artists who recorded as Bunny Lee's artists would also love going around in the ghetto with me. I was like their protection in the ghetto. That was where me and Horace Andy started to go up and down and I started to record him. But at the time politics was going on in Jamaica and after I made Natty Dread A Weh She Want Horace Andy had to leave Jamaica because people were saying he was re-

cording for politicians. People thought I was a politician in those times but I am not a politician because I am not political minded.

You were associated with the PNP and the JLP at one time. Why did they think you were political when you were not?

Because of the community that I lived in. I used to be in Trench Town in those times when the political thing started. I had to defend my children so I was only defending my area. But because I was in that area they said I was a politician.

You have suffered the consequences of political violence.

Yes. Yes I did. And it held me back in my recording career in Jamaica. But I am not a politician. I am a ghetto man who goes to all ghettos and even until now I go to every ghetto and deal all politicians - both sides.

Tell me why you decided to leave Richard Branson and Virgin at the end of the 70s...

Oh man that's a long story. I was with some Rasta organization in England. They were dealing with research on history. That's how we got to find out about Steve Biko. Now if you notice I sang Tribute To Steve Biko around then. So when we got into it now I found out that the biggest crime against black

people in those times was that the black man could read and write. That was the crime Steve Biko was charged for because he was a teacher and he was teaching black people to read and write. So it inspired me and I started to check out this man because it was something great he was doing. Then I got a report that Virgin was a South African company, mainly because the A&R man was a South African. I don't know if the information was right or if I was too naive or what have you. But when I heard that, at the time apartheid was going on, and I didn't want to get caught up in it. I didn't want to know that I was supporting things against my nation and they were saying that from every record of mine that was selling, a percentage was going to support the machine that was killing off black people in Africa.

Did you check up on this?

I went in to see Richard Branson and I told him that I didn't want to be a part of it and he said "Tappa? What are you talking about?" He didn't acknowledge it was like that. Maybe I was abit naive but I told him that I didn't want to be a part of Virgin and I told him I wanted back my contract and he said he wouldn't give it to me. So I took up my album, because at the time I had another album to give him titled Black Man, and took it home and released it in Jamaica. And from that time I stopped recording myself. That

was how I stopped recording myself and started doing production. They wouldn't give me back my contract so I decided to shut down Tappa Zukie and left it to work out itself. I got released from the contract but they didn't release the songs they had already.

Tell me about how you met with the group Knowledge, who A&M records attempted unsuccessfully to market as a crossover group. Anthony Doyley passed away in February of last year.

Well Knowledge, as I was saying, was where I learned about Steve Biko. That was where I got the inspiration to come back and try to help my ghetto community. That was when I built my community centre [in Trench Town] and I saw these Rastaman who were in the ghetto. People said they were some crazy people but when I went and sat down with them I saw they were singing some good songs with good lyrics. I decided to take them into the studio and when I started people asked what I was doing and thing but we came out of the studio with some wonderful songs and from there it started.

Alla told me when the music started to change he became a fisherman. You just kept producing.

I kept on producing to keep me learning new stages and new

skills from when I started so I could cover all angles of the music business. Because if you listen to the production of this album *X Is Wrong* you can know it's a more organized and together production. I'm more of a producer now

In the 80s and 90s you did some great work with artists like Yami Bolo and the Mighty Diamonds. One of the biggest artists you worked with was Beres - tell me about working with him on his *Putting Up Resistance* album?

At that time I was making myself a ten album catalogue because in those times people were all over the place so I told myself I had to give myself a new catalogue because most of my songs were all around. So I started to work with Ken Boothe, Dennis Brown, Gregory Isaacs and Mighty Diamonds and a couple more. While we were there Beres came in and because he was singer whose voice I'd liked for a long time I decided to make an album with him.

What was he like to work with?

He is quite easy to work with if he wants to work with you. He knows what he wants and he is someone you can talk to but he likes to know you know what you are doing also. He likes to work with people who know what they are doing. When

you know what you are doing and he knows what he wants it makes things a bit easier. What I try to do in my productions is work with top musicians who know and like to make good music. That means when I put the whole of them together it is exploring good music. That's where my head is - if I'm calling a session I get the best set of musicians so when artists see I'm working with the best set of musicians, artists love to work with the best musicians also. So when I line up guys like Robbie and Sly and Ansell Collins singers are just begging me to let them make a song with them. Which makes life easier for me.

You are still in touch with Bunny Lee as you released *Cork and Tar*, which is another nickname for you isn't it? You were both at One Love Festival - how was that experience?

Bunny Lee is my friend and is like a father to me. When we are in Jamaica we are like that - we visit each other and share ideas. We get along well.

Reggae seems popular in England again - it had some bad times.

Reggae is always going to be popular again. It has its ups and downs. Whenever you see reggae drop down it always has something that lifts it back up again. Right now I think it's going to be lifted up because



people are getting fed up of the computerized music. So what the producers need to do now is start making more good music. What's really lifting back the music is Europe. If you go and take a look at the shows that are going on in Europe you see twenty thousand, thirty thousand, forty thousand people come out for them. But if you keep a show in England and get three or four thousand people you're a lucky man! The English players in the business like the cheap music. If they can get four LPs for a thousand pounds they just run down and grab it to promote over there! They water down the business and they don't rate you anymore so the Europeans take away the business from them now. They don't get to know the business. They just try to hustle it more. They just try to play middleman now. For instance, an English company is not going to deal with you now if you don't have a market overseas.

What is the way forward for reggae music in Jamaica?

Most of the Jamaican people are just trying to keep up with the market. If the players in the business don't support us

to keep up with the market we just have to do anything to survive. The companies don't start to invest back into the producers to make the good music. It's going to stay like that same way and everybody is just going to be doing their own thing. It's getting a little bit more difficult now because there are a lot of studios in Jamaica because everyone is setting up their own little studio and doing their own little thing. So now music is coming out like hot bread. One time you only had a couple of producers. Now you have hundreds of producers. What needs to happen now is, the performance on stage is what is going to take it to another level. It all depends on how the companies are going to work.

Will you be touring your new album *X Is Wrong*?

When I used to sell records it was the tour that used to sell the records. When I toured with my Jamaican band I only needed tour to make enough money to pay the band because the records would sell. Now records don't sell so if I go on the road I need to make enough money to pay the band and also pay

myself. For artists like myself, when I stopped recording that help up my career so what I need to do now is start making an album ever year starting from this album. I will put out an album every year so the people will know I'm still here and I'm ready to take the road. I think I'm a better artist now because of my experience. Even on stage I'm a better artist. I'm planning on coming to tour Europe this coming year so people will get to experience what I'm talking about.

Will your next album feature a full band of top musicians recording new rhythms?

I am trying to keep up the originalness. I have the tracks and the songs now so I just need to record. For my next album I am going to try to sell it in the same vein as *X Is Wrong* because I don't think I can get them back until I make myself some money. Because to pay back some of these musicians in the studio now is very expensive. I need to go on the road, do a couple of tours and make some money - then I can start to make some acoustic rhythms because that's the way out now.



Mr. VEGAS

Interview by Erik Magni

"I grew up on original roots reggae, and the original reggae has been missing for years now"

Dancehall superstar Mr. Vegas is on a mission. He aims to save foundation reggae music and see artists like Alton Ellis and the late Dennis Brown on radio DJ's playlists again. United Reggae has talked to him about his recipe for change, which includes a petition and a new double album.



Mr. Vegas promotes foundation reggae

Over the last couple of years there has been a discussion on the state of reggae music. Several producers, artists, musicians and label owners in Jamaica and abroad have stated that reggae has lost its roots; mainly due to U.S. hip-hop and R&B influences.

Dancehall artist Mr. Vegas is known for his hard-hitting bouncy dancehall, and hits such as Heads High and the Sean Paul combination Hot Gal Today.

That’s why his recent initiative Save Foundation Reggae Petition came as a surprise. On top of that he’s about to release a double album, where one of the discs is jam-packed with classic reggae – both fresh originals and versions of material from the 60’s and 70’s.

“I grew up on original roots reggae, and the original reggae has been missing for years now,” says Mr. Vegas, whose real name is Clifford Smith.

I reach him after his rehearsal for the Shaggy & Friends benefit concert in Jamaica. He is in a good mood, talks fast and eloquently.

Best part of Jamaican culture

Mr. Vegas is concerned about the state of reggae music, and notes that the youth in Jamaica is into aggressive dancehall,

but is not familiar with the old school reggae from the 60’s and 70’s.

“It’s the best part of our culture. Peter Tosh and Bob Marley paved the way. You have to respect them and save their legacy,” says Mr. Vegas, and adds:

“They don’t get played on the radio anymore.”

To help raise awareness for foundation reggae he has taken the initiative to save reggae music through a petition.

“The petition could have been more well-received, right now about 6,000 have signed it,” he says, a bit disappointed and continues:

“It’s a long way to go, it’s not going to change overnight, and I might not be the person who is going to do it.”

Don’t want to be seen as a savior

In the petition Mr. Vegas urges radio DJ’s to pay homage to foundation reggae, and he believes the reggae industry needs voices other than Mavado or Vybz Kartel.

“The radio DJ’s just need five to ten minutes out of the show to make a difference,” he states.

At the same time, Mr. Vegas makes it clear that he doesn’t want to be seen as a savior,

and that it’s natural that music goes through changes.

“This music is under promoted, and I want to see a balance where DJ’s play foundation reggae and dancehall music. Today there’s definitely not a balance. It’s hype, and the DJ’s go for what Internet is telling them to play.”

A new double album

Apart from the petition Mr. Vegas has also taken a partly new musical direction. It started in late 2010 when the Shaggy and Josey Wales combination Sweet Jamaica was put out. It has been well-received in Europe and on the U.S. west coast, but interest in Jamaica has been cooler.

The single Sweet Jamaica will be followed-up on March 23rd by an album with the same name, an album that celebrates Jamaica’s 50th anniversary. It has been co-produced by Mikey Bennett and involves musicians such as Clevie (of Steely & Clevie fame), Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare.

However, Mr. Vegas is keen not to lose any fans or leave anybody out, so he made the album a double disc – one with sweet reggae and one with some of his biggest current dancehall hits.

“Sweet Jamaica is the music that is Jamaica. Original festival songs. People in Jamaica are crazy over festivals,” he



says.

Encouraged by Toots

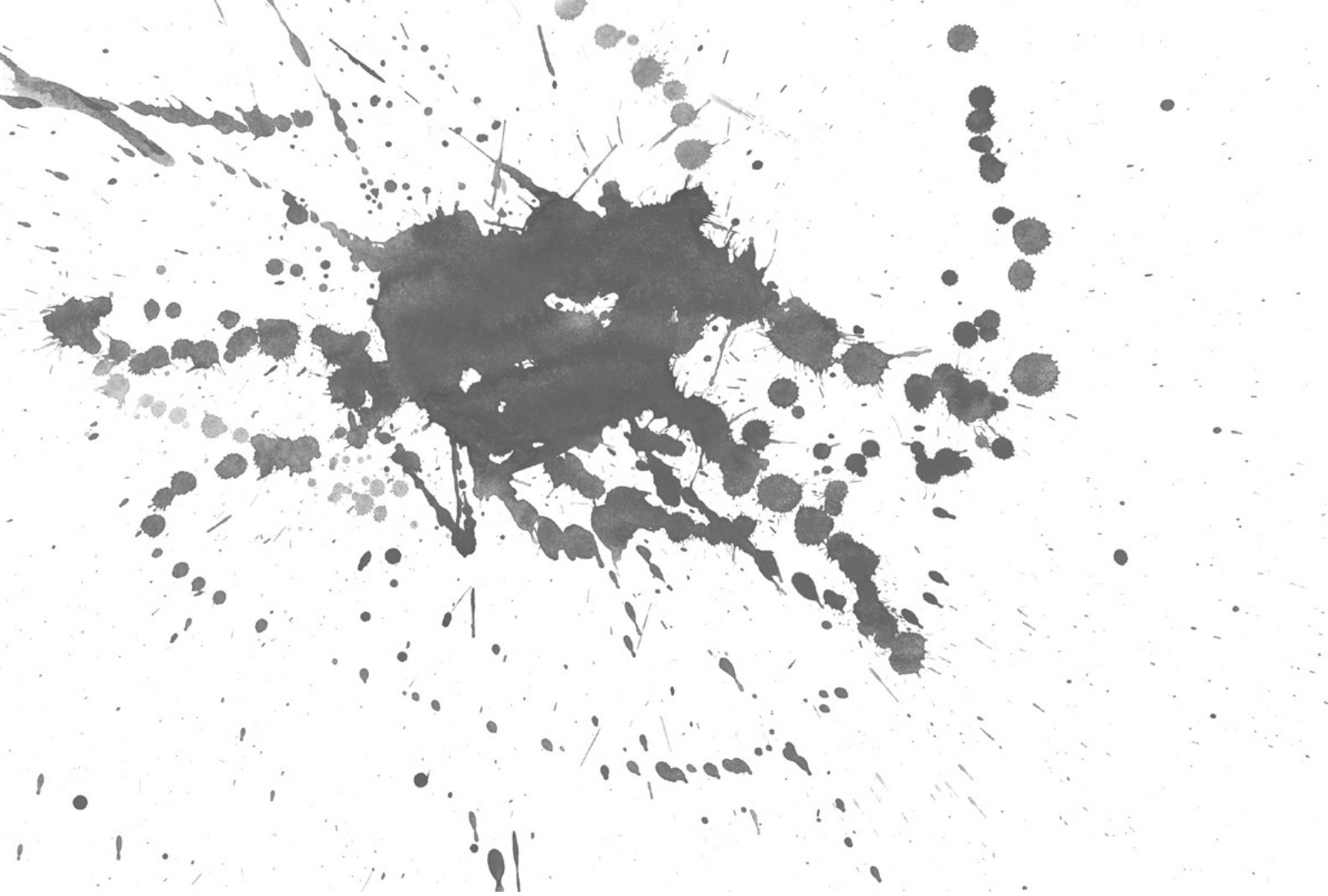
The Sweet Jamaica album holds a bunch of originals as well as cover songs, and one of those

is the classic Sweet & Dandy by Toots & The Maytals.

“Toots is one of my favorite performers ever. He encourages me, and comes to my dressing room when we perform at the same festivals. He is my torch

to carry on,” he explains, and continues:

“If I can do anything to highlight these artists it’s big for me. In my opinion they’re the best kept secret.”



KONSHENS

Interview by Angus Taylor

"There is nothing fictional about my songs. I don't make up a story to get a forward"

On Tuesday Konshens, having released albums in Europe and Japan (as part of the fraternal duo Sojah), dropped his first official worldwide album on his own Subkonshens label distributed by VP Records.

Collecting his big singles over the last few years plus some special remixes, the intriguingly titled 'Mental Maintenance' offers a fascinating insight into the singer-deejay who was raised in both military and ghetto garrisons (Up Park camp, Sherlock Crescent). Like fellow man-of-the-moment I-Octane, Konshens is a versatile artist who sings, raps or deejays on all kinds of rhythms; he is equally versed in the world of art and of business; and he's highly media trained. He was tight-lipped about the new record which has not been sent out as a full promo but he had some insights to share - including a frank appraisal of his own and other artists football skills!



The title of your album is interesting. I know you say “music keeps me sane” on your MySpace - is there a connection?

Yes, there it is. Music is like a psychiatrist, basically. It keeps me focused in every aspect - when you're upset music calms me down, when you're too calm music gets me upset. You have a song for when you get good news, a song for bad news, a song for every situation. So music is the thing that keeps us grounded and the mood of the album is a song for every situation.

You decided to release Mental Maintenance on your own label. You were going to drop your first album with Austrian label IrieVibrations at one point - what happened?

It was best for me at this time from a production standpoint because of all the different producers working on this album. In terms of the mixture of producers the best thing was to release it on my label.

I think it would be better for me and IrieVibrations to do an album totally together. Definitely. My bredda them musically so I will definitely do work with them.

The new album has hip hop influenced songs but also some roots songs with live instruments like Homewrecker and Leave Your Side. You

sing in a bluesy Dennis Brown style like Michael Rose used to. You're also a fan of Beres - could you have been a pure singer?

I don't think so because in regards to music I am very adventurous and very moody at the same time. So to the extent of my moodiness and the way I have my mood swings singing alone could not accommodate all of these moods. Sometimes I get really aggressive, sometimes I get extremely calm so as I said I have a song for each mood swing. To be a straight singer or a straight deejay wouldn't work out for me - I have to try some different things.

This album collects lots of your big tunes in one place but you also have some remixes to give certain tunes a new flavour.

I don't want to give away too much about the album but there is one particular remix on there of a song that is a very good song and didn't get the real justice in the people's minds. So the remix definitely will do some good for the song and for the album was well. It features Sizzla Kalonji, Tarrus Riley, Dario and Tarrus Riley's younger brother named Wrath Riley. The whole vibe of the album is good - you have the fresh nowadays music as well as the roots reggae vibe too.

That remix is Rasta Imposter - a song with a message that

made big waves back in 2008. You've said you won't use Rasta to further your career. What are your spiritual beliefs?

