

UNITED REGGAE

MAGAZINE
#18 - April 2012

BUSY SIGNAL
CLINTON FEARON

CHANTELLE ERNANDEZ

TRUCKBACK RECORDS

FASHION RECORDS

PABLO MOSES

KAYLA BLISS

JAH SUN

SUGAR MINOTT
REGGAE MONTH
MAN FREE

Tarrus Riley

*"I have to surprise you. The minute I
stop surprising you we have a problem"*



Is unplugged the next big thing in reggae?

In 1989 MTV aired the first episode of the series MTV Unplugged, a TV show where popular artists made new versions of their own more familiar electronic material using only acoustic instrumentation. It became a huge success and artists and groups such as Eric Clapton, Paul McCartney and Nirvana performed on the show, and about 30 unplugged albums were also released.

Doing acoustic versions of already recorded electronic material has also been popular in reggae music. One of my all time favorites is Joe Higgs' heartbreaking unplugged version of his own There's a Reward. In recent years Jamaican veteran guitarist Earl "Chinna" Smith's acoustic project Inna de Yard has received well-deserved attention and has attracted both old and new talents.

And acoustic reggae might be more popular than ever right now. The two newest acoustic albums are the acclaimed sets Mecoustic and Heart and Soul from Tarrus Riley and Clinton Fearon respectively. Both albums are solid as rocks, and hopefully these two artists have launched a trend. Be sure to check out Angus Taylor's interviews with both artists in this 18th issue.

Cover photo by Franck Blanquin

United Reggae Magazine #18 - April 2012

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United Reggae offers an excerpt from Beth Lesser's book about Sugar Minott and Youth Promotion.

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.



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 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.



Original Roots by Rod Taylor, Bob Wasa and Positive Roots Band by Erik Magni

Jamaican legendary vocalist Rod Taylor is set to put out a new album following the excellent Hold on Strong released three years ago. ‘Original Roots’ is the title of the new album. It is produced and backed by French Positive Roots Band, and vocal duties are shared with their lead singer Bob Wasa. Rod Taylor had his heydays in the mid 70’s until the early 80’s working with many of the roughest and toughest producers of those days, including Ossie Hibbert,

Bertram Brown, Mikey Dread, Linval Thompson, Henry Lawes and Prince Hammer. More recently he has worked with Jah Warrior and Roy Cousins. ‘Original Roots’ collects 14 tracks and hits the streets tomorrow.



One Love Peace Festival 2012 Line Up Announced by Karl Pearson

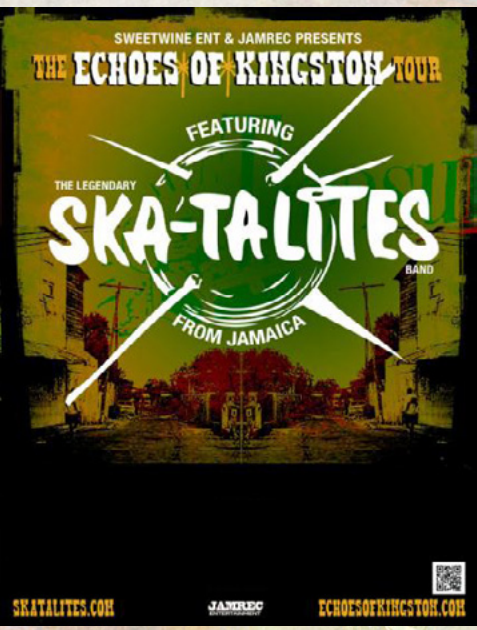
After the success of last years One Love Peace Festival at Wembley organisers have announced that this years urban music event will take place at East London’s Mabley Green on Sunday 15th July. The biggest name on the bill has to that of Rap/Hip-Hop global superstar Diddy, who will headline on The Contemporary Stage performing hits from an illustrious career in music that has spanned two decades and garnered four Grammy Awards. This year also marks the 15th anniversary of Notorious B.I.G’s untimely passing, and would have seen the first star of renowned rap label Bad Boy celebrate his 40th birthday. Diddy, who was his friend and mentor, will pay special tribute to the late star as part of an extended set at the One Love Peace Festival where he will be joined by special guests from the label. Fans of roots reggae will be treated to performances on the Heritage Stage which will be headlined by one of the genres forefathers and former Bob Marley cohort Bunny Wailer. Other acts include reggae heavyweights Barrington Levy. Capleton AKA ‘The Fireman’ and ‘The Messenger’ Luciano, rising reggae star I-Octane and the MOBO nominated Khago will be joined by one of the UK’s leading dancehall artists, Stylo G.

extended set at the One Love Peace Festival where he will be joined by special guests from the label. Fans of roots reggae will be treated to performances on the Heritage Stage which will be headlined by one of the genres forefathers and former Bob Marley cohort Bunny Wailer. Other acts include reggae heavyweights Barrington Levy. Capleton AKA ‘The Fireman’ and ‘The Messenger’ Luciano, rising reggae star I-Octane and the MOBO nominated Khago will be joined by one of the UK’s leading dancehall artists, Stylo G. Event organiser Dexter Ricketts said: “We are honoured to be staging another One Love Peace Festival with what is our most eclectic and exciting line-up to date. For us the event is all about raising multi-cultural awareness and tolerance through the powerful medium of music. We hope that the One Love Peace Festival continues to inspire change and promote social harmony within the British community.” Other features on the day will include guest DJs, comedy corners, fairground rides and an international food village offering cuisines from each corner of the globe. Tickets are available from ticketmaster.co.uk and Ticket Mania with prices starting at £45. For more information please visit www.originalonlove.com.

Dancing Shoes by Malijah by Erik Magni

Jamaican singer Malijah has teamed up with Reggaeland for his debut album ‘Dancing Shoes’, released on March 8. It contains 13 tracks, of which three are previously released, ranging from cultural roots reggae and easy skanking one drop to dancehall. The single Like How the Water is a celebration to Jamaica and its 50th anniversary. ‘Dancing Shoes’ follows several strong early singles from Malijah, though not included on this album. So do yourself a favor and also check out his Louie Culture duet Hills Farmer, One More Spliff, No Combo – a version of Lorna

Bennett’s Breakfast in Bed – and the Fyakin combination Sincerely.



The Echoes of Kingston: The Skatalites on Tour by Karl Pearson

The current line-up of the Skatalites Band are back on the road to help celebrate this years 50th anniversary of Jamaican independence, their own 48th birthday plus the anniversary of the creation of Ska music with a tour that will take them all over the world and feature a collection of new and original tunes combined with all the classics. The first leg of this tour, called The Echoes of Kingston tour, started on Friday March 30th in Houston, Texas before heading north to New Mexico and Colorado, then west to Arizona, Mexico, California, Seattle, Washington into Canada and back again to finish at the Viva Ska Vegas event in Las Vegas. As they visit each of these cities they will be aided by a collection of modern bands playing their own distinctive brand of Ska, which the Skatalites were of course a big influence on. Bands such as Keysor Soze, Los Skarnales, The Sentiments, The Georgetown Orbits will be joining them while on the AZ-CA portion they will be accompanied by Los Angeles’

leading proponents of ska & reggae, The Delirians who have been forging a sound that is firmly rooted in the past, yet is still distinctly their own. They have also backed and performed with legends such as Derrick Morgan, The Melodians, Derrick Harriot, Stranger Cole and more. The tour will also be used to help promote The Alpha Boys School Project by collecting donations of unused musical instruments to ship back to Jamaica to help those at the school who do not have one themselves! There are also plans to bring musicians to the school as guest teachers including King Django of Stubborn Records/ Version City fame who plans to teach Trombone. Anyone attending a show on the tour can bring in any instrument on our list (and some not on the list) in exchange for a CD.

Instruments Being Requested: 2 French Horns, 2 Bariton, 1 Upright base, 1 Xylophone, 1 Vibraphone, Flutes, Saxaphones, Clarinets

Also any other brass or woodwind instruments are gratefully accepted. If you don’t have an instrument to donate but would like to contribute in some way they are also taking money and other useful items as well.





Anthony B Is A Freedom Fighter

by Erik Magni

Almost a year ago Austrian label Irrievibrations announced the release of 'Freedom Fighter', a new album from Jamaican chanter Anthony B, with its first single Beat Dem Bad, a combination with Konshens.

The album was postponed, but the release date is now set to May 25th. 'Freedom Fighter' collects 14 tunes and comes with a wide lyrical range backed by live recorded riddims influenced by roots reggae, R&B and dancehall.

Anthony B put out his widely acclaimed debut album Real Revolutionary in 1996, followed by the almost just as great Universal Struggle in 1997. Since then Anthony B has worked with numerous producers and dropped up to 20 albums.

In These Times by Giant Panda Guerilla Dub Squad

by Erik Magni

Following the 2006 release of their debut album, 'Slow Down', Giant Panda Guerilla Dub Squad have toured relentlessly, and on April 10th they will put out their first electric studio album in six years – 'In These Times'. This is the quintet's second release in 2012 following the roots americana album Country, an album based on acoustic instrumentation including slide gui-

tar, banjo, harmonica, upright piano, percussion and bass. 'In These Times' holds twelve tracks and is mixed by Atlanta-based producer Billy Hume, who has previously worked with Nas and Ludacris. Guests include Hawaii's The Green, contributing backup vocals on one track, and John Brown's Body's horn section on another two. The new album is said to showcase Giant Panda's psychedelic reggae sound and explores a variety of emotions and themes, from feel good and sing along vibes to political anthems.

"I think it would be fair to say that this



is the album that long-time Panda fans have been waiting for," says drummer Chris O'Brian.

Reggae Sun Ska Festival 2012

by Karl Pearson

This year sees the 15th Edition of the Reggae Sun Ska Festival taking place over the weekend of August 3rd/4th/5th 2012 at Pauillac, Médoc, France, with over 45 acts spread across 3 stages. The festival, as well as being one of the oldest in France, is one of the 5 biggest reggae festivals in Europe, in terms of number of acts and attendance as well as probably one of the most picturesque as Pauillac is situated in the famous vineyard region of Bordeaux close to ocean beaches. Over the last 7 years festival organisers have been developing a green friendly policy, the "Eco Sun Ska" approach, in cooperation with the free association Meduli Nature, to minimise the effect of so many festival goers on the local area and lessen the impact on the environment by promoting eco-citizen behaviour. The first acts for the event have just been announced and this includes an exclusive appearance by Damian 'Jr. Gong' Marley. Also on the bill are reggae greats Jimmy Cliff, The Congos, Max Romeo, Linval Thompson, Pablo Moses, Mighty Diamonds, Third World and the equally brilliant and perplexing Lee 'Scratch' Perry. More contemporary acts include Tarrus Riley, Mr Vegas, Busy Signal, Italian Alborosie and Groundation from America. UK acts appearing are Reggae Pop virtuoso Hollie Cook, Dancehall star General Levy and Madness saxophonist Lee Thompson with his Ska Orchestra. They'll be some Reggae, Soul crossover from Germany's Ayo and an appearance by fellow countryman Sebastian Sturm. Senegal will be represented by Natty Jean, while for the home side we will see some Dancehall from Biga Ranks, Papa Style and Baldas, Dub from Kanka plus Hip Hop and Electro beats from Le Peuple de l'Herbe. With such a strong and varied line up already confirmed, with more to be announced, it looks like the 15th anniversary of the Reggae Sun Ska Festival could be one of the best.



What's In Store At The Reggae Film Festival 2012

by Karl Pearson

Organizers of this years Reggae Film Festival, taking place between April 16-22 in the Gardens of the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel, New Kingston, are expecting the event to surpass previous presentations, with the world premiere of a Hollywood movie, the presence of a well-known African-American producer/director/actor and the award of Fifty Thousand Jamaican Dollars and a trip to the Trinidad & Tobago Film Festival for the winner of the RBC Make A Film In 24 Hours competition, among

the highlights. The African-American actor making an appearance will be Giancarlo Esposito, star of several Spike Lee films and recently lauded for his role as 'Gus' in the acclaimed ABC-TV series 'Breaking Bad'. He will be bringing the 2008 feature film "Gospel Hill" to the festival, which he produced and directed for his Quiet Hands film production company. The film according to IMDb tells the story of "A former sheriff of the southern town dealing with past sins, and a former civil rights worker, withdrawn since the martyrdom of his brother thirty years before, confront a threat to their town" and stars Danny Glover, Adam Baldwin and Angela Bassett as well as featuring Samuel L. Jackson in an uncredited role. The oth-

er main highlight the 'RBC Make A Film In 24 Hours' competition will see keen amateur and professional Jamaican film makers participate in the film festival and showcase their film making skills. Entrants can use film, video or cell phone cameras to make a 5 minute film in just 24 hours commencing their film on April 16th and handing in the finished film on April 17th. To ensure that no pre-filming takes place before the competition begins, entrants will be informed one hour before the competition starts of a Theme and/or Element that must be incorporated in their film. All Entries will be shown during the remainder of the festival before the winner is announced.

Barbados Reggae Festival 2012
by Karl Pearson

Taking place between the 22nd and 29th April is the Barbados Reggae Festival with events taking place across three venues on the island. Brandon’s Beach gets things under way with a warm up party from 3pm on Sunday the 22nd with head-



line performances from Popcaan, Mr Vegas and Baby Cham. There is then a lull in proceedings until Friday 27th when the 3Ws Theatre Kensington Oval will be hosting “Vintage Reggae” with Freddie McGregor, Glen Washington, Admiral Tibet, Ernie Smith, Wendy Allene, Mike Grosvenor, Super Ruben and more. It’s back to the 3Ws on Saturday for what is billed as “Bajan Reggae Night” with whole array of various performers including Ras Michael, High Grade, Albert Olton, Lady Essence, Biggie Irie and far too many more to mention! Sunday 29th brings things to a close with “Reggae On The Hill” at Farley Hill National Park. Headliners at this spectacular venue with great views of the eastern coast of the island will be Jah Cure, Third World, Capleton, Chris Martin, Konshens, Tanya Stephens and Everton Blender.