I believe there is a God. There is a creator. I won't say I am Christian, I won't say I am a Rastaman. I wouldn't say I am a religious person but I am a very spiritual person. I am very spiritual - I connect with God and I know there is a greater being. But to tell you say it's Se-lassie or Jesus Christ, I am not equipped to tell you that right now. I don't know.

It makes sense that Tarrus would feature on the album since you featured on his last album on Good Girl Gone Bad.

Just one of my bredda dem musically. At first it was like - this is an artist I really look up to. His second album Parables was like a daily bread. But at the same time Tarrus Riley was a huge fan of Konshens same way so there was a mutual respect from the first day we linked up. Then the song we did together was like a live show and being in the studio with Tarrus is like being in a class because his level of vocal delivery and control is second to none. It's like you are at school but at the same time you have fun. Big up Tarrus Riley - him ah me don.

Another tune that gets a remix is the Realest song. How

did you come up with that song?

That's my favourite song ever. And the idea behind it, well, you know how the Jamaican thing goes - we say bad mind is at the root of Jamaican people. Everybody says a man there badmind we and friends them badmind we but I say that nobody really highlights the fact that the same badmind way we cuss when at school and try to downplay, for me it's evident in all of we and it lives in all of we. So we just need to say alright and address the issue, not run from it. I'm saying “Yow, me badmind too”. Instead of pointing a finger, point it at yourself for a change! (laughs) Before that nobody really said it that way before “Yeah, it's me that's probably badminded so I need to get rid of it or prevent it” and I think that's what made it connect with people so much.

You have said in the past you don't do plastic songs - they are all reality.

It's just being real. From the Realest Song I try to be the realest artist. There is nothing fictional about my songs - it's either something I've gone through or something somebody close to me went through. There's always a topic where there's evidence of the things I sing about. I don't make up a story to get forward.

As well as changing ourselves you've talked about the need for changes in the business -



have your warnings been listened to?

Yeah, I think so. Even now you can see a slight change in the type of production that people are doing in Jamaica. You'll find people are going back to the reggae vibe a little bit but it still needs some work. We still need to put reggae back on the map - from Jamaica. As opposed to importing reggae music into Jamaica. We still need to stress the importance of the

live show. To show the youth that come up now the live show and the music with a message is the way to go. It goes on.

As someone who has toured and recorded in Europe and Japan which do you think is a bigger supporter of reggae Japan or Europe?

I think the Japanese are more reggae fanatics. They're just

obsessive fans. When they love something they really love it. The Europeans have a different kind of love. They appreciate good music. You will find more Rastafarian people in Europe because they live and connect to the actual lyrics of the song - the whole meditation - and live their life according to the things the song says. The Europeans go into the music more deep but the Japanese just love the music man.

You collaborated with the French-speaking artist Tiwony on his album Cite Soleil for the track Never Give Up. How did that come to be?

Some friends of mine named D and H they make some bad remixes and productions like the song Gal Dem A Talk on the remake of Trailer Reloaded - that was Subkonshens and D&H production. They do a whole heap of remixes and I think they do a whole heap of work with Tiwony as well. They just said that Tiwony was a bad artist and they rate me as a bad artist too so artists just link up and music speaks for itself.

Tiwony named his album after the ghetto of Haiti. Do musicians from ghettos in different parts of the world have common ground?

Yeah definitely. Because when you are in the streets players have to know the code and real always recognizes real. Grow-

ing up in the ghetto affects how you look at life and when you have somebody you can relate to right away, even from a different country. It's makes the music easier man.

European fans will have heard of Up Park Camp, where you spent your formative years, from the John Holt song - what is the reality?

Yeah man. My life has been like this: growing up in Up Park Camp, my father was a soldier, so for most of my childhood years were in Up Park Camp. Then we moved to Sherlock Crescent in Duhaney Park at a time when Sherlock and Brook Valley were in a real war. So I got a firsthand view of being in the safest place in Jamaica to being in one of the most dangerous places in Jamaica right away. So these things affect the way you like at life and your views.

You have a clothing line and an iPhone app and a song featured on a video game. You seem to have a very forward approach to promotion what other plans do you have to promote yourself?

I've grown from an artist who loves to sing into a business. The name Konshens is now a business and it's just different ways of maximizing profit and being in touch with fans at the same time. Music and fashion go hand in hand - I don't know

too much about fashion but I know what girls like to wear and I know what I like to see girls wearing so that's how the whole mood for the clothing line came about. For now it's a female clothing line. In terms of other things, it will be anything to do with reggae and dancehall. In Jamaican culture you can take the name Konshens and put him anywhere, so there's really no telling.

In 2009 you had your MacBook stolen and lost some recordings. Did you ever get them back? Are they songs that could have been on your album now?

No never. Definitely because most of them were freestyle demos from straight off the top of my head so now that's gone for good. I got back the computer but everything was wiped. Those songs have gone and they are history.

You played in the One Love Bob Marley Celeb football match yesterday [Wednesday 22nd Feb] - how did it go?

(laughs) You're informed! The first game I think we drew - it was artists and celebrities vs. some other people like masters and promoters. The first game we drew and the second we gave a goal away from Wickerman, one of our own team! We fell to the hands of an own goal! (laughs)



(laughing) How do you rate other artists football skills compared to your own?

Chris Martin is a big baller, limited to the studio and the Ding Dong, Fyah King and... stage! that's about it! My skills are



BURNING SPEAR

Interview by Doug Heselgrave

Photos by Christian Bordey

"An artist can retire from touring and from other things, but in terms of musical creativity, I don't think you can retire from that"

I have chatted with Winston Rodney aka Burning Spear - or 'Spear' to those who know him - several times over the years, and every time we've spoken I realize how much different he is than the dozens and dozens of other musicians and artists I have interviewed. Of course, he's interested in talking about his newest project – that's part of the business – and as one of the torch bearers for the first generation of

reggae artists, he's able to reason at length about the history of the music, but what always strikes me is how well-rounded and considerate an observer of the human condition he is and how more often than not the most interesting part of our conversations have nothing to do with music. I recently caught up with Spear at his home in Brooklyn as he was putting the finishing touches on mixing 'No Destroyer', his first new CD since 'Jah is Real' was released in 2008. Over the course of an hour on the phone, we talked about how he's opted for a heavier approach to the material on 'No Destroyer' before we moved on to discuss more personal and philosophical subjects. As ever, when we finished speaking, and I began to ruminate on our conversation, I felt that I had been blessed to have spent time with a truly inspiring and unique individual whose words and thoughts left me feeling richer and more focused than I was before we began to speak. Here are some excerpts from our conversation.



Thanks for taking the time out to speak with me, Mr. Rodney. I understand you've been working some long days putting the final mixes on 'No Destroyer'

Yeah, mon. Everything is right now! Looking forward to this call. Yeah, we've been going back and forth in the studio. We just did one week in the studio mixing the album.

How are you feeling now about how the sessions have turned out?

I feel really good about it.

I've been listening to the new songs and they have a heavier sound than you've created in the last few years. Heavier than 'Jah is Real'

Oh yeah! Each time I go into the studio, I try to keep my creativity active and my expression fresh.

Yeah, it sounds really dense and dubby. I love it and it reminds me of the sounds you created with 'Postman' or 'Jah no Dead' - that kind of layered sound.

It is a strong album.

So, do you have a vision when you begin recording of how you'd like things to sound?

Of course! Each time I go into the studio to lay a track, I have a musical sensation about what I want. After so much time, I know how to set about getting what I want or how I want a track to sound.

So, you've been at this since 1969 and you've seen reggae music change a lot in that time. When you first started recording, reggae was essentially Jamaican music for Jamaican people, but that's all changed.

You know, to be honest, when I first got involved, I could identify that I'd been called upon to do a work, but I never thought in terms of creating music for Jamaicans. My creativity was an international creativity. When I say that it is an international creativity, I mean that I had a concept of creating music for all people, not just Jamaican people. I know that music reaches out to all different kinds of people. Music does so many good things for so many different people all over the world.

When you first began touring in the mid seventies, did you have any idea, positive or negative about how people might receive your music?

Based upon what I used to hear about myself, other musicians would come back from the road and tell me 'people are talking about you and your music.' I

was thinking about that when I hit the road, I would be accepted by many people. The first time I did that was to tour Canada, in Toronto in 1974. That first show was sold out and the place was packed. At that time, the clubs we played were really small, but that changed of course.

Toronto has a huge Caribbean population, so it would be a good base to start spreading the word about your music. In the early days, were your audiences mostly ex-pat Caribbean audiences?

From the beginning, it was a mixture. I would come on stage and see some white faces, some other coloured faces in the audiences. So, from the beginning, I was getting a wide exposure to different people. For me, white or black, I don't care. Music is for all people.

This may be a good time to ask you about the role that music has - as an educational tool or more importantly as a source of healing. I know that you've been through a lot in your personal life, your personal journey, in the last few years and when I listen to 'No Destroyer' I can really hear - more than in a long time - how you're using music to turn personal pain into strength.

I think what happened with recording 'No Destroyer' is that I put more of my experience into the tracks - as a man and as someone working in the music business - than I had before. This is what I would say inspired I man to put this album together. Actually a lot of things have happened. I have seen so many reggae artists of my generation struggle, get sick and suffer because they had nobody in their corner to watch out for their interests.

It is tragic to recall how many people have been lost - perhaps before their time - in the last few years.

Yeah. I, myself, was one of the 'reggae slave' artists and I started to see what was going on, so I ran away from the 'reggae slave' masters to start my own thing.

It's a funny thing because that 'slavery' benefitted your fans for so many years. There were times in the late eighties where you passed through Vancouver two or three times a year. That kind of grueling schedule must have exerted some stress on you and your family. It must have deprived you to a certain extent of a 'normal life' if there is such a thing.

Of course. These are the kinds of things that I'm talking about in 'No Destroyer' so that peo-

ple can overstand or feel what it was like. Another thing what inspired me when I looked at reggae music was that reggae music was like an open range in which bootleggers from Vancouver to Paris could come in and steal I music. It was time for someone to take a stand. So, I was in a position where I had to stand up to protect my musical history and my musical culture. It's been my working life, I have to defend it.

Many artists are also in your position. The digital age has made piracy so easy and the fruits of their piracy so easy to obtain. It doesn't take much to find cheap or free pirated music online. Is it difficult to be creative in a climate where you know there are people waiting in the wings to 'take' your product?

No. There is no interference with my creativity. It gives me more encouragement musically. (Big laugh) All of these things we've been talking about have gone into inspiring me to make more music. They have allowed me to get deeper into the concept of 'no destroyer.'

We've talked about that before, but perhaps you could tell your fans what those two words 'no destroyer' mean to you as a concept or an area to explore.

No destroyer means that there are a lot of destroyful minds out there trying to take what you've got. There's a lot of destructive minds out there - that's what it really means. People out there sometimes engage in a destroyful way. They are out there and we have to be prepared. There's a lot of things some people try to destroy.

Greed is a powerful motivator.

Oh yes. Oh yes.

As an artist and as a business owner, you wear two different hats. Do those roles ever conflict? Does Spear the artist ever argue with Spear the music executive?

(Big laugh) No. No. No. No. There is no interference. Both roles work together to strengthen each other.

At what point did you become aware of the extent of the bootlegging of your music, the theft of your art?

At first, I was just playing around on the Internet and I started bumping into things that weren't right. In life, these things are going to happen, but they don't only happen to me. They happen all over the world. I have to realize as important as these things are, there are other things that are important. Bad things happened then. Good things hap-

-pened then, but you can't bring these things into now. It's a new beginning and you can't carry forward the things you left behind. It's going to interfere with you in the present if you try to do that.

That is very wise, but I see how easy it is to get caught, like you're in a swamp, with this kind of futile anger and it becomes very difficult to move ahead. How do you avoid getting stuck in the mire of so much bitterness?

It's your mind. You develop your mind so that it can do the work of separation. Otherwise, you won't go nowhere. You think you're going forward, but you're going backward. There's a lot of good things to be done moving forward!

That's true. But, you haven't held back. As a friend, I sometimes worry because I know this is the period of your 'semi retirement' and it seems like you're taking on Goliath and you're just one David!

(Huge laugh) A lot of things gonna take place. You see, what really happen is that I realized that the music business is a lot like a door and once you identify that, you learn how to space yourself here and there. You then get your thing going and get what you need to get done done. Now, all the doors have been closed and they'll do

anything to get that door open again. This is what's happening now. How I can pretend it's not?

You could stick your head in the sand. (laugh)

(More laughter) NO! Sometimes you have to just laugh at these things because what is it you're going to do? It's a joke and at the same time, you're moving on. It's a new beginning.

We certainly need one! It seems we're in a very troubling time in history. There are so many traps, addictions and temptations out there. You've had lots of experience. Is there anything you'd advise to the people out there, trying their best to live a good life amidst all of those things?

That's a very good question, but we all are going through different things. If I knew what a specific person was suffering, perhaps I could say something. Essentially, we are in the same boat going through the same issues at different times.

Surely, your faith, your belief in the creator as Jah God, has had an influence on how you conduct your daily life. Has your faith changed or deepened over the years?

Not changed. When you are in control of your faith, you are in

control of your destiny, you are in control of yourself. You have to be in control of the things you do and the things you say. I would say that if you leave yourself open to it, things can interfere with your faith. But, if you are aware, you can block out such interference. Your faith will always be tested. If it can be toppled, it was not faith that you had.

I find it easier to have faith at a cabin or a mountaintop than in the middle of a traffic jam on a Friday afternoon. Spear, you live in New York and I know from going there, there are a lot of distractions.

(laugh) There is a lot going on! You have to know where you want to be in that and what you should do.

I know that you spend part of the year at your home in St. Anne's. Is there a certain kind of recharging you get there that you can't get anywhere else?

Oh yeah. You can go there and really chill. I put myself in a low gear. In neutral! You just let the vibes flow in, the essence you know. All of the good things – the beach, the good food. It is a meditation as well as a vacation and I feel the benefit.

When we've talked before, you've said you're semi-retired. What I'm wondering is if you believe an artist can ever truly retire. You tell me that you hear melodies and snatches of lyrics in your head while you're walking around during the day doing something that has nothing to do with music.

An artist can retire from touring and from other things, but in terms of musical creativity, I don't think you can retire from that. I'm always going to hear and do things that are creative. So, that remains and is never done.

You continue to do a few concerts each year. Can you say something about your motivation for doing that, and what the experience is like now when you sing live.

I do it for the fans. There are certain places that have supported me for so many years. They draw inspiration from the essence of I man and I know what my music has done for some people. It can change people and turn around people life. I don't do it, play live because I have to do it if that's what's in people's minds. I do it and I do it mindfully and I do it properly. Of course, I enjoy it still, but it is a work. A work I was called on to do, but not in the sense of an obligation in the sense that most people

would understand. But, I have to deal with what some people say out of whatever sense because they can't understand that I'm not touring still. They say that I am sick, that I have cancer, that I have a blood disease!

Really!

What a thing for one man to do to another. It takes away one's freedom and one's rights! I read and hear all this garbage and I wonder what is wrong with these people. I am 67 years old and I'm the best of health and I have all intention to stay that way. I'm who I is. I'm firm. I'm clean. To spread such rumors is one of the wickedest things one person can do to another.

Well, I can see how it happens. So much information is sent from our isolated position, sitting in front of our computers. One right click and someone has sent a message they would never have the guts to say if the person was standing right in front of them.

Yes, true. But, there has been so much wickedness. As you know, we lost our son, Kevin recently and there has been so much going on, it's only recently we have had the time to grieve. My wife, Sonia and I are grieving people and grief needs its proper care and attention. I can't let other forces

get in the way of what is a natural thing. People need to respect that. We need to respect it. It is part of the natural thing. Everything lives and passes.

That is true. But, as a parent, I can't imagine the pain you went through. As you're going through the grief process, you have had so much to deal with – including the continued pressure of ongoing expectations from the business side of music. You've told me that since 'Jah is Real' won the Grammy, you've had lots of lucrative offers to tour. I'm sure you could keep touring till you dropped if you wanted to.

Oh yes! (big laugh)

So, you've just played a big big show. People loved it more than ever. Do you ever wish you could jump in your bus and drive to the next town to play another concert?

NO. NO.

NO?

Yaggghhhh! (laugh) NO! I forget that kind of feeling! I love to play, but the idea of getting on a bus and touring for three or four months through Canada, the States and Europe never crosses my mind no more. I don't think I will get that itch again.

You'll probably live ten years longer as a result.

Mmmm Hmmm. I think every retirement person has to use their discretion and not overdo it. Whenever I play a show, it's not because I called a promoter. They call me. They have to abide by my rules. I do these things because of the fans.

You're playing the Marley family's 9 Mile festival. I assume you took that date because of the association with Bob.

Yes, I do it because of Bob. Something like that is important. Bob's birthday just passed and it is a celebration of his birth in a sense. It is an important thing because of course he was one of the foundations of our music. It's also been a few years since I was down in Florida and I have had some very supportive fans down there from the very beginning. It will be like a family thing. It is a people's festival.

We've talked at length before about the founding fathers and mothers of reggae music. Do you think there's anyone, any younger performers, who are carrying the torch in a positive direction?

Well, if they are there, they are not getting the chance to be heard enough. Now the DJ thing controls everything – especially back in Jamaica. If you're do-

ing anything different, no one will hear your music, no radio stations will play your music. It is hard to be a roots reggae singer coming out of Jamaica these days. It is very different than when I was a young artist trying to break through. It is a shame that I can't answer this question the way I should like to.

But, that's a powerful answer in itself.

Every day, I ask myself questions about this. What happened to the real reggae? The environment is different.

I think that what some younger people don't realize is that none of this was a given. People like Chris Blackwell were taking some real risks when they took a chance on Bob, or Jimmy Cliff or yourself. There were no guarantees it would work out the way everyone involved hoped it would. You came into a very competitive market at the end of the sixties that was dominated by 'hippie music.' Granted, the hippies were quite open-minded, but it was still primarily a music industry dominated by white people – with acts like Jimi Hendrix, Otis Redding and Sly Stone being noticeable exceptions. Yet, you came in and – against considerable odds –

did very well.

Yes, it was a very competitive time. But, I do think that the companies at that time did take risks and did do some work for us to get us exposure. I would say what you said about Chris Blackwell was true, you know, he gets a lot more criticism than credit. Yet, he believed in our music even if some people will take exception when I say that. If not for someone like that, our music could still be stuck in Jamaica exclusively. It was a very good time when I got in to things. I couldn't do it in the same way if I was starting today.

Before I go, I want to ask you about a quote from an older song when you sing 'No one remember Burning Spear.' Well, I don't think that's true, but given that, how would you like to be remembered? What do you consider to be your greatest contribution?

That song came about because I was still in the whole Jamaican thing where there was this kind of environment where people weren't respecting Spear and this whole new kind of music was dominating the scene. Since then, on another level, I have come to realize that people will always remember I and my work. I feel good about it. I've made my mark. I've done the right thing as I feel I should have done it. I have listened to Jah and got the work done.

You seem to have avoided a lot of the pitfalls – such as serious drug use – that mar the music industry and entrap performers.

I've seen it all. I've seen a lot of things. In the music business environment, a lot of things surround you. You have to choose what you want to do. Do you want to be a part of the material world they are encouraging you to join? Or, do they want to be a part of me? If I'd become a part of them, I wouldn't be here today talking to you. No one is perfect. Don't get me wrong, but I think I've managed to avoid a lot of the temptations that could have surrounded me and put me down. I've always tried to put forward a very positive, clean image where the work I've done has been good work and positive work.

Do you feel that the expectation of fans puts any pressure on you?

In what sense?

In the sense that whether you choose it or not, they may rely on you for a certain level of spiritual guidance?

Well, it's my work and my duty to do what I do. Perhaps they know that there are certain things that I know, but I don't think it's pressure really. I do music as I know how to do it. I strive to do it the right way. It's a calling, but there is no pres-



sure from my true fans. No. I am working for them and I get the job done. I don't stray from that. It's the way I started and it's the way I will end. But, I'm not the message. I am just a messenger.

Nice.

Life, you know Brother Doug. Life is here. Seen.

Seen.



SINGING MELODY

Interview by Angus Taylor

"If you're trying to sing you're in the wrong game. There's no trying with music"

Singing Melody cut his first tune Tie Me in 1987 at

King Tubby's (without the great man's permission!) before hitting big with a cover of the R&B group Surface's Shower Me With Your Love. His US influenced, powerfully delivered style made him both a successful solo artist and a key member of the harmony quartet L.U.S.T formed in 1997 with Lukie D, Thrilla U and Tony Curtis. In February, Singing Melody was in London promoting his sixth album 'They Call Me Mr Melody' released via his own SHEM Music label and distributed by VP Records. Angus Taylor had a chat with him a few days after L.U.S.T.'s Valentine's concert at Brixton Academy with Freddie McGregor and John Holt.





It's been many years since you last released a solo album. Why did you decide at this point, that it was time to step forward?

If you've been following my career for some while you can realise that whenever I come with a song it's always on time. I'm not one of those artists decid-

ed to rush through music and just record a lot of stuff and put it out, so that before you reach 40 you have 30 albums. I take my time with music because I think music needs to grow with people. So it came right on time. I was lucky to catch the 50th anniversary of reggae. Some of the reviews were associating this album with that

timing, so I was very pleased with that.

It's also your first solo album on your own SHEM Music label, in conjunction with Fateyes who have a history of working with.

I also wanted to learn the production side of the music and to work with other artists, not just myself, because I look at myself as a non self-centred person. I wanted to get other people involved in music who I see as a talent. So starting my own label and putting out this album on my own label was really important to me to learn the way to go into the record industry as a label and to operate as a label. I've watched a lot of artists who get into the producing and think that they all know it all. So when I approached Fat Eyes to record this album I said "I want you right upside beside me to help me to roll out this album because I know you know what you're doing". He actually guided me with the whole process and actually co-produced with me as well as executive producer.

You mentioned something about timing. A lot of artists release on Valentine's Day but you actually released it before Valentine's Day so that people would have it on their playlists already. Was that deliberate?

Absolutely. I've got to thank

Donovan Williams from VP Records. He actually guided us doing a lot of mentorship. We wanted it to come out on Valentine's but he said "Listen, if you come with the album before Valentine's, they will have the album on Valentine's. That was such a brilliant idea.

You are an artist who sounds pretty much exactly as you do on record. Not to put too fine a point on it but many artists these days don't.

Well, you have to deliver, you know what I mean? If you're trying to sing you're in the wrong game, you're in the wrong business. There's no trying with music. Nowadays you find that artists who are recording are using so much digital sounds on their voices and plug-ins and stuff, so you find out when they come to deliver it it's got a different sound. Reggae artists we try to make sure we maintain the standard of the music and what it's supposed to sound like.

There's one track where you do use pitch alteration on the album, but what's your view on the use of auto-tune and other pitch correction because clearly you're an artist who can sing and you're using it to take that singing somewhere else.

Sometimes there's a certain song where you think it may

need a different sound and you want to get it in the same style as what's going on so young people can be a part of it and get more into it. It's not that we need it, but for this particular track we wanted a different sound to it. I can tell you I had one of the worst times singing on that thing. My notes are so perfect and then you can't sing perfect when you're singing in it, you have to sing a flat note for it to correct it. I had two hours trying to correct it because I can't sing off-key, I don't know how to do it, so it was a terrible time but I finally got through it and it was fun!

Singing badly is not as easy as it sounds (laughs).

(laughs) Yeah!

You sing in a lot of styles on the album like dancehall and gospel but on Reggae to The Bone, you and Lymie Murray sing on the Please Be True rhythm, which is as foundation as it gets.

I think you said it right. It's like you were there when I was making the song, because the way you put the words just now is the exact way I wanted to do it. We sat down, shared ideas and Lymie came up with [sings] "Reggae music a wi thing come mek wi set it" and I said [sings] "A it a feed theghetto youth so we protect it", and after the song finished he said "Here is the song, it's done!" and I

said "No, we're going to do the song". We went into the studio with Germain and Germain said "Listen, you're on your own. Produce this one". Even though it was produced by him, he let off saying that, you know? (laughs) It was a great idea, we would deliberately do that.

You also appear with U Roy on Smile. Did you actually share studio time with U Roy, or was his part done at a different juncture?

At one point we shared the studio and at the next point when we came back to do the actual recording I wasn't there at that time. He lives in the area that Lukie D is from, so Lukie D took me to where he was living. He came out and he said "Lukie, wha gwaan?" I was kind of nervous approaching him, I said "U Roy, I have a song that I want you and me to do". He said "Wait, youth, gawaan. Play the song to be heard, man". I played the song from the car and he was like "Yeah, this is really a wicked tune, youth. You know this riddim? I know it long time!" I think at the weekend he had a dance going and he said after the weekend he's going to come and grace the song. I wasn't there, I had to travel, but Fatta took the role as a producer and got U Roy into the studio. We invited him to hear the finished product, and he was swept off his feet. He was like "Youth, you touch me man, you touch

me!” (laughs).

Let’s talk about some more reggae ambassadors. Let’s talk about somebody who was quite important in your early career, King Tubbys.

King Tubbys was a very interesting character. Even though he was a pioneer in the music, he showed the human side, of saying “Yo, you can’t sit there. Come out of the yard!” (laughs). He didn’t record me, obviously - who am I to King Tubbys to record as a little youth? The apprentice engineer that was working there was from my community so I got to go into the studio when King Tubbys wasn’t there. Back in those times it was reel-to-reel, four track machine, so if you use up a space it is a very important space that you use up. King Tubbys came in a week later and found out that someone was on the track. It was a big, big thing, the guy almost lost his job, and for myself as well (laughs) because King Tubbys was very serious about what he was doing and you can’t play around with it. But after hearing the song he says “It’s a good song” and he’s going to put it out, he’s going to give me one record and if I need more I have to buy it. That was just King Tubbys, you know?

Let’s just talk about somebody else: Junior Murvin.

Definitely. I call him Uncle Murvin. I’m talking now and

I’m having a chill just thinking about Junior. Junior has been a part of my inspiration through music, after listening to some of his great songs I said “I really want to be like this guy, I love his expression in music”. I loved the way he reached out and doesn’t play with it. I think Junior helped me to actually come out of myself, to start to sing and create more expressions. That’s what he is, he’s an expressionist. He expresses music so deeply that it hits you right away; you don’t wait to get hit, you get hit by Junior!

He is a singer who is famous for a particular register but that’s only a small part of what he does. Likewise, there’s just a moment on Must Be The Girl where you hit that register as well, just for a second, and you can hear the link there.

(laughs) Different songs require different expressions and like I said, I’m an expressionist. I think at first my producer had a lot of problems with me screaming in every song because I would just hear the song and start on a high note, expressing, and sometimes you don’t need to express that way. I think for this particular album there was not a lot of high-pitched singing, it was more calmer singing but then as I need it, I bring it. As a singer you should be able to do that. Your music should not be on one level where people easily get tired of stuff if it’s not different. People don’t like

things too normal, you have to impress them, it’s a part of how the world works. You can’t just build a car, you have to build a car plus features to impress people (laughs).

Like Junior, you clearly enjoy American soul music. Were you affected by the passing of Whitney Houston recently?

Thrilla woke me up about 2.30 when I was here. I said “Who’s calling me so late in my room?” And he’d hand up and he’d call, he’d call, and I didn’t answer. The third time I answered the phone and he says “Wake up! Whitney Houston just passed!” I dropped the phone, I turned the telly on quickly and I started scrolling through the channels. I couldn’t find the news and I said to myself “This is not true!” and I start to search my phone to see if I can get the internet access to go on to see if it’s really true because a lot of times you hear rumours and it’s not true. I was devastated. I didn’t eat all day. I said “This is a lady that gave us so much of her life and she’s not here”. To see she died that way was really painful to me. That made me just look at myself and think I’m going to do everything I can possibly do correct, I’m going to do it. I’m going to make sure that my life is in a certain way and a certain standard that I can just live it and live it true, you know? She definitely is going to be greatly missed. A big loss for the industry.



Donovan Williams from VP Records. He actually guided us doing a lot of mentorship. We wanted it to come out on Valentine’s but he said “Listen, if you come with the album before Valentine’s, they will have the album on Valentine’s. That was such a brilliant idea.

Finally, let’s talk about L.U.S.T. How do four very successful solo artists, people with their own creativity, people with their own personalities, manage to come together and keep that link so strong for so long?

We grew up together in the business and we have a lot of respect for each other’s talent. The groups that came before

us, all the harmony sounding groups: the Mighty Diamonds, the Tamlins, the Heptones, we realised back then that those kind of music were fading and we didn’t love that. L.U.S.T. came together because of that. We were always singing together at studio, carrying harmonies and finally in ‘97 we went to studio and recorded our first single Sweetness Of Your Love. That went to number 1, several awards, and from there we said “You know what gentlemen? This is special”. What kept us together as a group is the fact that we all respect each other’s talent and effort, and we work together. L.U.S.T. never had a boring moment. It is four interesting characters. Even when we’re on tour, a lot of groups will get bored after a while,

sometimes you see a group and they don’t get along because this person is egoistic, that person has his own ego on . When we come to L.U.S.T. we drop all ego because you can’t lead the group it’s a mashup, because it’s four individual singers, everybody can sing. When you’re in a group where there’s only one lead singer and he feels like he’s the one who’s doing all the work and he just has some back-up guys it becomes egoistic where he wants to leave and go on his own. With L.U.S.T. nobody can leave.

Otherwise you won’t be able to say the name.

Exactly!



TAKANA ZION

Interview & Photos by Franck Blanquin

"I wanted to be worthy of working with all these big names in reggae, in this mythical place that is Harry J studio"

Takana Zion is a young Guinean artist whose third album, 'Rasta Government' (Soulbeats), came out last May. Having recorded his previous albums in Paris and Bamako with the help of producer Manjul, he decided to record his latest one in Jamaica, at Harry J studio. As spiritually committed as ever, his music has taken on a more roots sound thanks to the influence of the Jamaican musicians he worked with on this album.

Last year you released your new album, 'Rasta Government', which you recorded in Jamaica. How was this album conceived?

This album is the logical continuation of my previous albums. I was already thinking about going to Jamaica during the recording of the second album. I met Samuel Clayton of the group Mystic Revelation of Rastafari, who worked with me as concert sound engineer. We toured together. Samuel completely changed my whole live sound. Everything went off very smoothly.

Then I invited him to visit me in Guinea to do the same show there. It was a hard time because 200 young Guineans had just been killed in a stadium. But Samuel was brave. As the eldest member of our group, he encouraged the musicians.

Then we decided to do an album in Jamaica. I had the songs, he had the contacts and the studio.

How did you compose this album? What was it like collaborating with the musicians?

It all happened very naturally. I played them the melodies and chords I had in my head, and they suggested arrangements for the different tracks. I didn't have to say anything. The music spoke for itself.

Then I meditated to find beautiful words right there in the studio. I don't even write my words down on paper. I just let myself be guided. Jah tells us when the time comes to speak. You don't have to worry. It all comes naturally.

Your recorded this album at legendary Harry J studio, a mythical place in the history of reggae, where Bob Marley and Burning Spear recorded. Did you feel special vibes during these sessions? Didn't you feel some pressure?

I felt a lot of pressure before I went to record in Jamaica. I'd always been drawn to this country. Even though I'd never been there, I've always felt very close to it spiritually. I listen to lots of music made on the island, and also read lots on the topic.

I wanted to be worthy of working with all these big names in reggae, in this mythical place that is Harry J studio. I wanted to carry out my mission. Thanks to God, I think we succeeded.

Three years ago Sam "Junior" Clayton became your music director. How is it working together?

He's a man with a lot of experience, who's worked with the likes of Burning Spear and Steel Pulse—just the man to help a young artist like me. He's here to guide me.

On the album you do a track - "Glory" - together with Capleton. What was it like meeting him?

Before going to Jamaica, a friend of mine named Black Man mentioned me to Capleton. So when I arrived on the island, Capleton generously opened his door to me. We ate together, meditated together and shot the clip. It was a really intense experience for me, as a young African artist who's appreciated Capleton's music for a long time.

In the song "Glory" you pay tribute to the great figures of the cause. Do you the younger generations need to be reminded?

You always have to look behind you. Haile Selassie got rid of the inferiority complex I had in me. I might have wasted my time and missed my life instead of becoming a new man. He guided me from the ghettos of Conakry to the hills of Bamako and stopped me from falling into the traps that the African youth so often falls in.

The tribute is obvious, because I have to thank him for giving us the force, as well as Marcus Garvey for these prophecies that gave us the vision and Emmanuel, who is a holy who devoted his entire life to Rastafari.

What's your view on the Afri-



can reggae scene?

Reggae is really taking off in Africa. Lots of young people are taking up this music. But we need infrastructures and good producers. Over there, there's a real lack of information about what's going on in reggae. We need sound systems and labels. Things need to fall into place.

I want to work with Guinean artists. I had a compilation project that fell through due to time constraints. But I'm currently building a studio in Guinea so that I have a place to work with young people

Some of your albums, like 'Black Mafia', were only released in Guinea. Can you explain why?

When I get home after a tour, I can't stand to not be doing something. But if I record roots reggae, young people won't be interested. So, to spread the message and the good vibes, I record more dancehall or R&B tracks. I want to make young people dance in wisdom. That's why I put out albums like "Black Mafia" especially for the Guinea music scene.

On your first album you included some dub tracks.

Would you like to continue on this path and do dubs of your new tracks?

I really like it, but dub was the speciality of Manjul, with whom I collaborated on the previous albums. It also depends on the album. Certain riddims lend themselves better to dub because of their musical color. But I'm open.

You started your career in rap. How did the transition to reggae and Rastafarianism take place?

It depends on the movements



of the heart at a given time of your life. When you're young, you want faster sounds. The American music scene influenced Guinean youth, the same way that French rap between 1996 and 1999 had a strong impact on some young Guineans. It was at a time when I was asking myself a lot of questions about myself, the African people and its origins. I started meeting Rastas and they told me about Haile Selassie. I was a young African in search of spirituality and identity. I left my parents very early because I knew I couldn't live the life I had chosen with them. I went to Mali, where I met Tiken Jah Fakoly, Manjul and other brothers who helped me become who I am today.

Your latest album is called 'Rasta Government'. Do you think rastas have a role to play in politics?

Obviously, because there are lot of kids who go to school these days and who also listen to the message of Rasta. Later on they will be able assume their responsibilities within our society.