LISTEN
TO THE
MUSIC

CALTONE'S JAMAICAN 45's 1966-69
Pressure Sounds 74
**WITH LYNN TAITT & THE JETS THE CLARENDONIANS ALVA LEWIS
THE UNIQUES LLOYD & THE GROOVERS TOMMY MCCOOK & THE
SUPERSONICS THE EMOTIONS THE KINGSTONIANS THE COOL CATS
CHUCK JAKUES THE DIPLOMATS**

30 Years In The Wilderness by Joshua Moses
by Erik Magni



Joshua Moses – a Bristol-based roots singer represented with strong material on the compilations ‘Bristol Reggae Explosion’ vol. 1, 2 & 3 – made his first recording session in 1978. And now, 34 years later, Bristol Archive Records is set to release the man’s debut album ‘Joshua to Jashwha - 30 years in the Wilderness’. Joshua Moses himself didn’t have any copies of the many recording sessions he has done, so it has taken more than 18 months of research and the pursuit of numerous leads to gather together the fifteen tracks on the album. The tracks were recorded

between 1978 and 2003, and prior to Bristol Archive Records’ involvement the only tracks to have been previously released were the scarce Africa (Is Our Land) and its dub counterpart Home. The majority of the other tracks was recorded over a period of twenty years and includes a trio of live recordings. ‘Joshua to Jashwha - 30 Years in the Wilderness’ hits the streets on April 9th as CD, vinyl and digital download.

Listen to the Music
by Erik Magni

Pressure Sounds – one of UK’s finest reissue labels – follow up on the successful Phil Pratt produced rocksteady compilation ‘Safe Travel’ released in 2005. ‘Listen to the Music’ is a 21 track set that covers the years 1966 to 1969. It includes rare ska, rocksteady and early reggae gems from Caltone, a label run by businessman Ken Lack. The production duties were however mostly handled by Bunny Lee and Phil Pratt with input from Lynn Tait, Tommy McCook and Johnny Moore. The recording sessions on ‘Listen to the Music’ took place at WIRL, Federal and Treasure Isle studios and the album includes, for example, scare tracks by Tommy McCook & the Supersonics and The Clarendonians, led by the vocal talents of Peter Austin. Their I’m Sorry and Lonely Heartaches are drawn from 45s that have never been reissued since the original Jamaican pressings. ‘Listen to the Music’ drops on April 10th on CD and double vinyl and also includes an extra special booklet with many original graphics and photographs.



The Tennors Reunite of a 35 Year Break
by Erik Magni

Rocksteady group The Tennors reunite after a 35 year hiatus. Founding member George Murphy and Ronnie Davis – also a member of The Itals – have reunited along with new member Henry “Sadiki” Buckley Jr., to record a new album and tour U.S. and Europe. The Tennors is already writing and recording new material for what will become their first new release in over 35 years. The Tennors made their mark on the Jamaican music scene in 1967 with the release of their first tune, as well as the biggest hit in Jamaica that year, Pressure and Slide, produced and released by Coxsoné Dodd. They went on to make some well-known rocksteady hits, including Ride Your Donkey, Hopeful Village and Weather Report, a version of Simon & Garfunkel’s The Only Living Boy in New York and one of this writer’s favorites.



Jahtarian Dubbers Vol. 3
by Erik Magni

German label Jahtari –with producers Rootah and Disrupt – have fine tuned the echo ma-

chines, rewired the reverbs and set the bass implant beyond max on the third episode of their ongoing various artists’ compilation series ‘Jahtarian Dubbers’. Mikey Murka, John Frum, Soom T and El Fata appear once again. Denmark’s Maffi teams up with Ranking Levy from MyLord Sound and the newest addition is Monkey Marc – who supplied a rough instrumental for the last Roots Manuva album. Lee Perry also shows up on a special Rootah version of the Dub Syndicate/Adrian Sherwood tune Secret Laboratory. ‘Jahtarian Dubbers volume 3’ hit the streets as LP and CD on April 5.



Bristol Archive Records Dig Out Cool Runnings Debut Album
by Erik Magni

UK roots and lovers outfit Cool Runnings had a career spanning twelve years, including the entire 80’s, and are one of Bristol’s longest lasting bands. Even though they kept together for a rather long time the band failed to release anything more than the 12” single Robin Hoods of the Ghetto. Even though Cool Runnings didn’t

put out anything more than a single they regularly recorded material throughout their career and fortunately enough keyboardist Mark Tuck and guitarist George Condoover have kept various master tapes, and Bristol Archive Records are now able to release the band’s self titled debut album. The album is made up from a dozen tracks recorded between 1983 and 1985 at various studios in Bristol, and a couple of live tracks to showcase why the band were an in-demand live act. Cool Runnings drops today on CD and digital download.

The System by Romain Virgo
by Erik Magni

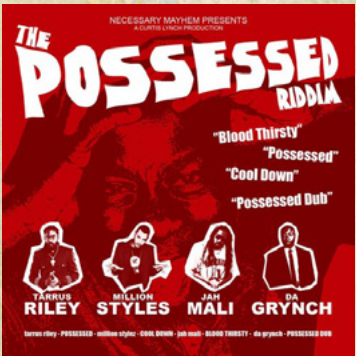
22-year-old singer-songwriter Romain Virgo’s highly anticipated sophomore album ‘The System’ is set to drop on May 8. ‘The System’ includes 15 tracks and is said to be in the same vein as his self-titled debut album and delivers a set of conscious-themed roots and lovers rock produced by Shane Brown, Donovan Germain and Viking Productions and was primarily recorded at Germain’s Penthouse Studio. It includes last year’s scorching I am Rich in Love and the gritty first single I Know Better. It has only been five years since Romain Virgo made history as the youngest winner of TVJ’s popular “Rising Stars” - Jamaica’s equivalent to American Idol. After the success Romain Virgo soon teamed up with veteran producer Donovan Germain to record several chart-topping hits, including Can’t Sleep and Wanna Go Home. Since the release of his debut album in 2010 he has won numerous awards within the Caribbean community and has also made history as the first Jamaican artist to perform at Academy of Country Music Awards in Nashville, Tennessee.



Dennis Brown Honoured in London with a Blue Plaque
by Angus Taylor

The house on Hazeldean Road, Harlesden, where Dennis Emmanuel Brown lived with his brother between 1993 and his death in 1999 has been affixed with a blue plaque to honour his memory. An unveiling ceremony took place on Saturday 7th April and was attended by Brown’s widow Yvonne, his brother Leroy and other relatives. Guests and speakers included Delroy Washington, Carol Thompson, Winston Francis, Jimmy James, Count Prince Miller and Daddy Ernie from Choice FM. The plaque was erected by Nubian Jak Com-

munity Trust Plaque scheme which seeks to commemorate notable ethnic minority figures in the United Kingdom. Blue plaques have been used in London since the 19th century to mark the residence of famous people in the capital. Delroy Washington, whose organization Federation Of Reggae Music, were instrumental in the project, told United Reggae that “What attracted a lot of young people over here to Dennis Brown was that he was quite ordinary. Dennis Brown could walk down Harlesden High Street or Church Road or go to the blues down at Denzil Road and just be like anyone else.” Washington said plans were also in place to honour his friend Bob Marley’s residence at a house in Neasden where he lived in 1972.



The Possessed Riddim
by Erik Magni

UK producer Curtis Lynch’s label Necessary Mayhem has just dropped their latest riddim. It’s titled Possessed and includes a haunting sample of Ken Boothe’s 70’s tune Black Gold & Green. The vocal duties are handled by Tarrus Riley, Jah Mali

and Million Stylez. The dub version is mixed by Curtis Lynch’s alter ego Da Grynch. The riddim was laid in Jamaica and Tarrus Riley was voiced under the supervision of veteran producer and saxophonist Dean Fraser at Augustus “Gussie” Clarke’s Anchor Studios. Blood Thirsty, the single by Jah Mali taken from the ‘Future Cuts’ album, is described by David Rodigan with the words “Jah Mali is an under-recorded artist but when he does record, you listen.” Million Stylez & Curtis Lynch have a long recording history, which is now continued with his cut Cool Down. The Possessed riddim is already available on two 7”, but the digital download doesn’t drop until April 22nd.

Calabash UK New Remixes
by Erik Magni

In November 2010 Maximum Sound producer and owner Frenchie launched a new label called Calabash for roots and steppers, a different branch compared to his usual output. Its first four first 10”s were lethal remixes of Jah Mason, Alborosie, Luciano and Yami Bolo conducted by Russ Disciples. Another four 10”s were put out recently. This time it’s Russ Disciples together with Dougie Wardrop that have given Frenchie’s Dunza 2010, The Session and Matches Lane riddims the steppers treatment. The riddims comes with dub versions and are of course heavy as lead with pulsating bass lines and nightmare-infused echoes and effects. The 10”s are released as limited edition so be quick and grab your copy, because these are on fire.



Back To Eden by Lloyd de Meza
by Erik Magni

Dutch label JahSolidRock has kept a low profile for about a year, but is now set for a new release. This time it’s the Dutch-Caribbean soul singer Lloyd de Meza, who is described as a domestic secret now presented to a global audience. ‘Back to Eden’ is a joint effort by JahSolidRock and production crew Not Easy At All. The pair has previously put out acclaimed albums from

The Global Selection
by Ras Achis

Boom Austrian label, House of Riddim, is back in a fine form for 2012 with the releasing of their latest sterling creation, the Global Riddim. Known for delivering some of the best modern Roots Reggae compositions to be found anywhere on the planet, House of Riddim’s Global follows the likes of the Camel Riddim, the Street Riddim, 2011’s big Sensimill-lionaire and others and it more lives up to what are lofty expectations. The Global Selection features the likes of Jah Mason, Chuck Fenda, Bryan Art, Natty King, Zareb, Ras Mac Bean, Smiley, Fitta Warri and a whole heap of others who give vocals to a big track which features the legendary Dean Fraser on the saxophone also. One of the biggest riddims of the early part of 2012, The Global Selection from House of Riddim, can be found in stores now. Right now. Stop reading this and go buy it. Like right now!

Chezidek, Earl Sixteen and Apple Gabriel. This project was supposedly born by accident. More than two years ago, Lloyd de Meza dropped by by the JahSolidRock studio, where he went wild over the sound of the album currently in production. And according to the press release he took a microphone and started singing.

‘Back to Eden’ is based on several of the riddims used for JahSolidRock and Not Easy At All’s previous albums and drops on May 5th.

New Day by Lutan Fyah

by Erik Magni

‘New Day’ is a free mixtape from Jamaican singjay Lutan Fyah presented by Jamaica’s Dejavu Records and DBeatz Music Group, based in the U.S. It collects 26 tracks, covering roots and one-drop to a deejaying style that fans may not yet be used to. “Lutan Fyah is an artist that can go very far internationally,” explains DBeatz in a press release, and adds why they chose to work with Lutan Fyah: “We also want to show other artists that when things are done right, there are groups worldwide willing to invest in reggae.” Lutan Fyah is known for hit songs like the Josie Mel combination Rasta Still Deh Bout, and on ‘New Day’ he sticks to his roots affirming his faith in righteous livity in songs like Me Ras and No Badness. And just in time for Jamaica’s 50th celebration of independence, songs like Overcome Them and Ambition offer motivation for youths who are disillusioned by difficult situations making them feel as if gun life is the only ways out. “To me, Lutan Fyah is one of the realest reggae artists left out there and we want to big this up in every way,” states producer Jermaine “Chase” Blake of Dejavu Records.

Ragga Ragga Ragga 2012

by Erik Magni

Reggae has ever since its inception in Jamaica in the 60’s been present in the UK. Reggae has spawned UK sub-genres like dubstep, grime and drum

n’ bass, but also UK dancehall. And the annual hardcore dancehall compilation series Ragga Ragga Ragga’s latest edition pays homage to UK’s dancehall scene, and features top hits from British emerging artists such as Gappy Ranks and Stylo G as well as some of their Jamaican counterparts, including Popcaan, I-Octane

and Khago. This year’s edition also contains a bonus DVD focusing on the UK’s dancehall scene and interviews with key players along with music videos. Club anthems such as Stylo G’s Call Mi a Yardie and Party Shot from Popcaan can be heard on ‘Ragga Ragga Ragga 2012’, now available on CD and digital download.

Garance Reggae Festival 2012 Lineup Announced

The 21st edition of the Garance Reggae Festival, now in its third year of residence at Bagnols sur ceze has announced its official lineup. The current roster features:

I-THREES FEAT. RITA MARLEY, MARCIA GRIFFITHS, PAM HALL, JOHNNY OSBOURNE, MORGAN HERITAGE, ALPHA BLONDY, GROUNDATION, ERNEST RANGLIN + MONTY ALEXANDER + SLY & ROBBIE, THE MIGHTY DIAMONDS, FREDDIE MCGREGOR, BOB ANDY, LEROY SMART, DERRICK MORGAN, JAMAICA ALL STARS, LLOYD PARKS, DERAJAH & DONKEY JAW BONE, RAGING FYAH, BUSY SIGNAL, BIGA RANX, DOWNBEAT THE RULER VS. SOUL STEREO, ABA SHANTI-I, KING ALPHA, ROOTSTING FEAT. MURRAY MAN, DUBKASM FEAT. SOLO BANTON, OBF, BLACKBOARD JUNGLE.

Last year Garance pulled off a major coup in booking Burning Spear, who is increasingly selective in his festival appearances. More acts are likely to be confirmed in the coming weeks.