They are the future "Rasta Government." We don't just sing to entertain, but try to educate and convey positive energy. We need to surpass ourselves—for our continent. Rasta provides us with spiritual independence. The people need to trust

in him. Rasta pushes us towards love and unity. How can people live without a living wage, enough to care for, feed and house themselves? There's no more room for dictatorships in Africa and rastas have a role to play.

We must grow economically. The people must realize the importance of getting involved in this area. We also must not be afraid of diversity. They say the world has become a "global village" because of globalization. We are workers, the builders of the divine creation, and we intend to fully assume our role in maintaining positivity on Earth. One Love.





ALBOROSIE

Interview by Gerard McMahon

Photos by Christian Bordey

"I'm really attached to the reggae foundation, from the 1970s up to the 1980s"

Two years ago I travelled to Italy for (what proved to be the last Italian) ROTOTOM Sunsplash reggae

festival. The priority was to catch Bunny Wailer, the Congos, Pablo Moses, U-Roy, Sly and Robbie and other 'old school' artists doing their thing. Little did I realise that a new young artist was to appear on stage, to wide and loud acclaim, effectively proving to be one of – if not the – highlight of the last Italian ROTOTOM. It was fitting, though surprising, that this artist should be Italian. Going from strength to strength – and deservedly securing the 2011 'best reggae act' MOBO award – United Reggae was delighted to catch up with ALBOROSIE in Holland recently.



What has been your greatest achievement in life?

When I start to play reggae. That is the greatest achievement. Reggae makes me feel complete... a little bit of aggression, a little bit of revolution, spirituality, inspiration and that's reggae.

What has been your biggest disappointment in life?

Sometime I would like to be in places with my music there where maybe I can do something for people. I'm not able to go there. Let's say I would like to do some time in Africa, during the revolution, but sometime I can't be there because the place is too rough. So I have to fight through my music. Sometime I would like myself to go places and be there with the revolution.

As one of the few reggae artists with an 'international consciousness', did you get any negative feedback to your song 'America'?

Not really. I've been in the States performing that song, people love it. People agree with me. Especially people from Africa. So, you know like, it's a revolution. It's always a good revolution. Every time I sing about something it's something that really belongs to people, so it's people saying 'let's do our thing now, we need to be independent'. One time I was listening to a show

in Africa through my computer and people we're saying 'American soldier stand down too, go back to America and let Africa be Africa', so that inspired me to write the song.

It's a good song.

Thank you very much.

Who is your favourite reggae artist?

Well, the teacher, Bob (Marley), can't leave Bob! Many of them, Burning Spear, Peter Tosh, many of them. But mostly from the past. The new reggae, me and the new reggae, we're not really compatible.

But you're excellent at using the different streams of reggae?

Yes, but I always try to mix my song with a little bit of 'old school'. So I'm really attached to the foundation, from the 1970s up to the 1980s, but we stop there.

Who is your favourite living politician?

Oh God Almighty! That is a question! No, I don't have no politician. Is there any politician that makes you happy?

Obama?

Who? No. Why Obama? Obama... the captain change, but the plane is always the

same plane (laughs).

Who is your least favourite politician?

Oh! I have a long list. But the winner is Silvio Berlusconi (laughs again). He's the champion. He's the greatest of them all in Babylon.

Outside music, what are your main interests?

Outside music, well you know I build guitars. If I'm not in the studio or performing or whatever I build instruments. And besides that I like going fishing, you know, throw the line, looking at Kingston. The last time I catch a big fish, it was a sting ray. But I let it go because I don't want to kill no creatures. I just do it for fun and then I let them go.

In life, who has had the greatest influence on you?

Well definitely Jesus, yes, Jesus is inspiration, the Emperor Selassie, yes? They will inspire me, and then all the revolutionaries, people like Che Guevara. Bob (Marley) is a revolutionary warrior, to me as a European, I see Bob as a revolutionary.

As a retired policeman, how did your father cope, knowing that his son was into Rasta?

My father, he was a good cop, never really troubled the youth for a spliff or nothing like that.



He was chasing the real bad man. He loves what I do. He's my greatest fan.

Did he travel with you in the early years?

No. He never took a plane in his life... 'old school'!

How did he feel about you going to Jamaica?

That was tough. You know we Italians we love family, we love being together. It was tough for them. But I believe that if you are a good parent you always let go of your children, because they

need to walk. They need to see the world, they need to choose what is best. When they want to come back, they will be back. Otherwise, they have the right to go and walk the world, and I did that.

Do you want a 'chartbuster'?

A what? No, I don't care about that. I don't care, like I do music from like I was this (He indicates as a child). Music has always been my life. Every single brick of my house was built with music, and I'm not interested in charts, No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, I just do what I gotta do, what I like until I

can't do it. When my work is over, I will step back. But I don't care about charts and selling and whatever, that's no gonna stop me from making music.

Would you like to be traveling with a brass/horns section?

I did. I'll tell you the truth, I'll give it to you straight - sometimes it costs. Because there are a lot of people traveling, with a lot of expenses. In summertime the budget is there, so I can have more musicians. It boils down to money at the end of the day.

What upsets you most in the music business?

The music business (itself!). Trust me, my spirituality keeps me going. The music business is atrocious. But I love music. It's like you are together with a beautiful woman (but) she's a troublemaker. But because she's so beautiful that you just can't live without her, (but) she's a troublemaker. So you just cope with it and walk with it.

Are you satisfied with the reception to your new album – 2 Times Revolution?

Yes, of course. You know, before my album came out somebody put it on the internet. It was out there already. I hadn't even put it out. But you know, before people like my album (I) myself like my album. So if I like it I put it out, but people love it. People have different songs that they like or whatever.

Have you experienced any resentment (as a successful white man) in reggae?

Say that again, because this is very interesting. (Question repeated). I have to tell you the truth, we had problems. We had problems of people saying things. For instance when we won the MOBO award for best reggae artist for 2011, we had problems with people saying things about the white artist and whatever. I live in Jamaica, my wife she is a black, I live in

a black man country and I love everybody. So if they want to talk, like whosoever is talking, I don't care. I play reggae music, I live in Jamaica. You know Jamaica is a tough place, so the decision to go there was a tough decision. And I'm still here playing my reggae music. My musicians are Jamaican, my manager is Jamaican, so you know, it's all good.

Where is your wife from?

No, I say my wife? It's my girlfriend, from Jamaica, everything from Jamaica.

What do you like most about Jamaica, where you've been now for a long time?

I don't know. It's like when you fall in love. Somebody asks you: 'Why did you fall in love?', I don't know (laughs). I just fall in love. Of course, the culture, maybe, the culture, the tradition. There is, I believe, a pirate in me, a soul pirate, so it's something from the past that's a little bit of magic. The first time I went to Jamaica I didn't like it. And then something happened there, somebody tell me things: 'Your spirit is here in Jamaica, you should come back and look for it'. And I went back, I'll never go back to Italy again (laughs).

What do like least about Jamaica?

The violence, the politics.

But you have avoided the violence?

Sometimes you're part of it. Living in Jamaica is not easy. I was there when they fire shots. I was there when houses were burning and everything. That's why I'm always trying to explain to my people that when I used to live in Europe and I used to play reggae music, it was not the same thing. Right now I'm there. God lives in Jamaica, but Satan lives there too. It's a balance, so you know you don't move between the two energies.

In past interviews you mentioned 'Meditation'. Do you meditate daily?

Every day. Everything I do is a meditation. I meditate a lot.

Are you optimistic that cannabis will be legalised?

I enjoy myself in fighting the system. At the end of the day we're still smoking. So they never stopped us from smoking. Ganja will be legalised when the church decides, as well as (when) the Americans decide to legalise ganja. For me, ganja is not a substance, it's a revolution. When I go up there and sing about ganja, I'm not saying to you, you need to smoke to get high. Ganja is a plant, ganja is my culture, right, from when I start to listen to reggae music I learn that ganja is nature. So when the system is trying to fight



nature, I wonder why. There must be a reason, or maybe the reason is politics. But ganja is a good revolution. I'll keep fighting.

What were you raised religion wise?

Well I was born Christian. I am still a Christian, but I'm a revolutionary Christian. So I sing

Jahspel music, the gospel of Jah. So I create my own spiritualism, I don't believe in religion, because that goes with politics and mafia. I'm a spiritualist.

Do you have any remaining ambitions in life?

You know, I give thanks to God every day for what I am doing

right now, and because from day one I do music, and I got every day a plate of pasta to eat. So I'm very lucky, I'm very blessed. So I'll tell you the truth, I don't have plans, I don't have... what I do right now, I live my life. One thing I know for sure, music was my life, but now my life is music. That's all I have to say.



MILLION STYLEZ

Interview by Angus Taylor

"When you do the music, you enter a different universe... just record and fly away!"

In the run up to the release of Necessary Mayhem's 'Trilogy' Series United Reggae spoke to a featured artist who has been recording for the label from almost day one - Sweden's Million Stylez. Raised by immigrant parents in the Stockholm suburb of Solentuna, the hip hop loving Kenshin Iryo was gradually seduced by the more melodic vibes of reggae and dancehall, travelling to Jamaica to win a coveted fourth place in Red Stripe and Irie FM's Big Break talent contest in 2005. Since then he has released two albums, 'From A Far' and 'Everyday', with a third in the works. Thanks to Siobhan Jones and Curtis Lynch of Necessary Mayhem for making this interview possible...



Your mother is French and your father is Japanese. How many languages were spoken at home when you were young?

When I was really young I only knew Japanese and French. I was born in Sweden but I spent a lot of time in Japan and France, so I got to learn French and Japanese fluently. I came back to kindergarten and the teachers told my parents to start speaking Swedish alone, because my Swedish was really bad. That's why my French is not good at all and my Japanese is now only a couple of words. My Swedish is really good though! (laughs) And English, I learned from TV and music, MTV and DJ Kat Show, Sky Channel - I actually learned English like that!

Through your parents both Catholicism and Buddhism were spiritual influences. Did this give you any impetus to follow your own path in life?

My dad, he's a Buddhist and he was the one who planted the spiritual seed in my life. My mum, she's a Catholic and most Catholic people I don't think they're so spiritual, it's more ritual. No offence to anyone. My dad taught me a lot about spiritual things and energies, good and bad energy, from a young age. At that young age it's kind of rare, especially in Sweden which is not so spiritual. Parents don't really teach their kids about spirituality and

God. My parents didn't really talk about God either because Buddhism is not a God belief, it's more like inner harmony.

When you're performing on a sound system is there a flow of energy between the performer and the audience?

Very much so. The sound system has speaker boxes which enhance that vibe and that energy that you put out on the stage, and it's the visual part as well when people see you jumping and sweating and singing your lungs out. You need to connect with the people because you're not connecting physically. A lot of artists can connect to your soul, can touch your soul, so that's a spiritual thing. Some people just catch your attention, the way they look, the way they sound or they've got a different kind of style, they've got a rough voice, or some crazy lyrics, or whatever. A good example is Jah Cure or Chezidek because when you hear the voice and the message and they just grab your soul. It's just a big difference between different artists, what kind of energy they put out there. If you've got positive lyrics with an uplifting rhythm in the background then there's a big chance that no fights will break out that evening. If it's really rough music with violent lyrics, also a bad sound or whatever (laughs), then I think the energy that gets put out there it transforms and converts and turns into something

negative or positive.

What are your views on lyrics? Is there anything that's off-limits for you as a topic?

Yeah, definitely. I mean I can talk about whatever I like but there's just certain stuff, because I've got a bunch of kids listening to my music as well, so I need to watch my mouth, you know? Not only that, I don't want to put out any too slack lyrics for even elders to hear or people my age to hear. That's energy again. Whatever you put out there you convert that energy to whatever you want to convert it to, so I try to keep my lyrics to as positive as possible.

What about in a sound clash situation? Even though it's a combative situation are you going to try to do it in a positive way?

That's like a double standard from my side, you know? It's a musical war. It's entertainment! (laughs) That's the only time I'll go violent, you know? That's where people get shot in their face - musically! I never got this question, you're asking me a bunch of original questions, that's good! I've been thinking about that a lot, "Oh my God, maybe I should stop doing this? Just stick to conscious lyrics all the time, positive lyrics." Then if somebody links me, one of my brethren, and says "Yo, I want a sound killing thing! There's a clash coming



up and I want a custom dub. We're clashing this sound and you have to say this and that" and sometimes you send lyrics and there's a bunch of violent lyrics. It's a musical war so I'm just trying to contribute to what they want because that's also part of my job. Gentleman for instance has stopped voicing dubplates, and I don't know, maybe that's the reason why he stopped. Of course, he's doing kind of well! I still need that dubplate money though (laughs). We live two different kind of lives, one earthly life and one spiritual life. It's that earthly thing!

Sweden is a big player on the European reggae scene yet people outside think of it as quite a cold country where visiting artists get arrested for suspicion of ganja. How true is that stereotype and if true is there a connection?

That's how it is, more or less (laughs). Unfortunately, that's kind of how it is round here. But we've got a bunch of wicked producers and artists and we're keeping the reggae scene alive. I really feel sorry for artists that come here because the police over here they're really strict when it comes to weed. And they really try to stop reggae music, also because of the anti-battyman, the homophobic lyrics, everyone gets judged from that so they just harass any kind of dancehall artist who comes here. It's a shame because you

shouldn't judge everyone just because of one person's actions. It's a cold country with a cold vibe in general compared to other countries in Europe. So I'll be spending a lot of time in the studio because when you do the music it doesn't matter where you are, you're in a different world, you just enter a different universe. The rhythm is there, the mic is there, just record and fly away!

You're the first artist on the first track of the first release of the new Necessary Mayhem trilogy. Tell me a bit about how you and Curtis linked up.

I think it was through MSN. Curtis, out of nowhere, he started to write to me. I didn't know who he was but he got my link somehow. He told me he had some rhythms for me and he started sending me some rhythms. I think that the first track I ever recorded for him was the one Champion Sound with Mr Williamz and the whole crew and YT, then it was Dub Plate. The first two tracks that we did were combinations, not solo tracks. That's how we got started.

On the new mix of Champion Sound you share with five other emcees. On the Future Cuts album, you're on As Mi Forward with three other emcees. Is it a different science just doing a few bars on a multiple rhythm like that? Are

you under more pressure because there's less to be done in a shorter time?

No, it's actually less pressure. Whenever I get a track with a chorus or some verses with some other artists I just try to add what's needed to the track. He told me it was a sound killing thing, Champion Sound, so I got into that vibe for the track and just recorded my part, which was 12 bars. It can really be explosive and I just try to stand out from the tune so that people remember my verse. You should always try to stand out, I think.

Tell me a bit about your writing process. Do you ever use paper? Do you ever write anything down or is it just a flow?

I used to write but I stopped writing maybe two years ago. Now I try to record two to four bars at a time and just free-style, improvise. It feels much better because every time you read a paper you can hear it sometimes that you don't actually mean what you're saying, you're actually reading something. If you're singing or rapping or whatever you do I think that it's better that you either know the song, the lyrics, first or that you just sing from your heart. You can actually hear it. There's a bunch of reggae artists that record that way. Sometimes the lyrics are too simple for some but they sing it with a lot of soul, anything that comes out of their mouth



is sung with soul and spirit.

You've been working with Curtis Lynch since the pretty much the start of Necessary Mayhem - have you actually met him?

The only way we've been working so far is that he sends me a rhythm or a couple of rhythms, I pick out the rhythm that I like and record myself in my studio, I engineer myself. So what I can tell you is that I met him once and he's really cool, I like his vibe. The one thing that differs with his rhythms from other producers is that he's got this more analogue sound. What he's really known for is the relicks of these rhythms, even the original rhythms they've just got a different sound, a different kind of fusion. He's from a different school if you compare him to other producers like that. They go more digital. Definitely he's more analogue and he puts his heart and soul into

it, a good vibe in every rhythm. He likes this old school style. The thing is I appreciate old school music as well as I listen to a lot of dub, foundation and stuff, some real roots music with an analogue mix. Just love that sound, that warm, round sound.

What other things have you got coming up with other producers that we should look out for?

I'm working with Special Delivery at the moment. We're going to release an EP with me, it's called Songs About You. It's actually four lovers songs. The first track is Me and You on the Sugar rhythm, that I released a couple of years ago but we're still going to use it for the EP. Then there are three new songs. I've got one song called Feeling for You, there we've got You again - every title has got something with You. Feeling for You is on the Longtime rhythm.

The next song is called Missing You, Special Delivery as well, TNT Productions. The next one is more crossover, on a hip hop, R&B kind of beat. That's going to be more of a surprise when people hear it because it's a different kind of style. So I'm working on that right now and I'm actually working on two different albums right now, one dancehall one and one one-drop one. I need to decide if I'm releasing a double album or the roots one first, I don't really know yet.

Will there be a Million Stylez Necessary Mayhem album?

Probably at some point. I try to keep my promises, so I don't really like to say yet. Everyone I work with we need to keep a good vibe and Curtis is really respectful. We've just been talking on the phone, we call each other every now and then, we link each other with Twitter, we send emails back and forth and we met once. I'd love to go to London and just go to his studio and just stay there for a week and record a bunch of songs. Once again it's just a matter of time because my schedule's fully booked!

Necessary Mayhem: Trilogy was released on March 13th.

Mike Darby from Bristol Archive Records

Interview by Erik Magni

"It's amazing seeing these people get a break some 25 or 30 years later, smiling, being proud and getting excited about roots music again"



BRISTOL ARCHIVE RECORDS

Bristol Archive Records came from seemingly nowhere when the label in early 2011 dropped the acclaimed compilation Bristol Reggae Explosion. This release has been followed by several hard to find roots reggae gems by Bristol-based artists. United Reggae got a chat with label owner Mike Darby to find out more about him and his many projects.

Bristol Archive Records' stunning journey

Meet Mike Darby, an independent financial advisor, golfer and married with two children. He's also the owner, head of people relations, chief detective, finding new material, head of A&R and boss man at UK labels Bristol Archive Records and Sugar Shack Records. If that wasn't enough, Mike Darby is also a Director at Archive Publishing and has taken the initiative to launch Reggae Archive Records, following the success of Bristol Archive Records.

He started his music career as a singer in 1979 with the reggae/two tone/ska band The Rimshots. The band put out a couple of singles and played with The Beat, The Bodysnatchers, Black Roots, Talisman and acclaimed dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson.

Six years later he ventured into band management and launched Sugar Shack Records focusing on British rock artists. The label recently switched direction though, and from 2012 and onwards Sugar Shack will be putting out contemporary British reggae acts.

In music terms, Bristol is primarily known for the genre trip-hop and artists such as Tricky, Portishead and Massive Attack.

It's about long lost gems

The reggae scene has however



also been thriving ever since the 70's in different shapes and forms, and the main aim for Bristol Archive Records is to put many more or less unheard of reggae artists on the map and put the record straight.

"For me it's the untapped and unreleased gems that have fallen through the cracks of time," explains Mike Darby, and continues:

"The expectation is minimal from the artists so its amazing seeing these people get a break some 25 or 30 years later, smiling, being proud and getting excited about roots music again."

And the response on the releases so far seems to please Mike. And one word sums it up well.

"Amazing," he states, and explains:

"I can't believe the response from all around the world. The records sell, the artists have a second chance and we are one big happy Bristol family – taking on the world and spreading our sounds."



Sugar Shack's new reggae direction

Thanks to the success of Bristol Archive Records Mike has also changed direction of his other label – Sugar Shack Records. Its first reggae release is the 12" Sound History Volume 1 by AMJ Dub Collective, out on April 23.

"The success of the Bristol Archive Records means that Black Roots, Talisman and now Joshua Moses are back out in force spreading their message via live performances. It just made sense to support them and their new material by having a record label that can work with them," says Mike, and further explains the company's direction:

"All things reggae from Bristol and the rest of the UK if we can



discover the talent.”

The work of a detective

Now back to the reissue business, and Mike’s recipe for finding new material to put out.

“Word of mouth, referrals, putting out great looking records and being nice people.”

It sounds easy, but it probably also means a great deal of work to compile compilations with hard to find golden nuggets or unreleased gems, and Mike pays special praise to his reggae colleague Martin Langford aka Dubmart, who compiles the track running orders and writes the sleeve notes.

Jah Praises from Revelation Rockers is one of those gems. It was recorded in the late 70’s, but didn’t see the light of day until March 2012.

“Shocked, stunned, excited and motivated,” says Mike about his reaction when he heard about Jah Praises.

More to come

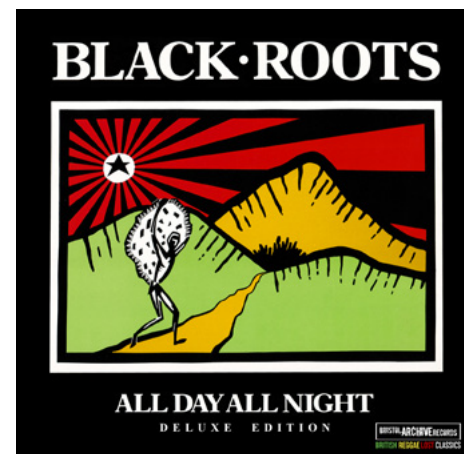
But this album is far from an exception in the increasing Bristol Archive catalogue, and the flagship compilations Bristol Reggae Explosion 1, 2 & 3 includes a great deal of unissued material. To me, it’s remarkable that a tune like Rise Up from Joshua

Moses has been lying around in a drawer somewhere.

And happily enough Mike reveals that there are more to come.

“Joshua Moses’ Joshua to Jash-wha 30 Years in the Wilderness is a must buy for any roots fan. It’s stunning.”

But that’s not all from Mike. In addition to the upcoming Dan Ratchet, Black Roots and Cool Runnings releases, the new non Bristol-related label Reggae Archive Records will put out three lost UK albums and in demand 12”s in the second half of 2012.



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REGGAE REGULAR

Interview by Angus Taylor

Photos by Veronique Skelsey

“Castro Brown called us Reggae Regular. We called ourselves the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly!”

Anyone who’s heard a recent Greensleeves compilation will be familiar with the British band and harmony group who went by a bewildering variety of names in the late 70s and early 80s but today call themselves Reggae Regular. Formed in South London in 1976 the seven piece, comprising Alan King and Tony Rookwood (vocals), George ‘Flee’ Clarke (keyboards), Trevor Salmon (bass), Patrick Donegan (rhythm guitar), Norman Ebanks (lead guitar) and Errol Francis (drums) started getting attention for their live shows (sometimes backing the likes of the Morwells and 15-16-17).

A change of management from Castro Brown to Lloyd Patten resulted in a deal with Chris Cracknell at the newly founded Greensleeves and their first 12” Where Is Jah? credited to Reggae Regular (the name of a local live showcase) being released under the catalogue number GRED001 and hitting the Reggae

top ten chart in February 1978. Their follow-up Black Star Liner hit number one and by the following year the group, taking the moniker The Regulars, were signed to CBS records. Their debut album ‘Victim’ mixed roots and lovers reggae with jazz fusion and soul styles but relations broke down during their European tour, with King, Rookwood, Clarke and Ebanks leaving to record what is popularly believed to be the sequel, the slower, deeply Rastafarian ‘I & I’ (1980). Meanwhile Donegan and Salmon recruited keyboardist Bryan Campbell and cut the single Jah Love for Greensleeves in 1981 as the Rebel Regulars creating their second longplayer (or third depending on where you stand!) ‘Ghetto Rock’ as Reggae Regular again in 1984 at the Mad Professor’s Ariwa studio.

Unpicking such a complicated history is no easy task, but fortunately various members reformed in 2009, releasing a comeback album ‘If Only’ in October 2011. It features fresh material and recuts of old songs (including Black Star Liner in combination with Tippa Irie, who the group backed on his pop charting 1984 hit Hello Darling). George ‘Flee’ Clarke, Bryan Campbell, Patrick Donegan and new lead singer Patrick ‘Dego’ Johnson of the 1990s outfit Private Collection met Angus Taylor at London’s Barbican centre to discuss their complex career. (As the history of the band is not well known we have chosen to edit this as little as possible).

Tell me about how the band originally formed in 1976-7.

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: The bass player then, Trevor and the drummer, and the singer, Alan, they were doing some original stuff, not reggae. I went down there to play some keyboards. In between in the breaks we used to play like Mighty Diamonds stuff, and Tony, the original vocalist, I just thought he was so good and I said he should do the vocals, they never liked it but that’s how it went, he ended up doing the vocals and then from there we got Patrick. Patrick came in and that was it.

Which artists inspired the music of original line-up of the group?

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: Bob Marley. Bob, Bob, Bob, and more Bob. For me just Bob, but obviously it was Mighty Diamonds, Gregory, D Brown, Jacob Miller and Ken Boothe, don’t forget him. To me it was all just about the material, if you haven’t got the writing, if you’re not going to produce something that’s got substance, to me you’re not going to get noticed or it’s not going to last long, so that’s where it was all at. So Bob was so influential.

You were managed by Castro Brown at first?

Patrick Donegan: Reggae-manage (laughs). For a short period of time.

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: Reggae-manage is in between fights (laughs).

He was working with Dennis Brown at the time. Did you meet him?

Patrick Donegan: Dennis was around when we were recording the original Black Star Liner, he was actually in the studio. He actually influenced the picking lead that was on the track because we didn’t have a lead guitarist.

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: And the organ bob.

Patrick Donegan: He said “Just pick something!”.

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: A super man, really super. He was just so talented, you wouldn’t think he was so humble.

Patrick Donegan: He was a nice person. Very, very humble.

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: He wouldn’t hear something nice that would go with a track and keep it to himself, he’d come and tell you, and almost insist that you put it in.

Patrick Donegan: And he didn’t act like a superstar. Anywhere he’s see you he’d just talk to you just like, you know? One of the nicest guys I’ve met in the business.

Was it through Castro Brown that you played with 15,16,17?

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: We did some backing, we never actually got to play with them! (laughs)

Patrick Donegan: It was actually the first sort of outing of the band, wasn’t it? Morwells and 15,16,17. Actually we weren’t called Reggae Regular at the time, it was Castro that called us Reggae Regular.

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: (laughs) We called ourselves the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. We were waiting to be introduced and they call “Ladies and Gentlemen, Reggae Regular!” (laughs)

Patrick Donegan: He didn’t like the name, from in the rehearsal he used to say “You lot should change your name” and we’d said “No, we’re not changing it”.

A lot of people who like reggae these days outside of Britain don’t seem to realise how the roots and the lovers rock were happening at the same time and very much connected rather than being very separate things.

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: Well, roots to me then was Rasta and lovers rock was like for softies. Lovers rock was a chance to really get hold of a girl and you know? But roots, say now, like the Bob thing now, people go out and whenever you play Bob Marley music everybody wants to dance now. Back then

it wasn't the case so much, it was like at home with a spliff and listening, that's where it was.

Patrick Donegan: The two goes together because it was the people who were playing the roots who also played the lovers rock. No matter how big and bad and ugly you are you still like to have it with a girl, innit?

Tell me about how you met Chris Cracknell and the beginning of the relationship with Greensleeves.

George 'Flee' Clarke: We recorded Black Star Liner with Castro and then our manager then, Lloyd Patten decided we were going to record it properly and we went to Gooseberry down on Gerard Street and Dennis Bovell was the engineer. We recorded two tracks. Lloyd took it to Greensleeves who were just up and coming and they did a licensed deal, that was the thing then. They bought half-page ads in the Black Echoes and all that, so the chart would be favourable, do you know what I mean? If you didn't spend enough money on the advert the tracks would become number 11 but if you bought a half-page ad it could be number 4. But Where Is Jah was good enough track and Black Star Liner was good enough track, with the help of the half-page ads (laughs).

They're still being re-issued

by Greensleeves on their compilations. Was your publishing shared at the time with the original group?

George 'Flee' Clarke: Yes, of course it was, we set up a publishing company for the whole band. You never got wages out of it because you were on the road, that's what you did for petrol, sometimes hotel bills and all that kind of business, you know, when you're on the road, before you got a deal and all that.

Did you have any rivalries with other British bands at the time?

Patrick Donegan: I think some of it was manufactured by management. There was supposed to be a rivalry between Steel Pulse and Reggae Regular but us and the guys were cool. We used to go to one another's dressing rooms and chat and stuff like that.

Tell me a bit about how you got the link with CBS and recorded your first album.

George 'Flee' Clarke: It was a fad. All the major companies then wanted to sign a reggae band, all of them wanted a reggae band. Like when the ska bands were there, everyone wanted a ska band. It was that kind of way. Then the A&R people, they'd come to the gigs.

Patrick Donegan: Wasn't it Is-

land that we were originally going to sign with? Island or Virgin.

George 'Flee' Clarke: But CBS was top of the tree then, so it was real prestigious to get a deal with them. That's what the management was working for.



At what point did you change your name to the Regulars?

George 'Flee' Clarke: CBS did that. They thought "reggae" internationally was a big no-no, to them who don't know the reggae music. So, to be honest, we did agree with them at the time, so there's no point in me saying they were this and they were that, we agreed with them that it was a good move.

Now, that album has got a distinctive sound from your later albums. There's jazz and soul, it's what now people with hindsight would call a progressive roots sound.

Patrick Donegan: You're right.

George 'Flee' Clarke: It was, to me, initially just the songs. It's

where the chord movements went and the melodies. Then the bass player was good and the drummer was good. If the drummer played a sound that we thought it wasn't good then he couldn't play it. I think the only person who could play anything that we didn't want was the bass player, Trevor Salmon.

Patrick Donegan: Yeah, he was a very progressive bass player. He wasn't really a reggae bass player. He used to study Stanley Clarke, so that's why the bass was so busy.

In those days reggae bands and non-reggae bands did a lot more touring together than happens now. Who were the most unlikely people you toured with?

Patrick Donegan: Boomtown Rats.

Patrick Donegan: Did a tour with them. Bit unusual, bit weird. Played to a lot of punk audiences.

George 'Flee' Clarke: Japan was another one. Siouxsie and the Banshees. Some guy that was down the Roundhouse, he looked like he lived there, I forgot what his name was. Glam rock, punk people, he was.

What was Bob Geldof like to tour with?

Patrick Donegan: Bob was all right!

George 'Flee' Clarke: He was nice. Down-to-earth. Really, really, really nice.

Patrick Donegan: We used to have a lot of chats. He used to come to our dressing room and stuff and we used to chat.

George 'Flee' Clarke: He did something one night which we never liked. They put pillowslipson and cut the eyes and come behind us when we were on stage, like Ku Klux Klan. We never knew, otherwise there'd be a little Bob Geldof walking about now! Believe me! But we never knew. In a way I feel like I'm glad we didn't know.

At this point it gets confusing. A lot of people think I & I, the next album that came out of your collective was a Regulars album yet it didn't have the Regulars name on the cover.

George 'Flee' Clarke: It was a faction. There was a faction of the Regulars.

Patrick Donegan: You had Regulars part 2 and you had I & I. So half of the guys went to Regulars part 2, which was what we did with Bryan Campbell and half went to I & I.

Patrick Donegan: Tony, Flee, and drummie. So half was I & I and half was Regulars.

Why was there a schism in the group?

Patrick Donegan: (laughs)

That's a long story!

George 'Flee' Clarke: You have to get yourself a century man! God, we don't know what happened.

Patrick Donegan: It was a combination of management and persons being unhappy. Instead of getting together and sorting it out, factions developed in the band. So some people decided that they could work together with some people and they couldn't work together with other people. This is what happens with bands. We were on a European tour. One day certain members of the band decided that they wanted to go home. But it was crumbling anyway. The band was crumbling because of the things I mentioned before. Then in the middle of the tour half of the band wanted to go home, so half couldn't play by themselves.



So who made the I & I record and how did that come together?

George 'Flee' Clarke: Well, the

lead vocals from the original Regulars, Tony Rookwood, he was obviously a songwriter and he wrote some songs and that was it, there was me keyboards, we got Deuce Burke from Jamaica to play bass and Errol, the original drummer, played drums and Tony did the vocals and played guitar. The other singer Alan, lead vocals, did backup vocals. He wrote a song about Mrs Thatcher called Mrs Government and he said “You still sit proud in your pile of shit, um-hmm, doo-doo”, which I thought was hilarious! (laughs). He’s a funny, funny guy, talented writer, nice singer. He was there, definitely there but doing his songs with-in the I & I and Tony was doing his songs within the I & I.

That I & I album seemed to be a slower, less of a progressive roots album. What influences came to bear on that?

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: Oh gosh. It was a very, very, very strong Rastafarian influence. Very, very strong.

Patrick Donegan: I think that you lot, maybe not you but those guys were moving into their Rastafarian phase.

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: Like Twelve Tribes of Israel.

Patrick Donegan: Reggae Regular wasn’t a Rasta band but I & I was.

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: Defi-

nately. I mean that’s what the name says. But equally, apart from Born With Nothing and Armagideon Rock, to me it was like a Burning Spear thing, the vibrations.

So who was getting involved in the Twelve Tribes at the time?

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: Well, it was I & I, it was me, Tony Rookwood and Alan Kingpin, which looking back, it’s like an indoctrination, but also a form of cultural education. A quick thing like the Twelve Tribes every month, say you were born in January you were a Zephaniah, and Joseph, which was Bob Marley and D Brown, they’re called the Fruitful Bough, and you come down to Libras which is like the Tribe of Dan and they’re in the Book of Judges, they’re the Scales of Justice, and Libra’s the seventh star from the sun, and he’s the seventh son of Jacob, and so it was. Every month there were colours, so you had the silver for July and gold for August, so you have a dance and you have to wear something gold. I used to grin my teeth! (grins)

Can I just ask about that I & I album? Was that one of those old BBC sound effects records that was playing in between the tracks?

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: Absolutely! Spot on! Tony went off one day and came back (laughs). I never liked it! I did not like it

one bit. I don’t know what the hell it was supposed to be.

There were some sheep weren’t there?

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: Yeah, yeah! (laughs) Baaaaaaaa! I remember that Born With Nothing, but yeah I don’t know what! That kind of fad, I don’t see what it’s got to do [with the music]. I can see someone saying “Ladies and Gentlemen, please fasten your seat-belt, we’re about to take off”, I can see that but... there wasn’t even a bloody lion on there...