Under One Sun by Brina

by Erik Magni

Jamaican songstress Brina dropped her debut double A-side single Listen/Real Reggae Music in mid 2011. Now her debut album ‘Under One Sun’ has hit the shelves adding another ten tracks. The seeds for ‘Under One Sun’ were planted in 2007 when Brina met Kieran C Murray, a Scottish musician living in Jamaica. In 2009 they started recording the album and now three years later it’s finished. ‘Under One Sun’ features Jamaican legend Toots Hibbert on guest vocals and Sly Dunbar on Drums. But there are several other prominent musicians involved, such as Jubba White, Jallanzo and Luke Dixon of Dubtonic Kru on drums, guitar and keyboards respectively. Michael ‘Ibo’ Cooper of Third World, Demar Gayle of Raging Fyah, Sheldon Bernard, Stephen Maxwell and Jerome Tulloch on piano and keyboards as well as Dean Fraser, Nambo Robinson and Dwight Richards on horns. People behind Santana, War and Maroon 5 have also been engaged in the production. According to the press release ‘Under One Sun’ is roots reggae rocked up with sounds of nyabinghi, gospel, funky pop rock and dub as well as African, Latin and Brazilian grooves.



Modern Roots by Norrisman

by Erik Magni

Internationally known singer Norrisman spent some time in Sweden between 2011 and 2012. There he met up his friend Advance, a Jamaican singer living in Stockholm. He was finishing his debut album ‘Game Over’ with Swedish-based label and production crew Nordic Steel, and brought Norrisman to the studio to record a tune. Norrisman however kept visiting the studio and started to record on several of the riddims produced by Nordic Steel. These recordings have now formed Norrisman’s new album ‘Modern Roots’, a set that contains different musical styles, including roots, dancehall and hip-hop. ‘Modern Roots’ is currently available as digital download on platforms worldwide.

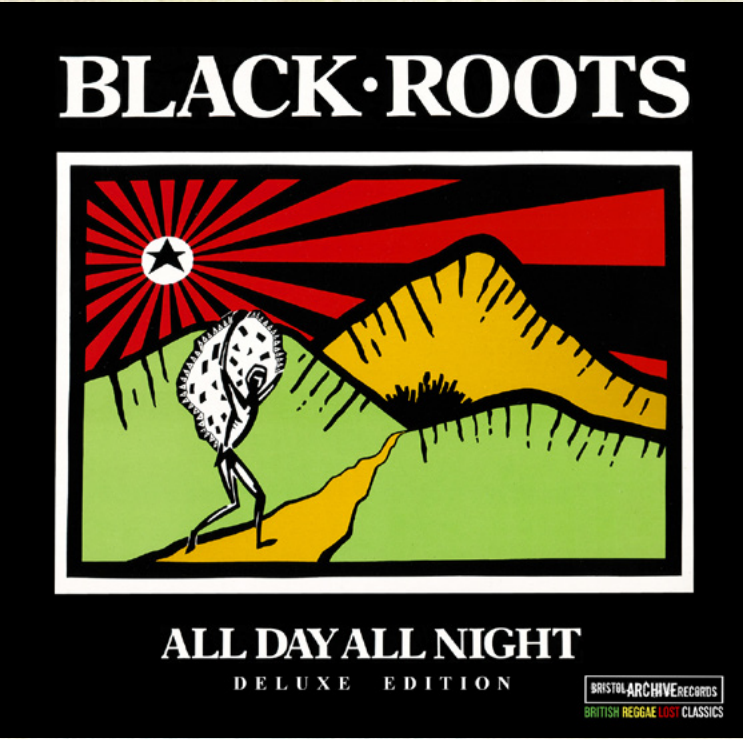


Hollie Cook in Dub

by Erik Magni

British acclaimed singer Hollie Cook’s self-titled debut album has got a dub treatment from its producer Prince Fatty. Extra bass, delays and reverbs are added to Hollie Cook’s vocals. It features tracks such as For Me You Are Dub, a ska version of an old Andrews Sisters’ tune, And The Beat Goes On Dub, a brand new dub cover of the The Whispers’ disco classic, and Walking in the Sand, a delicious adaptation of the Shangri

La’s legendary record. “The dub versions showcase real tape echoes, heavy spring reverbs and alternate instrumental elements such as melodica, percussion or horns that were hidden in the vocal versions. All the dubs are mixed live in my studio in the same rub a dub style as was made famous in 70’s Jamaica by King Tubby and others, i.e not with the use of computers for automation and endless digital nonsense but with fingers, late night vibes and re-arranged with a razor blade,” states Prince Fatty on the label’s website. ‘Hollie Cook in Dub’ is now available on CD, LP and digital download.



All Day All Night by Black Roots

by Erik Magni

Last year Bristol Archive Records teamed up with Nubian Records to release the critically acclaimed ‘Black Roots - The Reggae Singles Anthology’, and now the labels have collaborated again. This time they bring out a 25th anniversary deluxe CD edition of ‘All Day All Night’, the album that saw Black Roots working together with Mad Professor and moving away from their original roots sound for a more polished version. Included are the original dozen vocal tracks, but also six bonus cuts, featuring several dub versions and the extended 12” mix of Pin in the Ocean as well as a booklet with many previously unpublished photos of the band. Black Roots is also back together after many years, and are working on a new album to be released in late 2012 as well as performing around the UK. ‘All Day All Night (Deluxe edition)’ is released on April 23rd on CD.

Meditation by Nazarenes

by Erik Magni

The Nazarenes are made up of brothers Noah and Medhane Tewolde, born and raised in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to a family that worked for Emperor Haile Selassie. Nowadays they reside in Sweden, and their new album – ‘Meditation’ – reflects the journey of reggae travelling from Jamaica, to the Caribbean and to the world. ‘Meditation’ is produced by Laurent “Tippy I” Alfred of St. Croix-based I Grade Records and was preceded by the double A-side single Food/On My Way. It collects 14 tunes, of which two are combinations with Jamaican singjay Lutan Fyah and VI-reggae trailblazers Midnite. The album is I Grade Records’ first album project with an African group, and the Laurent Alfred says the chain of events that has linked Jamaica, St. Croix, Africa, Europe and now the world is evidence of reggae’s contribution to world music and the Nazarenes place at the forefront of a new generation of global citizens. “It’s a special feeling to know that this album has so many points of connection from across the African Diaspora and the world,” says Laurent Alfred in a press release, and adds:

“It represents the unifying force that roots reggae has always been.”

The Nazarenes are likewise devoted to



their craft and their unique role in the global community.

“Song writing is a process,” says Noah Tewolde, while his brother Medhane adds:

“We go in deeper than name only. We sing from experience and with the belief that Marcus Garvey’s call for ‘One Aim, One Aim, One Destiny’ is possible across borders.”

The Nazarenes established themselves independently on their self-produced debut album ‘Orit’ in 2001, and later broke out with ‘Songs of Life’ three years later before teaming up with I Grade Records for the first time on the single Everlasting, which was included on the acclaimed compilation ‘Joyful Noise’.

Together We Aspire, Together We Achive by Queen Omega

by Erik Magni

The multitalanted Trinibagoan singer and deejay Queen Omega has been working with French label Greatest Friends and its producer Manu Digital for four years. The bouncy Media’s Corruption, on the Blue riddim put out in 2009, is one example of the fruitful relationship. On May 1 Greatest Friends unleashes the EP ‘Together We Aspire, Together We Achive’ collecting seven tunes by Queen Omega, of which two are combinations with Ras Mac Bean and Prince Theo. ‘Together We Aspire, Together We Achive’ will be available as digital download from the usual e-tailers.



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CHANTELLE ERNANDEZ

Interview by Angus Taylor

Photos by Laura Forcucci

Singer-songwriter Chantelle Hernandez was born in Kingston of Jamaican and Cuban ancestry. From a young age she proved skilled at piano, singing, dancing and acting. Raised on gospel by her church going family her musical palette began to expand from the late Whitney Houston, Dionne Warwick and Nina Simone to Hindi, Arab and Greek music. While at school she joined some choir-mates in the 5 piece band Essence who in 1999 attracted the interest of producer and Grafton studio owner Mikey Bennett, the father of one of Chantelle's friends. The group soon disbanded but Ms Hernandez was hooked and carried on doing backing vocals for Gumption productions until she was noticed by Shaggy's bandleader Michael Fletcher, for whom she cut her initial single, Something Inside My Heart.

Harmonies for everyone from Gregory to the Wailers followed, yet the big hearted, big voiced Chantelle wanted to break out into the spotlight as Etana had done before her. A link with Sly & Robbie in 2008 lead to her cracking the Japanese market as part of the group UNITZz and even getting into the first round of selections for a Grammy. By chance, while laying some backups for Gussie Clarke at Anchor studio, Chantelle met the visiting pilgrim Curtis Lynch and signed up to his Necessary Mayhem imprint to release her impressive debut EP 'My Forever' in 2011. Since then, Chantelle has relocated to Europe where she is working on her first album with Catalan label Reggaeland. Angus Taylor spoke to a rising star in the making and found she had plenty to say...

"I gravitated towards singing because it was an escape"

When did you discover you had so many creative talents and why did you gravitate towards singing?

Before I'd even started a formal class I was doing these things. I could do choreography, singing songs, being a drama queen if that's what you needed (laughs). I've been writing poetry and songs since I was little, mind you they didn't make much sense then! So luckily my family figured I shouldn't waste my talents and allowed me to explore them in and outside of school. I gravitated more towards singing because it was an escape, but I tell people that I didn't choose music, it chose me.

What were you escaping from?

I went through my parents' divorce when I was six years old and a period in school where I was being bullied for a little bit. My way of fighting back was not to fight physically, not that I never did - I had a little bit of blind rage when I was very young but I got over it - but with words. Singing was the one thing I did exceptionally well, that most people around me could not do. So if I wanted to get back at somebody I'd start singing a song about them (laughs).

Are your songs often autobiographical?

My friends and family know,

if they tell me a story about themselves it might end up in a song. I'll never call names but you listen and go "Oh shit, that's me". I write my own stories in songs as well, personal stuff like breakups, and loving stuff. So everything goes into the song.

You did backing vocals for some of the biggest artists in reggae. How easy was it for you to move to centre-stage?

That's a journey I loved. I hold it dearly because singing harmonies, that's second nature to me. I learned a lot about the business thanks to Mr Isaacs who gave me a few pointers when I was struggling with producers who would hire me to do background vocals. It's hard for a female, they take you for granted more than they take everybody else for granted and I had issues with them not wanting to pay me, not paying me on time. If you know Gregory he's a no-nonsense person. He taught me well. If they have half of the money you sing half the song, when they get the other half you go back. And if they have no money you automatically have no voice! I learned that from him.

Etana came from that background and she made that move. Was she at all an inspiration to you at the time? I know now you've sung on the same rhythms as her and so on.

When she came out with her first song No Trouble, I was like "Whoa, she did it!" Most of us as background vocalists in Jamaica really want to make that move, very few are brave enough to do it. I was very happy for her and I somehow knew she would have but I was like "OK, good. One of us stepped out, now it's time for the rest of us to do it".

Through doing background vocals for Sly & Robbie you became "Big in Japan" with the group UNITZz. Were you surprised by the success there?

I was. It was strange at first. It's not easy to do Japanese pop covers, in reggae, in English. To us a lot of J-Pop words are strange, very different, extremely poetic, and sometimes we struggled to make sense of what they were trying to say. We put a lot of time and energy and creativity into it, so when we found out we were selected for first round of Grammy nominations we were happy, and it happened twice, on both albums, except that the second album they removed us from the Reggae category and put us in Best Pop Vocal. We only made it to first round but that's still major! A lot of artists in Jamaica never make it for any selection in the Grammys at all.

There is a belief in the industry that the Reggae Grammy is the poor man of the Grammys in terms of selecting

people who actually deserve things at that time. What can be done to remedy that?

It's a number of things. I think the quality of reggae, sadly, has dropped. A lot of what's coming out of Jamaica, nobody internationally can relate to it. It can't really cross a border. A lot of my peers treat it like a hustle or a money-making hobby. All doctors have to go to medical school before they can become a doctor, a lawyer has to go to law school before they can become lawyers, a taxi driver has to know how to drive a car before he can become a taxi driver. We have lots of artists in Jamaica who know absolutely nothing about music, about the creative side or the business side. On top of that there's a rhythm culture that's great for what it represents in our history but also dilutes the music to some extent. Because no-one would buy a reggae album because by the time they've collected ten rhythms from ten different producers they've already got the album. Then there's the media. We have a very bad situation with payola in Jamaica, so a lot of good artists never get heard because they either cannot afford or refuse to join the payola system. So there isn't much for the Grammy committee to think about.

Let's look at what you've been doing recently. How did you meet Curtis Lynch and do

some work with Necessary Mayhem?

I was at Anchor singing background vocals. I'd seen him around during the day but I never actually got round to talking to him, then one day out of the blue he called. Apparently he was mastering a song where I'd done background vocals and to him it sounded like lead vocals and he started to ask around for my number. He called and we chatted a long time, then he sent me one rhythm and I showed up in the studio the next day with a song. That song is not yet out. It's called Dub Me, a very bass-heavy kind of track, where I substituted "Love" for "Dub", instead of telling you to Love Me I'm telling you to Dub Me. I used a lot of things relating to Dubtonic Kru, the second verse has names of their songs in. We had a blast, me and Curtis, creating the harmonies, it was awesome.

Tell me about your links with Dubtonic, because they've been going for quite a long time but now everybody in Europe is going mad for them and they're going to "save reggae"? You mentioned issues with the quality and accessibility of music coming out of Jamaica. Do you think that groups like Dubtonic are going to change that?

I think it has already started

changing. I was just saying last night that very soon it's going to be very little about the artists and more about the bands. You have Dubtonic, you have Raging Fyah, you have Roots Underground, you have Pentateuch. All these bands that are being formed all over the place in Jamaica and are pushing forward now, so there's a strong live cultural movement that's growing but picking up mostly on an international level. The promoters are noticing, the media is noticing, so I think very soon it's going to switch.

Describe Curtis in one word.

Crazy! (laughs) He's musically crazy and I love it! I wouldn't change that about him for anything else. He comes up with ideas that make my eyebrows raise and I look at him and go "Did you smoke rum this morning?" but I love that because there was a part of me that was stifled by Jamaican producers. A lot of them I feel didn't really know what to do with me in terms of my vocal type, in terms of the ideas I had. Curtis was the first producer who allowed me to get as crazy as I wanted to. I could switch personalities, invent a new vocal, whatever. Trying something is an art form, we're playing with it and I absolutely love that.

Tell me about how you wrote the song My Forever on Delroy Wilson's Worth Your Weight in Gold.



Wow, that was the hardest song I've ever written. Curtis specifically said to me "I want a love song and I want it to be such a strong sweet song that even the coldest heart would melt when they hear it". I struggled with that song. I struggled with the structure of the music for a while but I can't change that so I started struggling with the lyrics and the melody. The day of the studio session, I woke up very early, showered, sat on my bed completely naked, and for hours not one word would come. Then I decided to get into role-playing, so what I did was

strip myself of my personality and my character, tell myself that I'm not Chantelle Ernandez, and try to feel from another perspective. That's still a love song that I can't relate to this day. I've never felt that way about anybody actually. Once I got into the role-playing it got so damn real that I started to cry, that's when the first sentence came. So I was on my bed naked and crying with the track playing and the rest poured out like water.

Tell me about your move to Europe and the music you've

been doing there. Have you left Necessary Mayhem?

I have not left Necessary Mayhem. Curtis was working on other projects, and I got busy trying to do tours, promote my music and other things, but I think Curtis and I are so good at being crazy together. We're like an old married couple, separate for a while then it's like "Oh, I miss you, Where are you?". He's coming over in a few

weeks, to do some more work on our second EP, so I can't wait to be back in the studio with him again. I originally came to Europe with the intention to do promotional shows. I felt that in Jamaica promoters might know about me but because of how the economy is there aren't so many promoters willing to fly an unknown name, so to speak, from Jamaica to do a tour or shows. So I used my strongest links and the minute I got here the bookings were a lot easier. I have a great team, Mark Sanchez and Laura Forcucci helping me so I haven't been fighting it on my own. I started recording with the Reggaeland back in 2009 and I'm still recording with them now, so it helped.

Tell me about your track that you did for Reggaeland, Reggae Reasoning last year. Tell me what inspired you to talk about reggae on that very general level.

I think a lot of people don't know that even though Jamaica is home of reggae music we still have issues with people there, it's more of a class issue with more the upper-middle class and upper

classes who tend to not give it so much ratings, they tend to disrespect reggae musicians and artists. Even the corporate society in Jamaica sometimes. It happened a lot then that people would ask me "What do you do?" and I guess based on how I talk they wouldn't expect me to say "I'm a singer-songwriter of reggae music". They don't expect that or they don't expect to hear that I'm a reggae musician and the response is usually "Oh, you're one of those" (laughs). I think it's because a lot of them don't realise just how powerful reggae is as a genre and just how powerful it is as a carrier of messages, they just don't realise how strong it is and how needed it is and how important it is, so I felt that I needed to do that song in the simplest form. It's something that they'll probably listen to because it's not too heavy for them, it's not too vulgar, it's not any of what they tried to avoid. I felt like for those people who didn't respect it as much then they'll hear that and it will help them kind of see the light.

You seem to believe very much in animal rights, would

that be fair to say?

When I was growing up we had pets, like most people, and it's very contradictory because while you're being taught to take care and have responsibility for your pet, you're also being told that animals are dumb things. I see people do things to animals and it was ok because they're not a person, so what's the difference? Very few people think that animals can feel and for the ones who do think they can only feel on a physical level. They never stop to think that animals are living beings and they might have emotions. So when that had occurred to me, I started getting more aware of animal testing, of what products I used, trying not to support companies that conduct animal testing. I started doing my own research and came across some very gross videos of animal abuse. That's how I came to be an advocate for animal rights.

You've also been part of a project called Reggae Against Intolerance. Tell me a bit about that.

While I was at Rototom I

was approached to do a video-message against intolerance, but at the time it seemed to be more of a message against homosexual intolerance. I didn't have a problem becoming a part of it because I don't believe in discrimination on any level, even though I felt it could get me some heat from my fellow musicians and fellow Jamaicans. I believe in One Love, which is something people use loosely but I believe when Bob said it he meant love and accept people regardless of race, religion, belief, of whatever you might deem to be different. You don't have to be a part of their lifestyle but you don't have to hate them, disrespect them, disregard their feelings. In being a strong believer of the One Love philosophy I felt like it was the right thing to do.

You've mentioned anti-homosexual feeling in Jamaica. Is this something that is changing at its own pace?

It kind of is and it isn't. There is actually a big homosexual community in Jamaica, people don't know it but it exists. They're increasingly becoming more open about

their lifestyle, not hiding so much, not denying it so much. At the same time you may have people who think badly of them but they never express it vocally. I think that's the major difference, that not so many people are expressing it now, and in the cities it seems not so many people care so much. It's not becoming accepted but little by little it's just becoming another thing that people know exists but they probably don't pay so much attention to it as they would years ago. You still have people who feel very strongly against it, however if you're in this business then they've seen by example of their fellow players that's it's best to not express, so they shut up.

What do you think about censorship of lyrics in general?

That's sticky. I think in a lot of ways it's good. I think certain types of lyrics should not be on the radio in daytime when children are listening. At the same time you're expressing yourself and it's a part of the art. I have learnt to edit lyrics but not edit feelings, still there are some feelings whose lyrics would be very hard to edit because it might

dilute what you want to say. This is where education comes in amongst artists and songwriters, if we learn more in terms of vocabulary then we can learn to say exactly what we feel without being vulgar or very blatant about it. So I think the censorship shouldn't come down to what the radio does to censor your music, I think it's a personal responsibility, I think that's where it starts.

Finally, you are working on an album with Reggaeland.

The album I'm doing now is with Reggaeland. The title is Gimme What's Mine. I have recorded many tracks, some with messages against the sex slave industry, some with messages for our prison system in Jamaica, but I still do love songs and sensual things. The genres right now are kind of mixed. I've done reggae, pop and R&B, so the album is still in progress, so I can't exactly say what direction it will take. It's a good writing experience and I'm having fun doing it.

CLINTON FEARON

Interview by Angus Taylor

Photos by Franck Blanquin

On Clinton Fearon's eighth solo album 'Mi Deh Yah' (2010) during the song Rock And A Hard Place he sings "Coming from the country with my little guitar, I find myself between a rock and hard place". It's a line that sums up the situation for a lot of reggae artists in the so-called golden age, coming to Kingston, new to the business, with dreams of being on the radio. But Clinton's story is more specific. Born and raised in the hills of Jamaica, when he was 10 years old he built his own tools and carved his first guitar out of a cedar trunk, using the teeth of a fork to make the frets and even making chisels out of flattened nails. Arriving in the Jamaican capital in the late 60s he and two friends, Vin and Neville, formed a harmony trio called the Brothers. They shopped their music around to the big independent studios like Studio 1 and Treasure Isle without success until by chance, Errol Grandison of the Gladiators heard Clinton strumming and singing at his house, knocked at the door and asked him if he wanted to join him and Albert Griffiths in their group. Two decades of reggae history later, Clinton decided he had had enough and relocated to Seattle, Washington, where he began releasing his own albums with his Boogie Brown Band, hitting what would become a signature sound, having linked with his lady engineer of choice, Mel Detmer for 2004's masterpiece, 'Give and Take'. Today his self-made original guitar is proudly owned by one of his school teachers in Jamaica - displayed as an example of what pupils can achieve if they put their mind to it. Angus Taylor spoke to Clinton while he was in France with his wife Catherine to promote his ninth album, 'Heart and Soul', an acoustic set of Gladiators covers, out now...

"Sometimes a good song gets hidden by the plentiful instrumentation and electric devices"

Your last album Mi Deh Yah was saying "I'm here" - it seemed like a statement about where you are in the present. You are revisiting your past on new acoustic album Heart and Soul - is that fair to say?

It's fair to say that I was saying "I'm here" - meaning "I'm going nowhere", I'm here in the present. And this one, going back, is a totally different concept. What happened with those songs is basically a lot of people call me "Bassie" instead of Clinton and I wanted to clear that up! (laughs) Because I'm not just a bass player. I consider myself a poet and a singer as well. So I wanted to clear that up and in the same breath spell it out that sometimes a good song gets hidden by the plentiful instrumentation and electric devices and things like that. Sometimes the message gets hidden within the instrumentation. That's why on this one I tried to make the vocal and the lyrics at the forefront.

You've gone for much fuller arrangements than on your previous acoustic album Me An Mi Guitar. Did anyone else play in the sessions?

I did all the tracks myself. Absolutely everything on them except for recording and mixing which was done by my engineer Mel Detmer who worked with me on Give and Take, Vision, Me and Mi Guitar, Mi Deh Yah, Heart and Soul and now another one that's coming that I haven't even named yet!

The acoustic bass that you use has a sound almost like the old rhumba box from the days of mento.

It's a Taylor Bass. It's a big one but it's not a stand up bass. The box is very big and instead of plugging it in we mic'ed it so you get more of the woody sound rather than an electric sound.

You're not the only artist from Jamaica who is coming with an acoustic album. Tarrus Riley is about to release one too. What do you think about why reggae artists are going back to this organic sound?

Really? It's excellent. A few years ago when I did Me An Mi Guitar I thought I am coming with something no reggae artist has done as yet as far as I knew. But since I did that I discovered that Inna De

Yard were coming into it as well. Now I am understanding that more are coming with it too. I think it's an excellent thing because I think we strayed too much from the root. That doesn't mean we have to go back primitive or anything like that - but we don't want to forget the root of the thing. A lot of artists today are singing on all these rhythms that musicians play and they don't even know where the rhythm is coming from. They even call it their own because they don't know any better! They don't know the history of the thing so they say "Listen my riddim" and they just pick up that lingua too and say "Hey this is my riddim" when it is an old Studio 1 or an old Channel One or an old Treasure Isle that a lot of us played on or created earlier.

Whereas this album is about songwriting - not riding perennial rhythms.

It's about songwriting. It's about art. It's about poetry. It's about going back to the cutting board. When musicians have to be musicians and singers have to be singers. You don't have the machine to do it for you!

What do you think about quantised digital music and the use of pitch correction software these days?

I think it's kind of lazy. I also think it takes away from the heart and soul of the thing. It is precise because it is a machine and it's not missing a beat and it's not going to miss the timing but the downside of it is there is no blood. So I'm just wishing and hoping that the thing goes back to when musicians really play their instruments and singers really sing. That's my hope. That way the music will live. It won't just play for one day, a week, two weeks, a month and then it's dead.

One of the songs on the new album that almost everyone will know is Chatty Chatty Mouth. How did you come to write that song?

(laughs) That one was for an MP in our area named Dudley Thompson. He was running about making promises and things that he could not live up to but apart from that it was from seeing him alongside guys that he would give a little money and things like that to fight his politics for him. The whole thing looked

sleazy to me and that was the only way I could combat it and the only way I could deal with it was to write about it.

Are you political at all?

Not really. I always think that the right person for the job doesn't want it. So it's hard for me to be on any side because none of them seem to be on it, and if they want to they just can't do it because there are the bigger cats round the corner telling them what to do and how to do it and what to say and things like that. The whole thing is kind of a cheat in my opinion.

As well as being a Gladiator, you spent some time in the 70s working behind the scenes working with Yabby You.

I did lots of work for him and for King Sounds as well because Yabby You and King Sounds were working together for a while then. Yabby You used to come by when we were rehearsing and I was one of the main cats that would sit him down and rehearse him, harmonize with him, try to guide him vocalwise. Then he got a little money and took us to

Scratch's studio where we did some songs, one of which was Jah Vengeance. That song in particular grabbed Scratch and he asked us to come back and do something for him. So once we did a couple of songs for him, he then asked me to come back and play some basslines for him outside of Gladiators, which I did steadily for about six months, almost every day over there for different artists and I must say I learned quite a bit! It was a learning curve (laughs).

What did you learn from Scratch that we can hear in your music today?

I learned how to be crazy with it! When I say crazy I mean in the sense where you think way outside the box because Scratch was like that. Also, I'd watch Scratch work. He would observe an artist and see where his tone is and figure "OK, what kind of vibe would fit that artist?" They'd sing and he'd think "This artist could step it up two tones" and it would be perfect for him. He was good at that (laughs). I remember one time we were playing some rhythms - not playing for any particular artist - and

"Anywhere you go you take your art with you"



he came and whispered in my ear “Hey bassie, try this line... DOOM DOOM DOOGO DOOGO DOOM DOOM” and then he’d crack up and say “This is 21st century stuff... them no ready for this yet!” And percussions, I learned a lot from him about percussions and how to lay percussions in “question and answer”. Rather than just stack things on top of one another it’s more “question and answer”. And I utilized that with other instruments too! (laughs)

You cut your first tune for the Gladiators, Freedom Train, for the producer Lloyd Matador Daley. Another artist who worked with Matador around the same time was Little Roy, who has done an album of Nirvana covers called Battle For Seattle. As someone who lives in Seattle could you see yourself doing a crossover into the grunge scene?

I know Stone Gossard from Pearl Jam and a few more cats. Stone is an irie youth! But I’m not too much in that world. But, yes, Seattle is kind of a little rock town and a lot of people ask me how come I’m there? (laughs) But the thing is, in my opin-

ion, anywhere you go you take your art with you. And if you trust and are confident enough, anywhere you are, you can do it.

Tell me about your experiences in Brazil which you’ve put into song?