Just some sheep and a fence falling down...

Patrick Donegan: I’ve never heard that!

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: And the sound of a Rasta pipe going (makes sucking noise) in the middle.

Bryan Campbell: I remember between there was machine gun fire. I remember that.

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: And that chillum pipe of ganja smoke. He just came back one day and I thought “Bloody hell, where’d this come from?”

Patrick ‘Dego’ Johnson: The BBC!

So Bryan, at what point did you join the other faction?

Bryan Campbell: I came on-



-board, was it ‘82?

Patrick Donegan: When the original Regulars broke up. Then what I’d call the Regulars Part Two came, which was Bryan, myself, Trevor the bass player, his brother was doing vocals, and Horseman on drums. Not the Jamaican artist Horseman, the English one. You had I & I and then there was me and the bass player who were like outcast. We lived in Battersea (laughs). Nobody would talk to us! So them that was there would play their music and they didn’t invite us. They weren’t using the name Reggae Regular so we thought

“OK, let’s form another Reggae Regular. Let’s use the name.” So me and Trevor got together, then we asked Bryan to join and his brother was doing lead vocals, and Horseman.

So Bryan and Patrick your version of the band cut the Jah Love 12” as Rebel Regulars. Do you think that the various changes of name had any negative effect on marketing yourselves?

Patrick Donegan: Rebel Regulars came up because when we were recording with

Greensleeves, I think there was a problem with the publishing issue with CBS because we were always signed to April Music, and we thought that we couldn’t then go and record for Greensleeves because we were already signed with CBS. A lot of misunderstanding, so to be on the safe side we just called ourselves a different name.

Then you recorded your third album Ghetto Rock. Where did the link with the Mad Professor come from?

Patrick Donegan: Because I used to engineer down there.

That was recorded partly at Ariwa and partly at Easy Street.

Bryan Campbell: Mad Professor just recorded some of it.

Patrick Donegan: I did the engineering on it. We just used the studio basically.



On that album, again there was mention of Margaret Thatcher. At the time there seemed to be quite a drive to sing about social issues. Where did that come from? And is that something that the band is still involved in?

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: Yes. In one word: wailing. We’ve been wailing for years and years and years. You feel oppressed and trod upon, so that’s always going to be there, but you find a different way now. If you’re going to write a song about that now it’s going to be written differently, it’ll be more succinct rather than with a “kill the white people” kind of lyrics.

What was your reaction to the riots in the summer?

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: There’s always going to be riots. I don’t know what it is with Tory governments and riots. Every time they’re in power there’s a riot, and it doesn’t seem to take much. Obviously I don’t condone it but I can understand why. We can go back to the youth, they’re a forgotten generation.

Bryan Campbell: Riots are kind of cyclical, they come along every few years. People get very oppressed, they get very frustrated, and that’s how the masses vent their anger. It was like that, certainly for me, in the Notting Hill riot in ‘76.

George ‘Flee’ Clarke: You started it didn’t you? (laughs)

Bryan Campbell: I was there and I saw it all develop and I can understand exactly why it developed. It was the whole thing back in the 70s with the SPG and the Stop and Search thing. I think Britain was just getting used to having black youth on the street and the police got it very wrong and I think Notting Hill riots was an explosion of frustration about the way black youth were being treated. I know reasons are a bit different in the last riots, it’s more economics but it goes back to the whole social economic issues back then. It was a real struggle.

Now that the Tories are in again as part of a coalition, what do you think of the cur-

rent government?

Patrick Donegan: Me personally, I don’t think about governments anymore (laughs). Politicians are politicians. To me a politician is a politician whether it’s Labour or whether it’s Tory. I think I’ve grown up now.

Bryan Campbell: Absolutely, absolutely. I think a lot of people think like that now. I vote for none of the above. We’ve seen it all.

In part two of our interview with legendary London reggae group Reggae Regular Angus Taylor discusses their latest album ‘If Only’ distributed via their old label Greensleeves. We also hear about their new singer Patrick Johnson, what the members got up to while the group was defunct, and their plans for 2012...

Why did you decide to get back together as a group?

Bryan Campbell: It’s about the songs. We all love the songs so much and we just thought it would be good for some of the unrecorded stuff to record it and re-record some of the earlier stuff. It’s just a love of the songs really.

Patrick Donegan: I would say it was like unfinished business.

George “Flee” Clarke: (laughs) Unfinished business! In a way.

So what happened that led to Kingpin and Tony not being in this new line-up?

Bryan Campbell: They were asked and they did briefly join.

Patrick Donegan: All the original members were invited.

Bryan Campbell: They were invited and...

George “Flee” Clarke: They declined.

Bryan Campbell: ...in some form it didn’t work out. Some declined, some decided it wasn’t for them and it just naturally took on this progression where we’ve ended up with us four and a fantastic album.

George “Flee” Clarke: In the old days, of the originals founders, Alan was angry because his stuff that he wrote, the band wasn’t playing it because the band, wrongly or rightly, thought maybe it wasn’t good enough. Not saying he wasn’t good enough but Alan’s a good love song writer. No one person decided what we were going to play, we’d write songs and we decided we’re going to play this and we’re not going to play that. Then Alan had gone from Rasta to becoming a Muslim. And why he’s not in this line-up, he wants to do his stuff called Islamic Jihad.

And what’s Tony up to now?

George “Flee” Clarke: He’s still doing his single project.

There’s a big word in the reggae: “producer”. You have a cassette tape and you’re a producer, you know? So he’s still doing his producing. Talent-spotting and all that business, I dare say.

Let’s just talk a bit about what you did in between incarnations of the band. You played with Desmond Dekker, tell me a bit about that time.

Bryan Campbell: Yes, I played with Desmond Dekker. It was mainly touring with him, pretty much all over the world for nearly ten years I believe. I was only going to do it for a couple of years. It seemed like a good gig. It was good money and love ska, so we did it. Had a really good time with it.

What was he like to work with?

Bryan Campbell: Fantastic guy. Very quiet, completely different to how he is on stage. I think a lot of brilliant artists are like that, really open on stage, really big on stage and in private they’re really quiet, really reflective. He was a very nice guy.

You also have a new singer in Patrick Johnson. Patrick, tell me how you came to join the group and what your experience has been like.

Patrick ‘Dego’ Johnson: Patrick Donegan called me up and he

said to me that he’d like me to listen to some stuff from his band Reggae Regular. He explained this stuff to me, it’s not straight-forward reggae, do you know what I mean? He said to listen to the stuff and to tell him what I think. I listened to the album and I just fell in love with it. I fell in love with the style of music, everything was just so different. When I said yes, I would like to be involved in the project and with what you’re doing, it was really just to do some live shows and then it moved on to recording. I’ve just been blown away with the music, the song writing, everything about it, the whole vibe of it. I feel like I was there from the beginning not just joined it at the end, you know what I mean? (ALL laugh and clap) It’s just been a wonderful experience. These guys are a bit older than me.

George “Flee” Clarke: Not by much! (laughs)

Patrick ‘Dego’ Johnson: Me and Flee were even born on the same day! Many years apart! (laughs) No, these guys, I’ve learnt a lot from these guys, it’s been an absolute pleasure working with them. It’s been a fantastic journey so far and it’s only been a couple of years I’ve been working with these guys and I’m just looking for the next 30 years, is it? (laughs) It’s been wonderful, absolutely fantastic.

What were you doing before this?

Patrick ‘Dego’ Johnson: Before this I was in a reggae band. I was working with Patrick Donegan, he was producing our reggae band at the time. We were called Private Collection. We did an album, a few singles, the band got quite popular back in the early 90s.

George “Flee” Clarke: Very popular, number one in the charts!

Did you win at the British Reggae Awards? Would you like to win another one now it’s been revived?

Patrick ‘Dego’ Johnson: Yes, we won two actually. Best single and best vocal. We got number one hits in the charts, number two, we got voted the best vocal band, we got a couple of awards as well. It was fantastic, we had a brilliant time! It was all learning and just enjoying ourselves at the time. At the time when Patrick asked me to join his band my band was just coming towards the end of a 20 year thing, we were just winding down a bit, then it was like “This is a new start for me”. Maybe another 20 or 30 years! (laughs) To be honest I didn’t go into this to look for any kind of awards. The reward for me is people buying the music, people coming to me and saying “Oh, I love that track”, that kind of thing you know.

Patrick Donegan: I’d still like the award!

Patrick ‘Dego’ Johnson: If these things come along they’re just pluses. I’ve still got my award on the wall, sometimes I walk past it and don’t even notice it’s there. It’s all about the rewards of the people, how people receive your songs. That’s my greatest reward.



The album, as you’ve mentioned already, has got some re-cuts of some previously recorded tunes but also new things? Were you trying to improve on what you’d done before?

George “Flee” Clarke: We wanted to improve. We thought we could improve on what we’d done before. Then new stuff, Bryan mainly said we should listen to some new stuff, I think Patrick was involved in it as well.

Patrick Donegan: I think that some of the old stuff wasn’t recorded or done very well

George “Flee” Clarke: Temporarily.

Patrick Donegan: Or the tempo weren’t quite right.

pos weren’t quite right.

George “Flee” Clarke: They were too fast.

Patrick Donegan: So we just wanted to play the songs like they were supposed to sound.

Bryan Campbell: I think also frankly, we seem to blend better than the first band vocally.

Tell me a bit about the recording of the album. Where it was done, who had production duties, who mixed it and so on.

Bryan Campbell: Well, Patrick has a studio and I have a studio, so between the two studios we constructed the tracks, between the two studios we mixed the tracks. It was a year long process.

Patrick Donegan: More like two years! (laughs)

George “Flee” Clarke: But me and Patrick, we decided which tracks were good mixes (laughs).

Your long-standing relationship with Greensleeves, was that how you got the link with VP to distribute the album?

Bryan Campbell: Pretty much

Patrick Donegan: We have a very long-standing relationship with Greensleeves, as

you know. I think Where Is Jah was the first track that they released, so we were there from the beginning.

George “Flee” Clarke: It was good enough as well. Regardless of how long-standing, if it’s not good enough they’re not going to touch it.

You also of course have a long-standing relationship with Tippa Irie. How did he come onboard to re-cut Black Star Liner?

Patrick Donegan: On Tippa’s hit tune Hello Darling, that he had a national charts hit with, we played on it and I did the production for that, so that’s how far we go back. I just took the song to him and I said “Tippa, I want you to chat on this for me”. He’s a good friend of mine, he only lives down the road. He lives in Thornton Heath. So it was very easy.

George “Flee” Clarke: He can’t hide, can he?

Patrick Donegan: He comes to my studio to do stuff as well, so if I ask him to do something he’ll do it and if he asks me to do something for him in the studio I’ll do it.

He’s been going in kind of a roots direction himself with his last album with the Far East Band. It almost seems like a kind of continuation in terms of a new direction for

him, still versatile but a bit more of a roots artist as he’s been recently.

Patrick Donegan: The roots stuff that he’s doing now, he’s always been very sort of rootsy in his ideas and stuff like that, so doing the roots is just a natural progression.

George “Flee” Clarke: From experience I think he’s got older and it’s something that he’s always wanted to do, so maybe he’s got the chance now.

Patrick Donegan: And he’s never been a kind of slack deejay.

It’s very interesting what you were saying earlier about listening at home to certain music like Bob Marley back in the day. Do you think that today, or pretty much since the digital era came in, there’s been a lot more focus on how things sound in a dance and less focus on things being produced to be heard in the home?

Bryan Campbell: I would think so. I don’t go to many dances these days but certainly there’s a lot of detail lacking in the production of reggae these days, which is why we’re trying to do things differently and actually putting more detail in there.

Patrick ‘Dego’ Johnson: I would say technology took over in a different way, so you didn’t need the skills like you had

back in the old days. It was like: just press a button, repeat, and that was it. So anyone could make rhythm tracks, you know?

Patrick Donegan: Anybody could make music then and it didn’t have to sound good because the people who then controlled the dances and stuff like that weren’t musicians but they wanted to become musicians, so the real musicians had to sit down.

So you didn’t take the tunes from the new album and go and test them in the dance?

Patrick Donegan: No.

George “Flee” Clarke: But we have no doubt that they would play anywhere in any dance, believe me!

You mentioned Bob Geldof earlier. What did you think about the controversy back in about 2005 with his Live 8 concert where several artists, including reggae artists, spoke up about the fact that there were no reggae artists and no African artists in the concert?

George “Flee” Clarke: At that point I was angry. I wasn’t angry at Bob, I was angry at us for breaking up (laughs). We would have been there! That’s the God’s truth. We would have definitely been there.



Final question, what's the next step?

Bryan Campbell: Well, promote this album and do some live shows.

Patrick Donegan: Do some live gigs.

Bryan Campbell: We've got a few lined up. Just hopefully do that and hope this album does

really well, and then certainly start working on the second album. George has got loads of songs.

Will it be mostly new compositions or unheard compositions?

George "Flee" Clarke: Well, yes really just talking to you what has come over strong, there's a split as to whether you want

to go down, let's call it roots, or you want to go down a fusion. It's so difficult to separate the two. I'm really excited about the fusion side of things, especially the way Bryan and Patrick work and some of the stuff that went down that road. I'm really looking forward to that, so when you think about writing, you're writing with that in mind, that these two are really going to take it to another level.

Kevin Batchelor Grand Concourse

New York City in Ska.

Review by Valentin Zill

It is usually the singers who get most of the music lovers' attention, not the musicians - although they are just as important for the overall product. A lot of the instrumentalists who back our favorite artists have musical skills that go way beyond of what they can show in their position, but only rarely do they decide to step into the limelight.

One of those gifted musicians who did just that is Kevin Batchelor. Born in St. Louis, MO in 1960, he was inspired to learn to play the trumpet by Miles Davis' Milestone. In his twenties, Batchelor was a scholar at the renowned Berklee College of Music (of which Duke Ellington is an honorary doctor). He went on to prove his exceptional musicianship working with a rich array of orchestras, producers, singers and bands - among them The Full Monty Orchestra on Broadway, Rihanna, Jimmy Cliff, Shaggy, Sugar Minott, Sidney Mills, and

Noel Alphonso, to name just a few. With Steel Pulse and The Skatalites, he toured the world.

Backed by the latter, he debuted his solo performance career in March 2008 in Russia. Batchelor's first solo album 'Batchelor Party' had been released two years earlier on Living Room Records. His second solo effort, 'Kevin Batchelor's Grand Concourse', had been released in May 2011 in the US on Mossburg Music. Thanks to the new born German ska and rocksteady label Rocking Records, it is now also available in Europe (distributed by Broken Silence).

'Grand Concourse' shows once more not only Kevin Batchelor's outstanding skills on the trumpet, but proves that he is equally at home in lead vocals. This album breathes the experiences of the Bronx urbanite - musically, but even more lyrically, evoking moods oscillating between mellow and melancholic. The sound is firmly based in classic Jamaican ska,

with a good shot of rocksteady. Here and there, jazz and blues influences add extra flavor.

Queens-born Jonny Meyers (The Stingers ATX) wrote the songs. Only the two bonus tracks, Where Are You Going and There Was A Time, have been written by Kevin Batchelor himself. The album is indeed a grand concourse of established New York ska musicians, including Brooklynites Eddie Ocampo on drums (who "replaced" Lloyd Knibb for The Skatalites since he passed away), Dan Jesselsohn on bass (The Toasters, New York Ska Jazz Ensemble) and Tony Orbach on saxophone (Urban Blight). Keyboard player Gideon Blumenthal hails from the Bronx.

'Grand Concourse' is a worldly-wise declaration of love to music in general and to ska/early reggae in particular. Lovers of rootsy ska find a lot to discover here, no matter if they are urbanites or rural dwellers.



Lee Perry & The Upsetters

High Plains Drifter

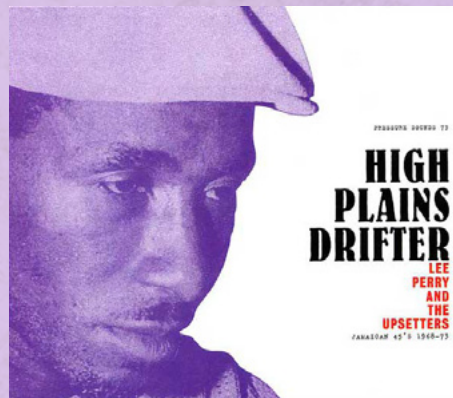
A fine collection that showcases Perry's development as a producer in those formative years.