About 10 years ago Gladiators were supposed to tour over there but they forfeited and weren’t showing up so Fully Fullwood called me up and said “Hey Bassie, I’m in a big problem, can you help me out?” and I said “No problem. I haven’t been there yet and I would love to!” I went over there and didn’t even get time to rehearse! It was Sylvia Tella, U Roy, Justin Hinds, Itals and myself but they used up all the time rehearse and I had none so Fully said “I’ll tell you say that... Just pretend you’re in the studio and hearing the song for the first time!” (laughs) They were making up their own lines to it and we really did it that way. Then I met Fauzi Beydoun from Tribo de Jah and we hit it off as friends so whenever he sees there is an opening he takes me over there so I have been going there periodically ever since.

You call it “home away from home” - what do you like about it so much?

Visiting Brazil for the first time I loved the weather and I loved the energy. Then I spent some time at the house of a friend of mine, Fauzi Beydoun, and the treatment was wonderful, the weather was sweet. It was so wonderful - the fruits. I think me and my wife spent a couple of weeks at his house! I feel like I could really live in Brazil. If I had the money I would have a property there already!

Jimmy Cliff spent a lot of time out there. Brazil has a long history of welcoming reggae artists. What’s the scene there like today?

That’s what I learned. I think it’s been strong for a long time. They really love it and they get into it! Because English and patois is a little bit hard for them they make up their own words! They have their own lyrics to the melody and they sing their own song along in the words they have made! (laughs) They have total respect for the thing and really love it. High energy!

Another country that has been good to both you and the Gladiators is France. You have released albums there in the 80s, your distributor Chapter Two is there, and even your wife is from there...

I remember we toured England, because we were signed to Virgin, we toured Ireland a few times but we’d never come to France. Then there was a promoter here by the name of Simon who took us to Guadeloupe and then to France. We were surprised to see the amount of people - eight thousand odd people showed up in a huge tent! I don’t even remember the name of the place! But the energy also! I tell this story all the time that the energy of the people kind of reminds me of Jamaica - they’re feisty! I could totally relate because Jamaicans are like that and they have that energy so I’ve been kind of hooked on France from way back when! (laughs) Also for their love and respect for art. And because my wife is French there is even more reason for that!

How did you and Catherine meet?

10-11 years ago Guillaume Bougard licensed an album, I think it was Mystic Whisper, for me here and I wanted to do some PR on it. So I called up Guillaume and asked him to get me some journalists saying I would buy my ticket and come over and do interviews and whatever it takes to spread the vibe. So when I came over he presented me with some names and there was only one woman on the list of about twenty people. So right there I was thinking “It’s kinda lopsided!” (laughing) so I was curious to see who this woman is! So I called her up and... hey! The rest is history! (big laugh)

Your music - past and present - contains deliberate references to the music of Bob Marley. Have you seen the Marley movie yet?

I don’t even have a TV man! My TV is my guitar. My guitar, my pen and my book and my home, my wife and family. I have another album right now, 12 tracks, eight are written already and four rhythms are already laid. I just need to write the lyrics and find the content lyric-wise. When I go back to Seattle, sometime in June and go back in the stu-

dio I want to finish that this year and have it ready for the right time to release it, maybe late next year. I’m always working man, I’m always on new stuff. You know how it is as a writer, there are always several things to write about! And at the same time every song sums up as one song: saying “Hey, we need some equality. We need some justice. We need more love.” In the true sense of the word - not just a pretend and a plastic smile - but a real smile. Real love. We need that. We cannot survive without it. We tend to think that we can but we can’t.

Will the next album be electric?

It is. Because I love both mediums. It’s really nice when a good album is properly put together and you hear the drum and the bass pumping with good melodies on top of it with sweet guitar licks and nice piano skanks. When it’s nicely put together it is beautiful. I love both of them and I think I’ll be doing both for a long time.

Since your last interview for United Reggae have you had any further contact with Al-



bert and the Gladiators?

(thinks) I've talked with Clinton Rufus and Gallimore Sutherland just before I came to France the other day. I haven't talked to Albert in a long time. I've tried to get a hold of him but because he is sickly and things like that it seems like he doesn't wish to talk to many people.

Finally, on the song Mi Deh Yah, you say "Life is rough but

I know I'm not the worst". Does that sum up your philosophy of life?

Hey hey, it is man! I remember my dad told me a story one time when he was going through a hard time and we were living in the woods. He said "Son, hear this story. There was this man who had one ripe banana and that's it - nothing more to eat. So he decided he was going to eat the banana and hang him-

self after that. He got himself a piece of rope, climbed a tree, peeled the banana, ate it, dropped the skin and started fixing himself to put this neck through the rope and tying it to the tree. Then a man walked by, picked up the banana skin and ate it then kept on walking! So the man didn't bother to hang himself and came down out of the tree, saying "If someone is eating the skin my life isn't too bad after all!" "



Fashion RECORDS

Interview by Angus Taylor

“Chris is musical, I know how the business side of it works. We complemented each other in that way”

On 19th March the seminal UK reggae label Fashion Records began reissuing its back catalogue via online distributor Believe Digital. Founded by two schoolfriends John McGillivray and Chris Lane (who together started the Dub Vendor record retail empire from a Clapham Junction market stall, selling pre release 45s) Fashion’s debut single, Dee Sharp’s cover of Leo Hall’s Let’s Dub It Up, took the UK reggae chart’s number one spot in the summer of 1980. Two years later John and Chris set up their first of several South London premises titled the A Class studio

cranking out superlative contemporary reggae in all forms. From UK deejay classics like the late Smiley Culture’s massive 1984 hits Cockney Translation and Police Officer to lovers fare by Nereus Joseph and Maxi Priest, the duo showed an unerring versatility and reactivity to what was happening in dances in the UK and Jamaica, navigating through the digital revolution and even putting out jungle tracks in the 1990s as their own works got sampled and set to 140bpm. By that time Fashion had a strong link with Donovan Germain’s Penthouse Records, and had kick-started the careers of apprentice-engineers-turned-producers Gussie P of Sip-A-Cup and Frenchie of Maximum Sound.

In the new century the label wound down, but following the closure of the final Dub Vendor store last year the time seemed apt for Fashion to make a comeback. Angus Taylor spoke to Chris and John at John’s offices above the shop about their roles one of UK reggae’s historic imprints and the heady times in which they plied their trade...

Chris and John, how did two seventies schoolboys become such big reggae fans?

Chris: At that time everyone was being skinheads. Reggae was the fashionable music at that time, so we just developed a friendship over that. Really we were some of the few kids who didn’t give up on reggae when we started wearing flares. Skinhead wasn’t really a movement, it was just a fashion. When everyone started growing their hair longer and wearing different clothes 99% of skinheads went off and listened to the Faces and David Bowie but me and John didn’t.

By the time Fashion started Dub Vendor had grown from a stall in Clapham Junction via the short-lived shop in Peckham to the two main shops in Ladbroke Grove and then Clapham Junction. Why did you decide to start the label?

John: I put out a couple of tunes from Jamaica for Gussie Clarke on the Dub Vendor label. Dub Vendor needed more of a presence in the marketplace because even when we were a stall we were kind of batting above

our weight, advertising in Echoes as if we were a big thing when we were a one-day-a-week market stall (laughs). Chris by that time had a dub-cutting machine and he’d produced a couple of tunes for a friend of ours, Dave Henley with the group the Investigators, under a different name, The Private Eyes. Having heard what he did on his own I thought “You know what? We could do something together”.

Your first tune hit big – luck or skill?

John: I found Dee Sharp through my girlfriend at the time, now my wife. A friend of hers at work was going out with him and said that he could sing. Both me and Chris knew that that Let’s Dub It Up was ripe for doing over. The great thing about the reggae market then was that it was a definite market, so it wasn’t like you were making things and experimenting, there was an audience there and they were hungry for stuff to be supplied to them. If you hit it right you weren’t going to sell millions, but you knew you could sell thousands if you got it on point. So the easy way at the start was do-

ing over songs that you felt were in demand. You’d be in the shop and people would ask for those things or you’d hear them still playing in the dance or whatever. That was really where it started from. There wasn’t any great plan.

You started your first A Class Studio in the basement of the Junction Shop just as the UK sound systems were starting to make waves.

John: When Chris moved his dub-cutter into the basement here we thought “Well, let’s get a little studio thing going” and it all keyed in really nicely with the explosion of the British deejays.

Chris: It was just really good timing. As we got the four-track studio, the dub-cutting and everything running downstairs, suddenly there was all this talk of UK, London and Birmingham-based deejays that were really ripping it up on sound systems. The big moment for us was when we recorded Johnny Ringo on a few tracks, cut a couple of dubs for him of the rhythms, and then went to hear Ringo and Welton Irie when Gemini played Saxon down at the People’s

Club. That's when we heard all these deejays that we'd been hearing about: Smiley, Asher and all the rest of them. I used to play guitar with Maxi Priest and Paul Robinson's band Caution and Maxi said to me at a rehearsal "Everyone talks about Philip Levi" because Paul had just produced Mi God, Mi King, "You should check out Smiley and Asher, they're very good as well".

John: The Jamaican deejays were listening to English cassettes. People like Papa San and Lieutenant Stitchie, that's where they were taking their influence from. The deejay thing was great because it suited the limited production abilities we had with a four-track studio. Most deejay music is not about loads of drop ins. A good deejay tune is a performance, so you're trying to encourage that performance from an artist and then maybe patch in a few things, which is kind of instant and it works well. We were in the right place at the right time, more by luck than design. It's how these things work.

John, you've told me before that Fashion's success

as a team was based on you bringing your commercial sense from running the shop to temper Chris' skills as a guitarist and studio engineer.

Chris: It was a very important part of it because as John was selling tunes over the counter at a time when I might be working on the studio or cutting dubs or other things, so John had a much clearer view of what's actually selling, or people would be asking for a certain sort of thing. He could spot a trend and say to me "We should make a rhythm like this" or "That rhythm you've got there is good, but we could do this with it" or "There's a certain type of artist that we could put on that rhythm". Whereas because I'm in the thick of it I haven't quite got that overview.

John: I had more of an idea of how the thing should sound so that it would sell. Chris is musical, I know how the business side of it works. The studio time, especially in those days because it was long doing stuff in the studio, I always found a bit boring to be really honest. Taking the vocals and doing the mixes and stuff like that is not so bad because you get a per-

formance, but the going over the harmonies, Chris is more prepared to get that, he's a perfectionist. We complemented each other in that way.

Chris, as well as an engineer you were also a respected reggae journalist. You have a reputation as one of the few reggae writers who actually understands studio craft rather than just as being collectors of records, talking about catalogue numbers and so on.

Chris: I never talk about catalogue numbers. I never see myself as a record collector. I've got records and I like records, but to me a record collector is someone who collects everything by a certain artist or every issue on a label. I don't. I've got records that I like and that's it. But the writing thing came from just liking the music.

John: When we were at school we'd be going out in our lunch hour buying pre-releases and they'd be two or three times the price of a normal release record with a big hole in the middle. You'd go back to school with it and you'd get "You paid a pound for that? You must be a fucking idiot!"

Chris: Or they'd look at it and go "You paid that amount for a record and they can't even be bothered to put a label on it?"

John: Out of that you kind of feel it needs to be communicated to them just how good it really is. I think it's where Chris' desire to sort of spread it came from. There was no serious writing about reggae at that time. A little bit after Chris Carl Gayle came and Black Music came out and it sort of exploded from there but Chris was doing it from way before. It was good that he spread that word, he found out that there are these other nutters out there that are into this as well.

What was your favourite release on Fashion?

John: That's a good question (laughs). I think my personal favourite is Shan A Shan, Smiley Culture.

Chris: It's difficult for me. Whatever I say to you, two seconds later I'm going to think of something different! I'd say Mood For Love, Carlton and His Shoes; Cool Down Amina, Keith Douglas... Young Rebel, Johnny Clarke. That's not to say that all the records from Fashion are my favourites! (laughs).

John: Some of the Cutty Ranks stuff as well, because it was very immediate with Cutty. When you're talking about getting a performance from someone in the studio, that is the archetype sort of person.

Chris: When he's just demoing

a lyric for you, that's frightening enough. When's he's actually giving it 100% behind the mic, that's the full force of the bloke.

John: We had a good rapport with Cutty. And I think out of all the artists that we worked with I personally think that the most impressive in the studio was Frankie Paul. It was just unbelievable that someone was capable of doing that vocally, and as he finished... "Give me another track. Give me another track ". He just put everything down and it was essentially one take.

Chris: You didn't have to give him a lot of direction, might be a couple of little things that you might pick him up on, but he really is very, very good in the studio. He was one of those people who really did seem to have it all in his head.

John: To be really fair, most of the Jamaican artists are pretty easy to work with. The English artists tend to be a bit more precious about what they do and want to go over and over the thing, where a Jamaican artist would be more like "That's it, done". To be fair both me and Chris after a while realised that it was pointless trying to tweak something up because you end up taking all the vibes out of the performance. As they say in Jamaica "Every spoil is a style". Sometimes you take it warts and all and if you listen to a lot of the really best reggae there are, technically, numerous mistakes in it, but it's the

overall feel.

Chris, as someone who's written about the music, what did you think about the various trends that Fashion catered for? There was roots, lovers, digital ragga, even jungle - on your subsidiary Jungle Fashion.

Chris: Well, we never set out to make any particular part of reggae. We never set out just to make lovers or just to make deejay tunes or just to make roots tunes. So when things come up, like the UK emcee thing came along and we were in the right place at the right time and we liked it, so we made it, you know? Carlton and His Shoes drops into town, certainly he's a big hero to me and I know John likes him as well, we wanted to make a couple of tunes with him. Johnny Clarke's about, let's do a couple of tunes with him. Alton Ellis, my favourite singer of all time, if I've got the opportunity to make tunes with him, I'm going to make tunes with him! So we never had any policy of "We're not going to make this sort of tune or we're not going to make that sort of tune". We're a reggae label, we make reggae tunes, whatever sort of reggae that is. Going back to buying records or whatever, we've always bought deejay tunes, instrumental tunes, singing tunes, dub tunes, roots tunes, whatever.