Review by Karl Pearson

Lee Perry has had his works collated and represented on umpteen compilations over the years but this brand new album from Pressure Sounds, featuring the Upsetters and covering the period from 1968 to 1973, is probably the first shall we say new collection of his work many will have heard for a long time. The reasons for this is that despite these cuts being around 40 years old what we have are 20 undocumented singles (including one dub plate) that for whatever reason never made it out of Jamaica. From the outset of Perry's musical career he was regarded as a producer who wanted to push musical boundaries and this helped that set him apart from other Reggae producers and artists. He had a broad range of influences but his main passion was for US R&B and Spaghetti Westerns. He married the two together with great effect for his UK Top 5 hit 'Return of Django'. That perfect marriage is carried on here on opening track 'Val Blows In' with the tenor saxophone of Val Bennett in fine fettle highlighting the R&B influence in

the horns that were a trade mark on many of Perry's early productions. Other tracks displaying that unashamed Spaghetti Western influence are title track 'High Plains Drifter', a re-cut of Sir Lord Comics classic 'Django Shoots First' ('Bronco' in the UK), 'The Man With No Name' and 'Amigo', another re-cut this time though of the Upsetters 'Sipreano', a track inspired by a character in a 1966 Steve McQueen western, Nevada Smith. The song opens with one of those classic spoken Perry intros where he could be advising a fellow gunslinger that "yesterday you were my very good friend, today you are my enemy, that's bad, you're no good amigo" or maybe its just another pop at producer/artist he has just fallen out with? You never know with Perry! Then there is the plainly titled, 'Boss' featuring ex-men-to star Count Sticky, who also provided many of these spoken blasts on many of Perry's early productions. Another Perry fave is Dave Barker, who hit the UK #1 spot with Ansell Collins on 'Double Barrel' turning up with 'Next To You' and 'Sitting And Waiting' two songs with

undisputed butt, shaking, funk flowing through their veins aided by his James Brown, Otis Redding growl. Jimmy and the Inspirations 'Aint No Love' is one of those soulful Motown-esque numbers while the Ethiopians Rasta praising 'Awake' shows Perry's willingness to produce and allow Rastafarian beliefs and ideals to be put to music when many of the islands producers would shy away from these. Another way in which Perry pushed boundaries comes by way of the Melotones 'What A Botheration', where in 1968 he used the pans, much as he did in 'Handy Cap', to provide a new feel to an existing piece of work. This original "alternate mix" would soon become one of Perry's production trademarks at his fabled Black Ark studio and is now considered the norm in everyday part of music marketing. This great collection showcases Perry's development as a producer in those formative years and is a must for any fan of Boss or Early Reggae; indeed I'd say it is a must for any music fan as a display of what helped to make Perry such a highly influential producer.



Sizzla

The Chant

Yet another decent album from Sizzla.

Review by Erik Magni

I get the feeling that several Sizzla albums in recent years have been marketed with slogans like "going back to the roots". The man must be a veritable tree by now. Anyhow, the latest album where he travels back to the roots is made together with sound system man and producer Caveman, who Sizzla met while still in his teens. He used to visit Caveman's sound system after school,

deejay and listen to his voice. Soon he met up with Homer Harris – who produced 'Crucial Times' two years ago – and later on Bobby Digital and Phillip Burrell, two producers responsible for Sizzla's best material yet. 'The Chant' holds thirteen tunes and blends one drops with dancehall, winding synth loops and hip-hop sounding beats accompanied by Sizzla's high pitched singing and hardcore deejaying. And

I have to confess I didn't like this album at all the first five times I listened to it. But after a while it sank in. Or most of the tracks at least. Reality tunes dominate the set and Sizzla voices his dreams of peace, hopes of a marijuana legalization, anger with injustices in the world and frustration over the people's struggle in Zimbabwe. 'The Chant' is yet another decent and competent effort, but far from the albums he made in the 90's.



Tappa Zukie

X Is Wrong

Tappa Zukie's welcome return.

Review by Erik Magni

Bodyguard turned deejay turned producer Tappa Zukie is back with his first album since the 96' released 'Deep Roots'. And it's actually one of his best albums since the 70's. But this doesn't mean that he has been absent from the music business. During this period he has successfully produced other artists as well as running his labels Tappa and

Stars. He was for example the producer behind Beres Hammond's album 'Putting Up Resistance' – probably one of his best albums to date. 'X is Wrong' is Tappa Zukie's return to the spotlight. It's a consistent set that holds 14 tracks, over which he chats conscious and cultural lyrics over classic vintage riddims supplied by Jamaica's top session musicians. His voice has changed over the years. It's deeper and darker and

doesn't have the same amount of excitement and energy as it had in the 70's and 80's. The vintage feeling remains throughout the set, and highlights include the Prince Alla combination Rasta People and Judge I Oh Lord over the much versioned Drum Song riddim. Maybe not as strong as his albums and productions in the 70's and 80's, but a welcome comeback for this prolific artist.



Necessary Mayhem Trilogy

If you're new to Necessary Mayhem this is the perfect place to start.

Review by Angus Taylor

The shift in focus towards albums for the UK's unstoppable Necessary Mayhem label continues with the first in a series of rhythm trio compilations. This vinyl and digital download release collects three of their biggest backings for the longformat listener, throwing in a few tweaked mixes and some attractive retro artwork to appeal to the collector in the brand's traditional singles buying audience too.

First up is Mayhem's no-introduction-needed relick of John Holt and Junjo Lawe's Police in Helicopter, featuring Sweden's high-demand singer/deejay Million Stylez. NL based 'Stastian Ziggi Recado's increasingly raw and angry style is perfect for Pretenders, the final track on his acclaimed self-titled third album from last year.

Then we hear another Junjo redo, Joker Smoker, which the imprint's founder-producer Curtis Lynch released as an EP back in 2009. Ziggi returns with Smoke in the Air, followed by a Mayhem institution in pure deejay Mr Williamz on the pun-gently boastful No Cigarette.

Next we revisit the works of NM maestro Gussie Clarke with the Pirates rhythm. Ipswich, Suffolk's bard of bars YT joins Million Stylez, Mr Williamz, Blackout JA, Iverse and Jah Knight for the heaving, remixed Champion Sound. The gruff JA then pairs with former Aswad frontman Brinsley Forde for the cultural United States Of Africa before YT gets a further chance to shine (and slap Simon Cowell!) with Real Music.

Each miniseries closes with a dub by Lynch, (including a very



different Pirates) highlighting the analogue-ears-to-digital-methods, historic-melodies-meets-heavy-basslines approach that is his trade. The download release includes two extra tracks: YT's Credit Crunch (on the Joker) and Amsterdam singer (and brother to Clarence) Joggo Seedorf's Don't Stop The Music (on Helicopter).

The vinyl edition comes with a sleeve by Israel's My Lord collective (of Jahtari and Mungo's HiFi fame) and is part of a collectors set whose spines will form one greater image. If you're new to Necessary Mayhem and wondering why they've been making waves since 2006 this lovingly-assembled compilation (like its predecessor 'Future Cuts') is the perfect place to start.

Sly and Robbie Blackwood dub

Sly and Robbie free your mind.

Review by Erik Magni

Jamaican duo Sly & Robbie is most likely the world's best known riddim section and have probably played on more records and sessions than most other notable outfits like Mafia & Fluxy or the Barrett brothers. And they have a stunning catalogue that spans over four decades, including working with world renowned artists such as Grace Jones, Bob Dy-

lan and Mick Jagger as well as most well-known reggae artists from the 70's up until today. Their first album under their own name in years is the recently released dub album called 'Blackwood Dub', recorded in Jamaica at the Harry J studio with notable veteran musicians Sticky Thompson and Mikey Chung. The ten tracks are both refurbished vintage riddims as well as more contemporary ones. And all bear the Sly & Robbie trade-



mark – bouncy, driving bass lines along with pounding, tight drumming complemented with exercises in studio wizardry. The sound is rich, full and heavy throughout. Since there are no traces of vocals to be found it can be a bit dry though. But, 'Blackwood Dub' is nevertheless a fascinating cavernous and vibrating journey that will set your mind free.

Konshens Mental Maintenance

An urban and contemporary debut from Konshens.

Review by Erik Magni

A few years back brothers Delus and Konshens dropped a brilliant joint effort album under the name Sojah. Now – three years later – it's time for Konshens debut solo album, an album preceded by several strong singles and riddim album cuts. And many of these have also found their way onto the album. 'Mental Maintenance' collects 19 tunes with Konshens melodic singjay style set to contemporary one drop and urban,

R&B influenced dancehall. Some of the album's strongest moments have been heard before – No More Tears on Frenchie's Rebellion riddim, Simple Song on Niko Brownie's Set It Off riddim and Represent on Chimney Records' Island Vibes riddim. There are also a bunch of tasty unreleased cuts, sure to make your mouth water. The funky remix of Rasta Imposter features guest artists Tarrus Riley, Sizzla, Darrio and Wrath Riley and is somewhat reminiscent of the Midnight Hour riddim. Bounty Killer



makes an appearance on the new version of The Realest Song, and this fresh mix exceeds an already strong original. Konshens should however rethink the waste-of-time long intros to some of the songs. In Gal Dem A Talk the song doesn't begin until after more than one minute, and I'm not keen on hearing what appear to be messages on Konshens voicemail. Luckily enough the long intros are only on three songs, so time wasted is less than two minutes on an otherwise excellent album.

Stand High Patrol

Midnight Walkers

An eclectic range of influences for this dynamic and varied album.

Review by Karl Pearson

Stand High Patrol formed just over 10yrs ago in Britany (France) when two guys, Rootystep (selecta) and Mac-Gyver (operator), decided to create a sound system so they could share their passion for roots and early digital reggae. They were soon joined by MC Pupa Jim and started touring their homeland, building their reputation and gradually developing their own style and sound that resulted in several releases on 7 and 12inch. Now they have put all this hard work together and have just unleashed their debut long player.

Their sound I would describe as having the deep and heavy bass tones, much like Mungos Hi Fi, the quirkiness of Damon Albarn's Gorillaz and then combines dubstep, techno, house and hip hop along with other

influences in to the roots and digital reggae melting pot to create a hybrid that these three self proclaimed "dubadub musketeerz" call dubadub. What exactly that all means I'm unsure of, but one thing I do know is it sounds great!

These fertile backdrops are then vocalized by the MC Pupa Jim, whose name I am already familiar with having heard him on last years 'Forward Ever' album from Mungos Hi Fi on Boat People. This song appears on this album also, though I presume in its original form which has a brighter ska feel to it as it romps along. Pupa Jim is a very impressive MC as he tailors his deliver with such panache that each track sounds different from the last and it is hard to believe that only he is supplying the vocals throughout the album. This ranges from that bizarre undulating style akin to



Nitty Gritty on jokey sounding The Bar a song about the descent into alcoholism, a soft, almost mystical, approach on Big Tree, a clever little rap for Home Made, telling the story of the Stand High Patrol who come from the west coast, that's of France not America and downtown LA, the semi-spoken Muskateer Sword which relates to finding solace in music and lyrics as opposed to hard drugs and violence all the way to a robotic monotone for the dark, rumbling Speaker Box.

With its penchant for low end frequencies mixed with an eclectic range of influences this dynamic and varied album should appeal not just to reggae fans but also to those of hip hop and electronic music alike and the genre of "dubadub" is most definitely something more of us should get into.

Revelation Rockers

Jah Praises

A reggae revelation.

Review by Erik Magni

Most reissues that I've come across are new issues of already released albums or collections of hard to find singles. It's a rare occasion when a label presents an album recorded way back, but not released. But Bristol Archive Records has done just that.

'Jah Praises' contains five previously recordings dating from 1979 by a group called Revelation Rockers, who would soon form the more well-known outfit Talisman.

This album is something of a time capsule and deals with the realities of life in 70's Britain, a time of racism, mass unemployment, industrial unrest and poverty. A reality not far from today with riots and financial constraints around the world.

The cultural lyrics are accompanied by sparse arrangements with ruthless bass lines, a lonesome saxophone, keys, guitar, drums and fine tuned harmonies. And the relentless grooves hit you hard. Straight in the chest.

Each tune also clocks in over five minutes and evolves into an instrumental or dub exercise.

It's a rare event to come across an entire lost reggae album, and this album should of course have been released in the late 70's. And Bristol Archive Records has done the right thing to put it out more than three decades after it was recorded. It was long overdue, but well worth the wait.



JARIA Reggae Wednesdays Week #3 - Reggae Gone Global

Report and photos by Steve James

Reggae Wednesdays' week #3 in Kingston put on by JARIA for Reggae Month.

The ongoing series of events for Reggae Month put on by Jamaica Reggae Industry Association continued to generate huge interest in its second week. Emancipation Park came alive once again with high energy performances by Jah Mason, dub poet Oku Onuro and others on February 15th. Initially appearing on stage with the Messenger Luciano, radio personality and dub poet Mutabaruka delivered one of his usual entertaining performances with some witty poems. French group Broussai, who are currently in the island, also delivered a great performance and received the seal of approval with the audience clapping in appreciation. One of Jamaica's new emerging live bands Blue Print also showed that they deserved to be billed for the show as they look forward to participating in the world competition which will be held later on this year. The show was brought to a climax when Roots Radics played several hits that were recorded during the Channel One era. Deh Deh whose real name is Carlton Scarlett

started off singing some of Sugar Minott's classic hits and other songs also made during that time. With his widow June Isaacs looking on, Roots Radics also played a tribute to the Cool Ruler, Gregory Isaacs. Lead by the band leader and bass players, Flabba Holt, the audience could easily relate to every bass line that was played. Popular MC Junior Sinclair read off the names of the original band and those of his current members before slipping into his set

honouring the Cool Ruler. With his felt hat leaned to the side, his sideways movement on stage, neatly dressed before unbuttoning his shirt and exposing the trademark merina, he gave the audience a true impression of how the Cool Ruler performed on stage. The show ended at around midnight with the Emancipation Park audience feeling fulfilled knowing that quality reggae music was still alive and kicking.



Tiken Jah Fakoly in Quebec

Report and photos by Martial Labarthe

Check these photos of the Ivorian singer in Québec.

Tiken Jah Fakoly was performing at the Grand Théâtre de Québec in Canada on February 23rd. Here are our photos of the event.



I-Wayne, Fantan Mojah and Ijahman Levi in Warszawa

Report and photos by Bartek Muracki

Check the photos of the artists in Poland on February 21st

I couldn't miss another occasion to hear the veteran roots singer Ijahman Levi live and in the club venue for the very first time. The mini-tour over Poland organized by Buxna Agency spanned Wroclaw and Warsaw and was reinforced by recognized Jamaican artists Fantan Mojah and I-Wayne and a short set by Marlene Johnson. However short, I-Wayne set was a really memorable one and artist's skills clearly shouted for more attention (summer festivals, perhaps?). Polish massive could hear a vast selection of his tunes and hear some spiritual advices from the 'Life Teachings' author. I was really pleased to listen to artist's greatest hits Can't Satisfy Her and Living in Love and I definitely can recommend seeing I-Wayne live. Fantan Mojah was the

last artist to enter the stage before Ijahman Levi on this very special evening in Warsaw's Proxima club. I have already seen his performance on Summerjam Festival and expected a good, powerful show. And so it happened! Fantan entered the stage wearing his inherent "Zion" backpack even got a strong feedback from the massive from the very first song. Fantan, who is a Rastafarian and member of Bobo Ashanti puts a strong emphasis on social issues and advocating the poor, while spreading the spiritual message and praising King Selassie I. The audience went crazy when they heard Hungry, Corruption and Hail the King, signature-tunes of Fantan. Highly recommended! Finally Ijahman Levi came on stage. The setlist comprised his greatest songs, including Witness, Africa, Ring The Alarm and extended, combined versions of classic Jah Heavy Load and Moulding.



Rebelution and The Green in Oakland

Report and photos by Lee Abel

There is no place like home... California. Rebelution's Peace Of Mind Tour on February 18th.

The beautiful Fox Theatre in Oakland, California sold out early to enthusiastic fans of California's leading homegrown reggae band. Originally formed in 2004 when they were in college in Santa Barbara, Eric Rachmany (vocals/guitar), Rory Carey (keyboards), Marley D. Williams (bass), and Wesley Finley (drums), have stuck together and carved out a niche for themselves. Their latest album, a 3 CD set (including dub

and acoustic versions) entitled 'Peace of Mind', debuted at #13 on Billboard's Top 200 chart, coming in #1 in Reggae and #1 in Independent albums. It also placed #4 on iTunes. Pretty impressive. The energy and anticipation on the densely packed dance floor was palpable. The first opening act was hip hop artist Pep Love (who later joined Rebelution on stage). After a short set, The Green, a promising young reggae band from Hawaii, kept the vibes moving. And then, in a swirl of ganja smoke rising from the sea of faces and dancing among the colored lights, Rebelution took the stage. The crowd, even the guy in a bright yellow banana suit squished up against the stage barrier, sang along, swayed and danced and threw their arms up in the air.



Prezident Brown and Rivah Jordan In Berkeley

Report and photos by Lee Abel

Prezident Brown links with Rivah Jordan for EP Release Party in Berkeley, California.

On February 23, 2012, a full house at Berkeley’s Ashkenaz Community Center celebrated 2 new EPs: Prezident Brown’s “Do Thy Work” and Rivah Jordan’s “Jah Works”. Multi-generational and ethnically diverse, the vibes were sweet and joyous both on and off the stage. Rivah Jordan opened the show. His father is Jack Radics so he’s no stranger to the stage. With reggae in his DNA, this youth-man is multi-talented. Recording artist, engineer,

singer and producer, he’s also experienced in video and photography production. No oubt he has a long career ahead of him. He wrote, sang, mixed and produced all the songs on his EP “Jah Works”. Pure roots and culture, Prezident Brown has been entertaining, informing and inspiring music lovers since the 90’s and just gets better with the wisdom and energy of age. He performed from his extensive library, including Rough Road, along with his newest songs Do Thy Work, I Love Jah and Life is A Gift. Rivah Jordan co-wrote, produced and mixed Prezident Brown’s new EP, and sang backup on stage. Brown’s conscious uplifting lyrics were delivered flawlessly. Clearly he relishes his role and is highly loved and respected in return. Yes Prezident Brown, “Life is a Gift” and so was your show.



The Making of Clinton Fearon's Heart And Soul

Report and photos by Catherine Fearon

Clinton Fearon was in Jamaica with Chapter Two Records to shoot videos and photos for the promotion of his new acoustic album Heart & Soul, set for release in late March. We got this report from his wife Catherine.

The trip to Jamaica has been planned for a while with the purpose to visit Clinton’s family on the country side and in Kingston. Closer to the date, Nicolas Maslowski from Chapter Two Records learnt about our travel dates and realized that he will be there at the same time to shoot videos with Derajah and Winston McAnuff. So we finally met and worked a couple of days together in Kingston.

Friday 13th January 2012

One Love

Today is Clinton’s birthday, and we are on Walsh’s Beach, East of Kingston. The idea is to make a video clip of the song One Love and Clinton thought about this place because of a tree that’s special to him.

“It is the one closest to the ocean. I loved to sit here to play guitar and write during the week, it was quite. I wrote a lot of songs here. I wrote Chatty Chatty Mouth here and some other songs that I recorded with the Gladiators. But many other songs never got to be recorded, or only on a little cassette player I was using not to forget them! I still have those cassettes actually.”

We did not know if the tree would still be there, but yes, here it is. And Roland Allard – the photographer – is already recording the first moments of Clinton and his tree, after something close to 40 years of separation.

Clinton remembers that Gladiators were playing close by often on Sundays: *“We used to play at Walsh’s bar. We were playing on Sunday for a*

little money and spending almost all of it in food and beers”. But the place is not here anymore.

Nicolas is making pieces of interviews with Clinton on different places of the beach and Roland captures everything to prepare a short video.

Baaba

Later in the day we move to go at the crossroad of Waltam Park Road and Hagley Park Road, West Kingston. A busy place in the middle of the ghetto. The Gladiators were often passing by a barber shop installed in the building corner.

“Yes I know it’s strange for Rastas to have a barber as a friend but so it is!” says Baaba with a big smile.

Clinton remembers too.

“Me and Baaba, we were playing guitar sometimes when there were no customer. Albert and Gabby were passing by too, we were hanging on together in a little room on the back of the shop. Baaba was cool.”

Saturday 14th January 2012

Marvel Not

Another big day in Jamaica - tonight in Ochos Rios Rebel Salute takes place hosted by Tony Rebel, one of the most respected festivals among the Rasta community.

For us the purpose is to shoot a video clip of the song Marvel Not. Clinton wrote it during the rough times of the early 70’s.

“The idea was to give support to each of us. Times were really rough with politicians and gun men working together. But we have to go through and we’ll do it. Marvel not.”

In the street

We stop at Sonic Sound studios to pick up Barnabas, drummer. He worked on some songs with

The Gladiators and he also is a good friend of Clinton.

Together we are driving around the Cross Road area, Kingston 10, and we decide to stop at a corner to start shooting the video.

Clinton is sitting on a box, playing and singing Marvel Not. Roland is making several cuts. People around are checking what’s happening and slowly get closer to Clinton and enjoy the music. A little girl is attracted by the guitar and come to touch the strings with smiles and laughs.



Derajah

Derajah is passing by. The young artist was on the Inna Di Yard Tour in the summer of 2010, when Clinton was guest of the acoustic formation lead by Chinna Smith. They met then and stay in touch since.

Pictures of the picture of the cover...

When the day goes down and the light get smooth, Roland is making some pictures, thinking one of them could be the cover for ‘Heart And Soul’. He was right!





Ijahman Levi in London

Report by Angus Taylor / Photos by Andrew Thompson

A ninety minute musical meditation cloaked in reverb and delay.

“In other countries I entertain fans. Here I entertain friends, family and fans”. With these words roots reggae veteran Ijahman Levi appraised his London audience on one of the final nights of his European tour. Ironically Ijahman, who lived in the capital as an adolescent, performed before an unusually international turnout for the Hootananny, attracted by the man who joined Bob Marley as one of Island Records flagship reggae signings in the 1970s with the albums ‘Haile I Hymn’ and ‘Are We A Warrior’. Bob himself, who would have been 67 this February, was honoured by the songs Bob Marley (along with Peter Tosh, Burning Spear and Jacob Miller) and Armageddon Warriors (on the rhythm to his classic War). “Bredda Bob and I are still friends even though he is not here in the physical” said Levi, a fellow pupil of Joe Higgs, with a sense of serene sanctity that pervaded the entire set. Often, during instrumental breakdowns by his Roots band (featuring some agreeably un-metallic guitar leads from Stephen “Marley” Wright) the white-clad singer, with eyes tightly closed, clasped his hands together as if in prayer. Although

Chris Blackwell was rumoured to have insisted that Ijahman lengthen tracks such as Jah Heavy Load and Jah is No Secret so his debut album would match Van Morrison’s Astral Weeks, all the material showcased had a lengthy, rambling feel. The music was rather late 80s in flavour with synthesised panpipes and brass, while the vocals were cloaked in reverb and delay via guest sound engineer and tour manager Bhakti of Buxna Agency. His clinical work at the desk gave an echoed impetus to opening PAs by red turbaned singer Ras IWhan and deejay Blessed Barak. Promoter Cecil Reuben’s own JahRevelation Muzik sound featured dubbier toasting than usual from Brother Culture and MC Trooper, buoyed by their nomination in the British Reggae Industry Awards. “There are many ways to dance - not just with your feet but with your eyes and with your ears” Levi sermonised cryptically towards the end. And indeed, there was not much physical or verbal interaction, only silent swaying to a ninety minute musical meditation, without wild peaks and troughs. Yet even if this was a less boisterous night than recent big promotions at the Hootananny, it was received with consistent applause and without complaint by the enraptured crowd.



The Caroloregians in Cardiff

Report & Photos by Phunked-up Photography

The band was on UK tour this month.

Monday night (5th March) saw funky Belgium reggae band The Caroloregians grace The Globe, Cardiff as part of their rare UK tour. I hit the venue early to be sure to get a good spot. As I enter the newly refurbished venue expecting to wade my way through fellow reggae fans, I am greeted by an almost empty room. The lack of crowd is dissapointing, but the music is good so I make myself at home for what would appear to be a rather intimate gig. The band are greeted warmly as they arrive on stage and begin their set, unphased by the lack of attendance. To describe the exact musical stylings of this band is a tough one but I think the poster pretty much nails it with ‘deep fried funk-dipped reggae’ and ‘Meters meet The Upsetters’. This reggae band

are seriously funky with a southern flavour, heavily led by drums and organ. The Caroloregians are predominantly an instrumental band, which is interesting as the live vocals sound great, but yet they manage to keep the crowd engaged and moving throughout the whole set. They treated us to number of tracks off their new album ‘Fat is Back’ along with their own musical renditions of reggae classics such as Monkey Man. The band finsh their set but the the audience are left wanting more. The band return to the stage to do a cheeky cover of Charles Wright & The Watts 103rd Street Rhythm Band’s Express Yourself. If I had to use three words to describe this show ‘Funky Reggae Party’ would definately spring to mind and I can’t help but feel that the rest of Cardiff really missed out. I definately hope to catch these guys again and I advise you to do the same...You won’t be disappointed!



Mad Professor and Lee Perry in Paris

Report & Photos by Aude-Emilie Dorion

Mad Professor, The Robotiks and Lee Perry played at La Bellevilloise on February 19th.

Nearly 600 people came to see Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry perform at this packed Parisian venue. Backed by The Robotiks and Mad Professor as sound engineer, the visionary Scratch delivered his incomparable rhythms and experimental dub.



Tribute to the Reggae Legends 2012

Report & Photos by Jan Salzman

The festival took place on February 18 & 19 in San Diego, California.

Day One February 18, 2012

It was a cool winter California day with temperatures in the mid-60's as I walked through the open air section of the Harbor Pier venue. A secondary stage was set up outside with lots of great local reggae bands performing. The main stage was set up inside the main building structure that had an open back to the pier. There also were many vendors set up on the second floor of the building with beautiful reggae wares. I was able to enter before the doors officially opened and I got myself situated with camera in hand for the main stage was about to heat up with a performance by Ocho Rios based artist President Brown! In his 45 minute set he performed such hits as Black and Proud and My Confidence, which really got the crowd moving and grooving.

Next up was newly reformed, huge reggae band Big Mountain, who were recording today's performance for a live CD/DVD. They had many luminaries in their band celebrating their 29 years together including drummer, Paul Kastick (809 band/Maxi Priest), bassist Taddy P (Shaggy), and Reggie Griffin (famed NYC producer/musician). They performed their newly released single, Leap of Faith, which is sure to be a chart topper like their massive previous classics Touch My Light and their Billboard chart topper, Baby I Love Your Way. Kino, the charismatic lead singer wowed the crowd...sometimes playing guitar... sometimes coming out from behind the guitar,

sparring with brother James (percussion and vocals) and putting on a magnificent stage show.

J Boog graced the stage backed by local sensational band Detour Posse and performed songs from his newest album 'Backyard Boogie' including Do It Again and Every Little Thing. He was joined onstage by vocalist Fiji, from Hawaii. Toward the end of his set he performed a cover of Marlon Asher's song Ganga Farmer that was a big hit with the audience as they sang along with the lyrics.

Sister Nancy, who is the sister of reggae icon Brigadier Jerry, performed to an enthusiastic crowd including her smash hit, Bam Bam which is in regular rotation at all our reggae clubs here in So. Cal. And is a dance favorite.

King Yellowman treated us to a very high energy set backed by the Sagittarius Band, out of Jamaica. The high-kicking star did a fabulous set, dressed in reggae warrior style camouflage. He pranced and ran across the stage, sometimes posing for the cameras sings such hits as Blueberry Hill, Operation Eradication and Don't Burn It Down.

Now it was time for the headliner and perennial San Diego/Tribute to the Legends favorite artist, Don Carlos, known as a solo artist and also from many years as lead singer for reggae's legendary band Black Uhuru. His band, dressed in black to complement Don's gleaming white jacket, drove a powerful reggae riddim to the massive audience. Don danced across the stage singing such classics as Laser Beam and Just a Passing Glance. His smiles warmed the crisp night air. He was joined onstage by Garth Dennis (Black Uhuru, The Wailing Souls) on backing vocals.





Day Two February 19, 2012

Day two started with the irie vibes of The Itals, lead singer, Keith Porter, singing classics like, In Dis Ya Time. Their lead guitar player, Dwight Pinkney, was picking out the notes in his well known style.

The very rootsy, Sister Carol, was backed by the band Ikronic which was lead by singer/guitarist Junior Jazz, most recently of Inner Circle fame. Sister Carol came onstage sporting a beautiful green/gold and red, Lion of Judah wrap. She sang such favorites as Mi Name Sister Carol, Black Cinderella and Dedicated to You.

Big Mountain made a repeat performance this Sunday thrilling the crowd once again with their classic hits and magnificent stage presence.

Italian reggae sensation, Alborosie, followed up with a strong set of songs from his last two albums for Greensleeves... my favorites the very rub-a-dub style Kingston Town, Rastafari Anthem and his hit cover of Steel Pulses' Stepping Out. He danced across the stage swinging his knee-length dreadlocks with passion.

Reggae veterans and three time Grammy nominees, The Wailing Souls, opened their set with their classic, She Pleases Me. Winston "Pipe" Matthews was wearing a beautiful shirt with Haile Selassie on the front. Lloyd "Bread" McDonald sang lead on their classic Old Broom. Other classics that they performed were Jah, Jah Give Us Life and Shark Attack.

Junior Reid bounded onstage wearing a black suit and black bo bo style head wrap. His high register voice was clear and strong as he sang his hit tunes. He sang his massive solo hit One Blood about the third song into his set. Also a former lead singer for the legendary group Black Uhuru, he sang Great Train Robbery to the delight of the crowd. Another crowd pleaser was his song, This Is Why I'm Hot. The side of the stage area was packed during Junior's set with all the musicians and singers there to hear his wonderful voice.

Opening the set for Johnny Osbourne was singer Wayne Smith, doing his classic Under Mi Sleng Teng.

Now it was time for the king of sleng teng, Johnny Osbourne, whose song Buddy Bye was a sleng teng anthem during the late 80's in Jamaica. Celebrating four decades in the music business, Johnny sang classics like, Ice Cream Love, Little Sound Boy, Come Back Darling and Ringcraft the latter being the first time it was performed live. This was Johnny's first West Coast appearance in ten years and the crowd loved it. Johnny and Wayne Smith were back by the Roots Covenant Band from San Diego who did a great job!

These two days of sold out shows proved the strength of reggae music in Southern California. Many thanks to promoter Makeda Dread for bringing this wonderful festival to San Diego!



One Love Nutrifest 2012

Report by Sarah Soutar / Photos by Gail Zucker

Great vibes, great performances and a beautiful Miami Day!

February 12, 2012 was a perfect summer afternoon in the middle of the winter season and the glorious feeling of one love was all around Grand Central Park in downtown Miami for the Budweiser/One Love Nutrifest. This festival was a long awaited one as it was to mark the return of “The Messenger” - Luciano back to South Florida.

Alfonso D’niscio Brooks, the CEO of Rockaz MVMT formed the non profit organization as a grassroots movement to use a musical platform to educate the masses on the need to be “green” using the day to raise environmental awareness, and to benefit Curley House a local organization serving the less fortunate in Miami. At around 4 ‘o’ clock, Jahfe a local Miami reggae band energized the crowd with songs like Solution and their new single Miami Vice.

Chilean reggae stars Gondwana came on for a 30 minute set, showing us why they have over 40 million Youtube views and fans worldwide performing songs like Irie, Armonía de Amor and a great rendition of Bob Marley’s Could You Be Loved which sent the fans into a frenzy showing that their love is indestructible. Be sure to look out for Gondwana’s new album ‘Revolution’ in stores in April.

Making their Miami debut at twilight, the Easy All Stars dashed on to the stage to give everyone a trip down memory lane - Famous for their ‘Dubside of the Moon’ - a complete cover of Pink Floyd’s ‘Dark Side of the Moon’, it was a joy to hear the reggae/dub interpretation of Breathe, Money and Sargent Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band with a mix of island love - it was a real pleasure to see the ensemble of at least 10 musicians on stage, being extremely energetic and

allowing the joy of music to take them over and embracing the love that the patrons had to offer.

Lance O, Jah Stream and DJ Waggy Tee did an amazing job keeping the energy up for the people of grand central park, playing hit after hit getting the people to sing and dance along waiting for the next act on stage. St.Croix’s own Midnite came on next, staying true to their deep rooted conscious roots, they had the crowd in a state of reverie, as if they were hanging on to every word being said. Pagan, Pay Gone and Love The Life You Live had everyone in an irie meditation.

Luciano entered the venue at 7:45pm he was greeted with so many fans backstage and he kindly obliged taking pictures with the patrons before stepping into his dressing room to warm up for his long awaited performance. Despite not being able to make his appearance back in November “The messenger” took the stage at approximately 8:30 p.m. With amazing vitality, making it his responsibility to show the people his gratitude to be there in the moment and to preach the message of One love as he always has. With his voice as soulful and strong as it has ever been, Luciano sang Give Praise as an opener. Songs like Messenger, Over The Hills and Who Can It Be followed. It was pure magic to listen and see Luciano completely enjoying himself skanking to the music on stage.

Puerto Rico’s Cultura Profetica closed the show with a mind blowing performance. Playing hits like La complicidad, Illegal and Baja la Tensión romanticizing the crowd much to the delight of the Puerto Rican massive. We are happy to announce that the festival raised 2 tons of food and over \$5000 dollars towards Curley House - Many thanks to the sponsors and all the people who came and supported the event. Looking forward to next year.





SOJA and Gentleman in San Francisco

Report & Photos by Lee Abel

Ina Time Like Now we need Strength To Survive, March 7, 2012.

Geographic diversity shared the stage at San Francisco's Fillmore, starting with Hawaii's top female artist, Anuhea. Her beautiful voice and acoustic guitar blended pop, soul and a little bit of reggae in to a solid set of love songs, capped off by Bob's Redemption Song.

Gentleman and The Evolution followed. A multi-platinum and award-winning artist from Germany, Gentleman's newest album 'Diversity' was only just released in the US, lagging way behind its European launch. Combining lyrics that are always uplifting and uniting with fresh and powerful roots reggae, Gentleman continues to move from strength to strength. As a performer, high jumping, bouncing into the crowd, and laughing with his band, he's always a joy to watch.

SOJA's lead singer/guitarist Jacob Hemphill is not as animated as Gentleman but their message of unity is the same. Touched and humbled by the adoration of the crowd, the East Coast (Virginia) band excels in shining a light on the destruction of our planet and how each of us can help. Definitely not pop music, they sing about what really matters in life. Their new album, 'Strength to Survive', is message music, not unlike Hemphill's early influence, Bob Marley's 'Survival'.

Before the night was over and to the delight of the crowd, Gentleman, with Tamika and Mamadee singing backup, joined SOJA onstage, sharing message and vibe.



UNITED REGGAE

MAGAZINE

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

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!**

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