John: Well, I think really that reggae itself was one thing, it's



only later on that it kind of divided into all these sub-genres and people were like "I only listen to roots" or whatever.

If Fashion had continued in the 2000s, do you think you'd have put out newer reggae and dancehall related genres like dubstep or afrobeats?

Chris: I don't particularly like afrobeats. Dubstep to me, what I've heard of it, doesn't particularly touch me. Some of it sounds like jungle, some of it sounds like slowed down dub music. I've said to people "Play me a dubstep tune" and I think "Well, I was doing stuff like that 20 years ago, it's not really that much different". Then they'll play me something else and I'll think "Well, that's something completely different to me, and it's not really me". I mean, when the jungle thing came along that took a little bit of getting used to but I sort of got into it because it could be very musical, very interesting.

I ended up quite liking it, and obviously we ended up getting some good jungle deejays to do some remixes and so on and so forth. The reason why I came out of Fashion was because I got to the stage where I was starting to make tunes I didn't like. Once you recognize that in yourself it's time to do something else.

John, has the taking of the Dub Vendor business online given you the chance to do projects like the digital re-launch of Fashion?

John: Personally I don't like to rake over the past too much. I like to go forward. At the moment I'm in a kind of interlude between wherever I go to next. There've been opportunities to reissue the Fashion stuff before but I've never been that motivated even though we got some big orders for it because I was busy doing other stuff. Don't get me wrong I'm proud of it but I was always felt may-

be someone else would come along and do it so I could get on with something else!

Chris: I came out of the studio thing about 12 years ago and I never even played the guitar for about ten years. But then I started doing a couple of sessions for a mate and that started coinciding with starting to get the Fashion stuff together again and because I had such a long break it's been quite refreshing to look at it again.

Will Fashion ever return to new releases?

John: Never say never but me and Chris agree we'd have to find artists that gave us the enthusiasm to produce them. Other people remixing stuff - we're up for that because that interests me because people come to it from a different perspective and different angle. I've got people like Russ from the Disciples who've expressed an interest in working with some of the acapellas. Curtis Lynch and Peckings want to use a couple of rhythms. But we'd like to find new artists. I go to Jamaica quite a lot and when you're there the new music sounds great but when you leave it doesn't seem so relevant. Back in the day the music exported whereas now it's instant music for the people of Jamaica. You hear it in the right environment and it's right but me and Chris wouldn't want to make that.

It's one year on since the death of Smiley. What are



your memories of working with him?

Chris: I'd say that Cockney Translation was one of my favourite tunes now that's been mentioned as well!

John: Cockney Translation was something that Chris worked on quite a bit with Smiley. The concept of it was Smiley's...

Chris: We worked a lot on the lyrics of that and the performance of it and structure. We heard that when we went to the People's Club that night after voicing Ringo; not only did

we hear all those Saxon emcees performing but Smiley did Cockney Translation that night. Me and John went "This is a tune!"

John: Because prior to that we were working on these guys called Laurel & Hardy. To my knowledge they were the first people to come with that uniquely British... not like Judge Dread who's a white bloke who's into reggae, but two young, British-raised, black kids who had the kind of Cockney thing going.

But they didn't have the performance levels and the charisma

that Smiley had. The difference was that Smiley was totally credible from the street, just the same as Philip Levi, Asher, they were of the street and that was what they did.

Chris: He wasn't pretending to be anything or anyone else.

PABLO MOSES

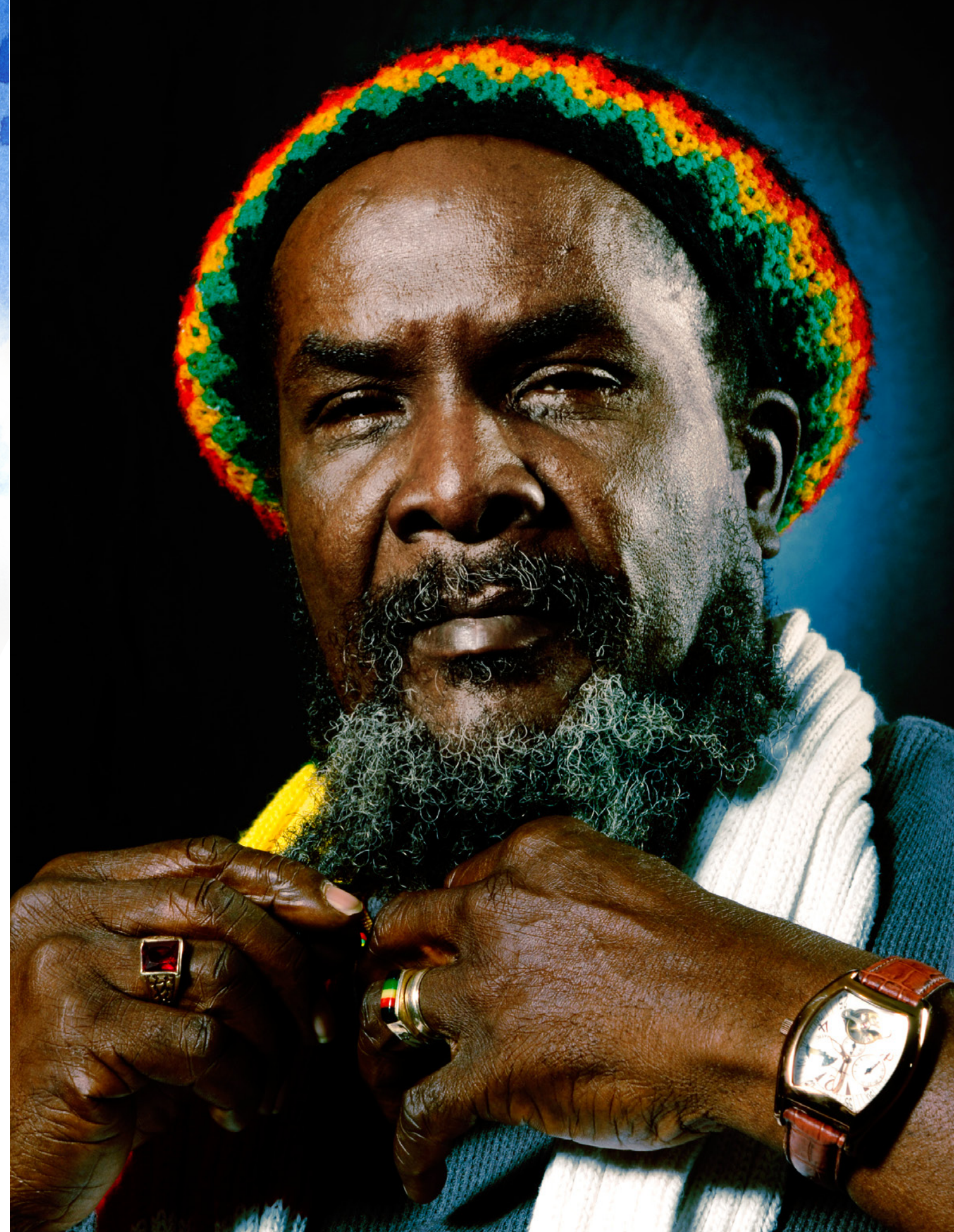
Gets Personal

Interview by Gerard McMahon

Photos by Franck Blanquin

"Everything that I do I think that I can do better... I always strive for perfection"

Pablo Moses is a genuine 'living legend' in the reggae arena. Schooled in the Black Ark studios of Lee 'Scratch' Perry during the 1970s, it is a remarkable achievement that he is still recording classic material and playing live to full houses. In late November Pablo Moses treated Brussels to a musical feast of conscious roots reggae. As the audience roared for yet another encore, Pablo led 'United Reggae' to his dressing room for the following interview. Considering he had a 200 kilometre journey ahead of him that night it was a generous act on his part and was much appreciated.



What has been your greatest achievement in life?

(He laughs) The greatest achievement is that I can really take care of my children and I have the opportunity through music to send them to school, right up to University. My 3 (big children) finished University and I have 2 more small ones that are going to High School and they are also going to University, they have to go.

You can do that through your earnings in music?

Yes, I do that. I make sure to buy old cars, second hand cars and all those things and so forth, buy cheap things at Wal-Mart and other places and I am taking care of my children. I think education is an essential commodity.

What has been your greatest disappointment in life?

Well I would say that I am sorry that my people (parents) did not really see the interest in the arts when I was younger, when I was telling them that I loved music and wanted to do it full time. You have to understand they are the ones coming out of hardship. They thought that you have to be a teacher,

or a lawyer, or a doctor or an accountant or you have to have a 'jacket and tie'. I forgive them for that. I think that's my disappointment, because I started when I was almost 30 to play guitar.

What has given you the greatest satisfaction in music?

The greatest satisfaction is when I go on stage and I see my people and I look in their eyes and I see that they see my eyes too and we both see honesty. I see honesty from the people and they see honesty from me. That – to me - is very very important

What has upset you most in the music business?

Payola, unfortunately and also not getting sufficient airplay because my songs are really saying something positive. I'm really upset about that. Well you have to understand that the big corporations don't want Pablo Moses' music because it might obstruct their commercialisation.

Are you satisfied with the reception to your latest album – The Rebirth?

(He hesitates) So and so, yes I

think there should be more out of it. Everything that I do I think that I can do better. Everything that I produce, I'm never totally satisfied. With a finished product I always say 'I could have done that better'. But sometimes it also takes financial resources which is the main thing for having time to spend in the studio. Because I'm not Michael Jackson or those rich guys like U2 and so forth.

So are you a perfectionist?

Yes. I always strive for perfection and I tell my children the same – strive for perfection. Never use the word impossible. Those words are my enemies.

Who is your favourite reggae artist?

It is difficult to say - Bob Marley and Peter Tosh. Tosh was a real revolutionary. I think Marley was also a revolutionary and a messenger in that respect.

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

It's hard to say, because I listen to so many different artists. I listen to jazz, blues, funk, rock and every type of music. Even nowadays I listen to some of the dancehall too. I think that



'each one teach one' and I'm always learning. I usually sing a lot of Ray Charles. I think he has really made an impact on me from when I was young.

Do you think you will live all your life in Jamaica?

Yes, I love living in Jamaica. I might one day go and live in Africa. I love living in Jamaica, it's a miniature Africa.

Who is your favourite politician?

My favourite politician passed away unfortunately, but it's hard to say. My favourite revolutionary man was Che Guevara. And one of the greatest politicians that Jamaica ever had was Michael Manley (left-wing Prime Minister over a total of ~12 years during the 1970s, '80s and 90s) who made sure that Rastafarians had the opportunity to expose themselves, because in the 1940s, '50s and '60s Rastafarians had to stay in the bushes and to hide in the gullies.

You don't think Manley provoked the Americans to bring guns into Jamaica (in covert support of the right wing opposition)?

I don't think so. I think it's the big corporations in Jamaica – the so-called upper class – just don't want to share the wealth with the masses. That was the major problem, and still is a major problem.

Who is your least favourite politician?



Outside music, do you have any interests?

Well I was aspiring and going to College pursuing accounts, before I discontinued and went to pursue music.

Accounts?

Yes, I just like messing with figures. I still do figures.

If you were to do a 'cover version' what would it be?

I think one of the greatest songs that was ever written is from a guy - that a lot of people won't say that maybe I'm right about - is John Lennon. 'Imagine' - that song was very inspirational, can you 'imag-

ine that every one is one', and there's no 'country' there's no 'hatred', you know, just love.

Do you have any regrets in life?

I think we all have certain regrets. There are so many, I don't really put regrets as regrets, I use regrets as motivation, I use disappointments as motivation. So I really don't think I have any regrets that I ... the only thing I regret is that I didn't do music as early as I should.

Is it really true that you made no money from your first classic album (Revolutionary Dream)?

No. I made a small amount. I got

some money from it, a small advance. I really didn't get much out of it until I relicensed it (re-issued by Shanachie in 1992). 'A Song' album is the one I really have problems with, with Island. I cannot get my royalties at all from it, because they sell it to Universal Records and they do this and they do that. They make it so complicated that I have to have lawyers and I don't have the money.

Any memories from Lee 'Scratch' Perry and the Black Ark recording (of Revolutionary Dream)?

Oh I love the work of 'I Man A Grasshopper'. I am the original Grasshopper.



TRUCKBACK RECORDS

Interview by Siobhan Jones

Photos by Joshua Chamberlain

"Truckback doesn't follow trends, we follow vibes"

Operating out of the back of a truck, under an Ackee tree, in Kingston, Jamaica, Truckback Records has one of the most unique recording spaces in Dancehall. Steve Locke and his brother Adrian are behind this production unit, releasing some of the most popular tracks over the past few years, including Erup's 'Click Mi Finger' and I-Octane's 'Lose A Friend'.

Siobhan Jones spoke to Steve about their truck, Jamaican dancehall and their latest riddim releases, Freedom Shines and Sexxx Tape.





How did you end up working out the back of a truck?

The truck story is interesting. Where I come from we have tropical storms. We had all our equipment in a room in a house and then in the hurricane season lost the roof! We were trying to keep the equipment safe so we covered it all in clothes. We were shouting, "Where are we going to put the equipment?! The house is leaking!" The truck was in the yard, it was dry, so we moved everything there and it just stayed. We ended up renovating it and it is now a full production studio. It's also a hang out ting for a lot of industry people - artists, DJs, Sound Selectors. It has a nice, homely vibe. Everyone is comfortable, sitting there writing under the Ackee

tree.

Your earlier riddims all had truck-related names such as Gearbox and Dashboard. What are your thoughts about how the space and the truck influences the music you produce?

That's a nice question. The music is influenced spiritually. It's a feeling, a vibe. The truck has a homely vibe. The truck is a real inspiration. A lot of things come out of that truck. When at the truck, you start seeing things, and start feeling things, and it just comes out in the music... outside on the step, laughing, joking and then something hits you so you go in and put it down.

How did Truckback actually get started as a production



team?

I started off playing in a band called Kaushan back in the 90's with, Teetimus, Ernie Wilks & Dia. We started touring the world as a backing band with artistes like Bounty Killer, Elephant Man, Lady Saw and Shabba. We'd be asked to go to studios like King Jammy's and Bobby Digital to build tracks. However, when you're in a band on the road, you're playing other producer's music.

Although we all had a dream to produce our own music, it was hard. In the early days, studios used 24-track tapes and huge mixing boards. Not everyone could have a studio then. So, as the digital age progressed, we realised that we needed to do things ourselves. But it's

not like we set it up our studio and then tried to do music, we were doing it before that. Now a studio can be anywhere - a laptop and that's all you need. I have always been doing music on way or another.

One of the most recent riddims you released was Freedom Shines, which was released to mark the 50th anniversary of Jamaican music. You've said a bit about how you feel being able to get hold of equipment easily has influenced Dancehall, but what is your view of Jamaican Dancehall now and for the future?

This is funny as I was talking about this earlier. I like to talk about things openly to hear what people think. With Freedom Shines, we re-licked an original beat from back in the day and put a modern twist to it with current artists. The response from the younger generation of selectors has been amazing.

What a lot of listeners are saying that the Dancehall thing has been watered down as it's gone hip-hop/pop, but I understand that, the generation has changed and that's what the kids hear now. They put the dancehall deejay on a hip-hop



sounding ting, merged with a little dancehall ting. But guess what, the world is not really comfortable with it... saying that's not the authentic Dancehall that they know.

You see, a lot of the generation that is building dancehall now really haven't taken the time to learn the history of Jamaican music in general. I'm just assuming but ask some of the new generation producers, "What is Mento?" (Mento is a Jamaican Folk ting from way back) they wouldn't even know. They might know as far back as Ska but they don't know past Ska. Same as I said before, it's easy to call yourself in Jamaica a producer.

As far as the future of Dancehall, Truckback usually stays true to authentic dancehall

riddim but music is subjective and I am not opposed to creative experimentation. I do like the way some dancehall has been mixed with the house and the euro trance sounds. You hear dancehall influence in a lot of mainstream dance/pop playing on the radio now.... we need learn how to capitalize on that. Jamaicans were the originators. We definitely have the talent, maybe its just about learning to do business side of it right.

What do you think the implications are of this for the future of Jamaican Dancehall?

They have a lot of marketing to do – to try and sell you and I and the rest of the world that this is the music from Jamaica.

Your latest riddim, SeXXX Tape, has just been released which feels like quite a bold statement. What are your thoughts on Slackness in Dancehall?

There's nothing wrong with slackness. The SeXXX Tape exudes what a lot of people are really feeling but we need to get the Dancehall back to the Dancehall.

So this is your way of trying to get Dancehall back to its

roots?

It's not our way of getting dancehall back to its roots. Truckback doesn't follow trends, we follow vibes. Earlier this year with Freedom Shines that was a conscious dancehall project that is getting good radio rotation. Now with the SeXXX Tape, it was created for the streets... the dancehall, not the radio. There is a separation. Back in the day no dancehall was played on the radio. It's not exciting to hear the same thing on the radio and the same thing in the dance. Quite a few radio disc jockies are selectors at night, the SeXXX Tape gives them the ability to play something they couldn't play on air. A lot of disc jockies who are close friends heard what I was doing and they asked me to do the clean version, and I was like 'are you crazy?' I'm not doing radio, I'm sorry. This is not a radio project. There are no clean versions at all as you have to have the separation from radio to the streets. Some of the radio disc jockies are selectors at night and a lot of them don't know how to separate it. Although we as producers all want radio play, sometimes, Dancehall is simply music for the streets, for the dance.



Do you feel then that Dancehall is a type of music then that should only be played in the Dancehall?

No, but there must be some kind of variation to keep it exciting. Why should we try to express ourselves— cursing, saying this and saying that— and have to clean it up? I don't always want spins on the radio, sometimes I want spins inna di Dancehall.

So you feel that it would be a censorship of you and your own creativity if you were to

do a clean version?

Hell yeah! Not just for me but for the artistes and the songwriters too. Obviously, they have something to say and people want to hear it, otherwise slackness wouldn't get such a forward in the dance. Why do you need to get the hardcore Dancehall on the radio? We don't need that. If we want to do radio songs, we'll do radio songs. If you want to do this for the Dancehall, you do it for the Dancehall. Don't try and mix them.



BUSY SIGNAL

Interview by Angus Taylor

"A lot of young kids right now don't know about Alton Ellis or U Roy - some of them don't even know about Shabba!"

By the time dancehall eminence Reno Gordon AKA Busy Signal finally issued his fourth album 'Reggae Music Again' on 10th April it had already snow-balled into a major event. Featuring production from his manager Shane Jukeboxx Brown plus Donovan Germain, with a final mix by Brown and his veteran engineer father Errol, as well as tailor made roots rhythms from Kirk Bennett and members of the C-Sharp Band, 'Reggae Music Again' was being hailed as a game changer long before it hit the streets. Within days of release reviewers were comparing it to Buju Banton's 'Til Shiloh' both favourably and critically - as part of a backlash against the hype (ironically it could be argued that this reaction is as hype driven as getting swept up in the critical group-think). So United Reggae sent Angus Taylor direct to the source pulling the eclectically minded deejay out of the studio to ask about his album and how it fits into his unique career...



Your new album Reggae Music Again is here. Where did the idea to do this album come from?

Just me being in the studio, listening to a wide variety of music, sitting down with my engineers and just joking around and saying “I’m going to do a whole album of strictly reggae music”. It just came up out of the blue. But then I started to take it very seriously when I saw the feedback to my songs One More Night and Night Shift. Those two songs inspired and triggered the whole thing.

You work in all kinds of styles now. How, for example, did you come to choose your cover of Kenny Rodgers The Gambler for the Reggae’s Gone Country album last year?

I was just on the road with Christy Barber [VP Vice President of Marketing and Reggae’s Gone Country producer] when she told me she was going to do an album of reggae artists singing country songs on a reggae type beat. I asked if I could do one of those tracks and she was like “You’re serious?” and I said “Yeah, I grew up listening to all those country songs!” So she said she was going to think about which song she would

ask me to cover and she called me back about 4 days later and asked me if I knew The Gambler. I told her I knew the song but I didn’t know all the words so I would do some research. It was Christy and Dean Fraser who really helped me there.

Tell me about the process of making your new album. You had Dean, your manager, Shane and his father Errol, who not only was the engineer at Tuff Gong but was also the engineer at Treasure Isle for a while when it was taken over by Mrs Pottinger. You also had Kirk Bennett who is one of the great modern reggae drummers. It sounds like it was all made from the ground up.

All of the instruments are live and from the ground up. It was the whole Tuff Gong energy and vibe of being at Bob Marley’s studio laying down live tracks and then going back into Penthouse which has been around for so many years. Even the percussionist, a man called Sticky, who had been there since Bob Marley time. We’d be going into the studio, humming some melodies to catch a vibes, and little sounds not even making sense with words at the time when we were mak-

ing the beats. Kirk, Aeion who played the bass, Monty with the guitar, Dean Fraser with the horns, we were all humming and making a vibes, making the changes before doing the whole thing live again. Just real love for the music which meant we could talk to each other if we had agreements and disagreements, “I don’t like this change here” “I don’t want the bridge to be so”. We could listen and try things, we could undo things, we could listen over. It was a whole vibe.

What was the vibe?

The whole vibe of just focusing on real reggae music, being true to my own roots and culture, my own backbone of Jamaica. Not just hustling or making a track to speed to collect some money and then come back tomorrow to do the same. It was also me getting the right type of guidance from the people around me like Beres Hammond, Freddie McGregor, Michael Rose, Donovan Germain, Shane and Errol Brown, Dean Fraser, who encouraged me to put my all into it.

David Rodigan, who has been quite critical of Jamaican music in the last few years, has

supported this album very enthusiastically even before it came out.

I don’t even know the words to explain how I feel about that. Hearing David Rodigan recommending and commenting has been overwhelming. David Rodigan, he could have been my father. He does so much for reggae music as a whole and has been around for so long way before me so that I can do something and he is pleased is like a blessing.

Even before you made this album your music has attracted praise from the foundation. I interviewed the Wailing Souls a couple of years back and even though they were critical of modern dancehall music they named you as a good example of an artist working today.

OK! That’s like my first time hearing that! That’s an additional blessing! It just feels so good to be connecting with the roots and with the real culture. I do dancehall and will still do it but reggae music is the music that gave birth to dancehall and to hip hop and to reggaeton. So it’s just me keeping it real and being true to it and showing the respect to reggae

music which is my genre and my own culture. It wasn’t my first choice but I still make it the choice that is first in terms of quality music.

You’ve always sung reality and sufferation lyrics even on your dancehall music like Something A Guh Gwaan with Bounty Killer and in People So Evil.

Definitely. I always try to keep it that way so people can relate to the message throughout then songs. The melody is important so that it can do something out there and the people can move to it but the message is much more important so people can move to something with substance. In music a lot of things nowadays have no substance. The vibe is there but no substance. So it doesn’t really last. The longevity is not there. People have to grow and go through different phases but at the end of the day I have to take it upon myself and the team to present this package of reggae music but still keeping it real from my perspective. It’s nothing about Rasta, nothing about me having dreads or not - it’s just music. Original reggae music live and from the ground up.

One song in particular on the album is Kingston Town, which bears a resemblance to the track of the same name by Alborosie. Was this an attempt to look at the same topic but from someone who was born and grew in Jamaica?

It was definitely about the perspective of someone who has lived here all my life. But actually the name was The Dark Side Of Kingston Town but they shortened it! You could talk all different things about Kingston, it’s not all dark and it’s not all what people may expect or hear. It’s not a tourist resort but at the end of the day we have kinds of things we can say about Kingston as someone who has been living here so long. It may come off harsh but at the end of the day it’s just real stuff, being true as a Jamaican seeing these things.

People have been comparing the album to Buju Banton’s Til Shiloh. How important an album is this or is that for the people to decide?

It’s definitely a very important album to me! In terms of how important it is to me I can’t really make a comparison. But the people would be the best ones to decide in terms of what

they are hearing and what they think. Me, I hate self praise. I respect myself and I respect my music. I don't underestimate what I can do with my flows and styles and things but I would prefer people be the ones to listen and relate to the tracks in their own way. They will be the ones to decide.

Is dancehall music at a crossroads right now?

I think most of the artists are at a crossroads right now. Most of the artists are the ones who are confusing everything and the disc jockeys that play that into the system. A lot of young kids right now don't know anything about the people who paved the way. They don't know anything about Alton Ellis or U Roy - some of them don't even know anything about Shabba! These nowadays youth have been misled by disc jockeys and some of the artists that really focus on disposable songs and disposable lyrics. As I said before, most of them have a vibe but no substance or message is there so basically they just die and then young kids are listening for the next thing. They're not going back, researching to see who are The Chi Lites, who are the Abyssinians, who is Joseph Hill from

Culture, who is Burning Spear. They just listen to what's out today and when that song dies next week they listen for what picks up after that. I would say some of the artists are lust-ing after the hip hop that they see on the BET and VH1. But at the end of the day, reggae and dancehall, these things live.

What is needed to push it forward?

We just need the real promotion, and the support of the real disc jockeys and media houses to push it out there. As a matter of fact we need these things in schools locally. This is our culture and we should have classes about the people who paved the way for me and for people who are going to be there after me. It needs to be installed in the youth because they know nothing about it. Like I sing One More Night and Nightshift and a lot of people think I am the original singer of them! I myself, I just research and sit down looking at different stuff from way before me. A lot of people do that. Kanye West does that. He mostly samples vocals, different drum patterns and beats from way before him. He's one of those wide listeners. Puff Daddy also listens to things from way before his time. We have to. We can't real-

ly leave out the roots because this is what brings us up and is going to be the firm foundation for whatever we do in music.

I'm glad you mentioned those artists because I wanted to ask you about Snoop Dog's reggae album with Major Lazer. As you've been working with Major Lazer could there be a Busy combination on the new Snoop album?

(laughs) I'm not sure if we're going to have the Busy and the Snoop but I am sure that Major Lazer has produced this track with me and Gwen Stefani of No Doubt. No Doubt's album is supposed to be coming out in August and that's definitely a good thing. Major Lazer, these people are musical producers and these people listen and travel all over the world so they know all the different types of things people want to hear from far outside the box, not just local or stereotype stuff. I'm really looking forward to hearing that track we did for Gwen Stefani. I wrote that track - both her part and my part. It's definitely a good look, looking out to fuse different styles. Gwen Stefani she loves reggae music but she's also a big artist across the world pop-wise and in the alternative with No



Doubt so it's definitely a plus for me.

How many rhythms to you estimate you voice a year - both released and unreleased?

(laughs) Oh my God! I don't even keep count! Sometimes I do so many things I don't even remember my own songs. I was in London the other day voicing a couple of tracks for my friend Gappy Ranks of Hot Coffee Music and for Kaos and then I came back to Jamaica and Gappy mixed the track and sent it to me. I was like "Who is this? When did I do this?" and then he had to call me and remind me! So we do so many things I can't really keep track, but that's a good thing because working so much means there is a vast amount of experience I can put into everything. So it would be really hard to estimate how many times we went and voiced tracks on a rhythm in a period of time but if I had to put a number to it I know

that in March it was like 47!

I think that gives us a good idea of how many you do in a year, give or take!

(laughs) I just listen to a beat, put the earphones on and just say whatever comes out of my mind at the time. I don't literally take up a paper and pen and write. I just go, think about it and spit it right there when they press record. Everything is from mentally straight through the microphone to the record so I kind of bypass writing. I'm not saying writing is not good but my style works for me!

On your second album Loaded you collaborated with two artists - Michael Rose and Marcia Griffiths who have both been going for decades yet still make hits and stay relevant through the ages. Is that the kind of artist you want to be and will be in three decades time?

I definitely will be that kind of artist and I definitely want to be and NEED to be the kind of artist that is still relevant 50 decades from now, old and grey, still doing music, people still remembering and respecting the real work that I did and am still doing with substance. Even advanced in age I still want to be doing the real stuff. For music alone shall live as the Bible says. We just want to endorse the good stuff so music can be a whole lifeform for people. Because there's music for every situation. There is music for you to listen to whenever you are hungry, whenever you are feeling bored, down, happy, celebrating an anniversary, birthday or wedding, there is music to help you celebrate each aspect and each part of life. I want to be one of those people who represent all that music that people can relate to, from now on, endlessly, limitlessly, forever.

KAYLA BLISS

Interview by Marc Marino

"I feel honored to have worked with Fatis Burrell"

Kayla Bliss "The Love Rebel" from XTM.Nation (formerly Xterminator Productions) is about to drop her first EP on the world. Kayla started getting notice from the reggae world after her duet with Jesse Royal on I Need You last year. Kayla has a powerful voice with a great smile. XTM.Nation has allowed United Reggae to premier a video for their readers. The video is an acoustic version of Kayla's first single Tears of a Soldier. The acoustic video was shot in the 'chapel' at Anchor Studios and features guitarist Monty Savory.



What inspired you to pursue music as a career?

When I was growing up my father was a lead singer in a reggae band. I remember being in the studio with him and I realized that is what I wanted to do. I never developed a passion for anything else.

I know you are Brooklyn born but what are your ties to Jamaica?

Both of my parents are Jamaican. I was born in Jamaica and started school there. I moved to Brooklyn when I was 8.

How did you begin working with XTM.Nation?

My aunt did background vocals for Fatis. My mom was in JA on vacation and wanted me to come down to meet Fatis. He did not believe that I could write as fast as I did. We went to the studio one day and I voiced three songs. That was the beginning of my relationship with XTM.Nation.

What was it like working with Fatis Burrell as a young artist?

I think I didn't really know who it was I was working with until a couple months in. I started



doing research on Fatis. I was getting messages online and people came into the studio and said how lucky I was. For me it was like working with family. After my research I realized it was a big deal to work with Fatis. I feel honored to have worked with him.

You recently released “Tears of a Soldier”. What is the meaning of the song?

It's an unconventional type of love song. It's based on true life. You may think it's about an intimate love with someone who makes it hard to love them because they were hurt before. When I originally wrote the song I based it on my relationship with my dad. I just changed it to be a little more relatable and less personal. It's really about loving some-

one that is hard to love and being emotional about it.

I hear that your EP “Love Rebel” will soon be released. What can you share about it?

Love Rebel is different and fun. The concept is the idea that being a woman you can be emotional without being irrational. You can be sexy without being a skank. You can be soft without being weak.

After the EP drops what are your future plans?

My plan is to be on stage as often as I possibly can. For whomever I can be on stage for in any country, city or town as long as I get the opportunity to tell my story.





JAH SUN

Interview by Erik Magni

"Music can activate and expand your consciousness"

Californian singjay Jah Sun has recently dropped his third album. Like many other reggae musicians he was drawn to reggae thanks to Bob Marley, and has ever since his encounter with the man's music wholeheartedly embraced reggae. His own take on the genre is however fused with hip-hop and world music and filled with uplifting lyrics. United Reggae got a chat with an artist who was considered a hoodlum by his in-laws, but changed his way of life.



Reggae changed Jah Sun's life

Andrew McCommas, probably better known as Jah Sun, hails from Humboldt County in northern California. He made his first appearance on the reggae scene six years ago, and has since dropped three albums and one EP as well as contributing to several one riddim compilations. He has also performed on some of the biggest reggae festivals in the U.S. and Europe, including Rototom, Reggae Rising and Uppsala Reggae Festival.

His debut album, titled 'Height of Light' and released in 2006, featured top Jamaican performers such as Luciano, Junior Reid and Lutan Fyah.

"I really did put a lot of intention into Height of Light. However, I was just learning and I was very green. It was the beginning of my transition from a hip-hop MC to a singer/chanter. That is why you hear more hip-hop tracks on that album," explains Jah Sun.

Not a straight road

But the road to his music career was not particularly straight, and he had been in trouble many times as a teenager, something that led to being in and out of boy's homes and jail. But thanks to an encounter with Bob Marley's music Jah Sun changed his ways, turned

to reggae and changed his lifestyle, growing dreadlocks and becoming a vegetarian.

When listening to his music and lyrics it's hard to imagine a former street thug. Today his lyrics are about romancing, spirituality and equality. Sharing his thoughts about the world through music rather than violence.

"Music is a very powerful and mystical force. It speaks to people on a much deeper level than conversation. It really reaches the soul. I feel we are all divine children with a great purpose. But due to the lack of love in our society, many of us seldom reach our true potential and most end up living their lives disconnected from themselves and in dysfunction and depression," believes Jah Sun, and continues:

"Music can heal that. Music can activate and expand your consciousness. It was music from Bob Marley, Fela Kuti, KRS ONE and many, many more that put me on my path," he explains, and gets personal:

"When a person can transition from pain and suffering, to a place where they can feel love for themselves and others, that is the greatest thing. This is why I make music."

New album sets the bar

His path so far has led to his third album 'Battle the Dragon' recorded together with a broad

variety of producers based in Europe and the U.S.

"Battle the Dragon to me has all of the qualities of my first album – message, concept, intention, but also nice melodies, beautiful harmonies, good phrasing, clever song writing and good collaborations," he explains, and continues:

"I mean, I really put a lot of thought into every aspect of the album – from the songs and the mixing to the mastering and even the packaging. Everything had to be the best that I could do. I'm very proud of this album and I feel it is my best work. The most exciting part is that I feel it sets the bar for all future works."

Jah Sun describes 'Battle the Dragon' as up-tempo modern roots with a couple of radio friendly gal tunes.

"All in all it is full of vibes and I think any reggae fan, or fan of good music, regardless of genre, will enjoy this album. Also, the special guests that I chose for the album really give the project that 'wow' factor and mix it up, so the listeners get a musical treat," he says.

Fond of European producers

Like his previous albums, 'Battle the Dragon' includes European producers as well as several combinations.

"I really like what the European producers are putting out right



now. I consider myself more of a singjay or chanter, than a 'classic' singer. So a lot of the riddims I hear from Europe seem to fit my style nicely," he explains, and adds:

"Collaborations have always been a great experience for the listener because it often fuses two different styles; usually a deejay with a singer. There is something really nice about

two artists that are great on their own, joining together, because the song becomes even more powerful."

A win-win situation

Combinations also have other aspects, such as when an established artist teams up with an aspiring talent to help his or her career. But, Jah Sun has other benefits with combinations in

mind.

"Combinations are also great because it gives each artist the chance to tap into the others fan base and get more exposure. But mostly I choose to do collaborations to make my albums more interesting. Personally, I think the fans appreciate it and I get great joy working with other artists as well. So it is a win-win situation," he concludes.

TARRUS RILEY

Interview by Angus Taylor

Photos by Franck Blanquin

Tarrus Riley has made the transition from “next big thing” in reggae music to “consistently big thing” with relative ease. The son of Uniques, Sensations and solo reggae veteran Jimmy Riley, the Rastafarian star has brought his powerful but distinct tenor voice to a wealth of original material such as his lovers smash *She’s Royal* (2006) and the African consciousness of *Shaka Zulu Pickney* (2011) as well as covers of John Legend and Robin Thicke. His fourth album, *‘Mecoustic’*, is a collection of unplugged renditions of songs from his previous three albums *‘Challenges’*, *‘Parables’* and *‘Contagious’*, devised with and recorded with his BLAKSOIL band (Bredren Living According King Selassie-I Overstanding & Iritical Livity) under the watchful eye of hornsman producer Dean Fraser. Angus Taylor spoke to Tarrus for the third time about his new record, his love of nurturing other artists, and why London is the place for him...

“Sometimes a good song gets hidden by the plentiful instrumentation and electric devices”

How did Dean and yourself decide to make an acoustic album and how did the project come to fruition?

We decided to make the album last year while we were on the tour bus, thinking about giving people some of the special, personal Tarrus Riley songs that they never probably got on singles. Songs with strong lyrics, real wholesome songs. It was Mr Fraser’s idea to do it acoustic, I liked it and we started recording. It took about six months to record.

A lot of acoustic albums are just a voice and guitar but you and Dean have put a lot more into it than that.

Yes! For there is more to acoustic than just a voice and a guitar. Remember, acoustic is not electric so you have a whole heap of instruments you can use on an acoustic album and that’s what you get on this album right here. So it’s just like you said: “A lot more than just a voice and guitar” - and I’ve done that already on *Parables* with *My Baby* (Cyaan Sleep) where it was just my baby, a voice and guitar! So it wasn’t just that, it was much more

than that.

Then again, in your recent video for *If It’s Jah Will* it shows these songs can work very well with just a voice and guitar. Tell me about how and where that was shot.

Yeah! That was on the set of the video for my song *Come Over!* I was there with my guitar giving them a little sneak preview of how the acoustic album was going to sound and we just recorded *If It’s Jah Will* right there in Times Square. We were in New York for the Reggae Rhythm n Blues concert with Babyface and all them when we decided to shoot a video same time. But then at the same time I was playing the guitar and giving them *If It’s Jah Will* so we just put it on YouTube to let people see what happens behind the scenes.

In that video it shows you meeting your fans and doing some exercise. How important are those two things to you?

(big laugh) Well I’m the biggest fan of my fans! I really am. The fans make the music go on. They come to the concert and buy the records. The

fans are family. Fans make Tarrus Riley. Fans make Omar Riley into Tarrus Riley. And exercise? We have to exercise to do music. Music is something that will definitely take a toll on your system so you have to exercise your mind and your body. And you see that on the video! Me on the treadmill and everything! I was not modelling - I really had to do that! (laughs)

As well as new material and hits from *Parables* and *Contagious* you’ve given a lot of songs from your first album *Challenges* a new platform on this album. You start off with the first track from that album, *Larger Than Life*.

Yes, definitely. Because when I did my first album I was a new youth on the scene with new music, a new sound, new rhythms, everything. So now that Tarrus Riley has been getting more attention we want to revisit these songs. They’re very special songs and I definitely want people to get a chance to hear them. And you have new material like *Paradise*, *Whispers*, you have nice brand new music on there also.

You sing with your father, not for the first time, but this time you sing one of his songs Black Mother Prays.

That’s also a new thing for our generation. That’s a very big song for him, and his generation knows about that more. Black Mother Prays is definitely a big Jimmy Riley classic along with Love and Devotion and the rest. So I really wanted the youth in my time to hear that song.

Another collaboration on the album is with the dub poet Cherry Natural where she adds some extra exposition to the song System Set about the Willie Lynch syndrome. Were you there in the studio with her? In our last interview you talked about how the slave owner Willie Lynch is not a person but an order, a mind-set, so people who doubt the veracity of the Willie Lynch document are missing the point.

Cherry Natural is someone Dean linked up with in the studio but we’re not strangers. We’re all a part of the musical community in that sense. But in the studio she and Dean linked up and she did the song a whole heap

of justice. Willie Lynch is the system. I don’t know if there’s such a face. I can’t tell you if it’s a person but I know that the Willie Lynch syndrome is a syndrome like you have other syndromes. They use your differences to fight against. That’s how he works: he doesn’t use your differences to make you stand out and be special and who you are. He uses your differences against you. So because you come from there and I come from here, or we walk different or we look different or we speak different, he tries to bring in a greater or a lesser value. That’s how the system works inside and out. That’s how the system works and how you see it. People prejudiced and ridiculing each other because of difference.

Let’s talk about some tracks you’ve been doing with other people. You were vibing in the studio with your old tourmate I-Octane for the very uplifting song All We Need Is Love on his new album.

That was all courtesy of Robert Livingstone. He brought me to the studio and he wanted me on Octane’s CD. As you know the first time

Octane was on tour in Europe he was with us and we wish Octane all the best in what he’s doing. All We Need Is Love is what the song is saying and it’s true that all we need is love. We support Octane music and Konshens music and a lot of the new youths rising like C-Sharp and Protoje. We need more of them on the road so when we’re touring we tour it up nice! And you see Jamaican music is bright just like how you see R&B with all the Ushers and the Chris Brown’s and all of them. We have a whole heap of youth doing good music.

I was just going to mention Konshens as both you and your brother Wrath guested on the remix of his Rasta Impostor on his new album too.

(laughs) You know about my brother too? Both him and Konshens went to Excelsior and they are friends. They play football together because Konshens is a good footballer and enough people don’t know about that! My brother plays football and he deejays in his spare time and because I was on the album Konshens said “Yow, bring your bredda and



mek him give me a verse!” So it was all fun and we’ll see how far it goes.

Both I-Octane and Konshens have talked about the guidance you give to newer artists. Konshens said being in the studio with you is like being in a school class where you have fun.

Well that’s a big compliment and I really respect Konshens with that talk there! Konshens is crazy and we always have good fun in the studio!

It’s funny because we do this without even trying to do it when the man them like Octane call me their big brother! I’m not even approaching it like that. I’m not even trying anything - I’m just being myself! So it’s good when the energy is up and it’s good, like we say, that we really expect great things from the youth. Trust me. Because I can’t do it by myself and I really want great things to happen to those youths to show you how powerful reggae music and Jamaican mu-

sic is!
As a deejay when you started out you must have no problem helping both deejays and singers with their technique. Honestly, that is my first music influences like Shabba Ranks, Bounty, Buju, that whole music. It was just the love of music and wanting to do music long term that led me into singing as well as encouragement from people like Mr Fraser and my brethren Gibby Morrison. I used to tell my brethrens

at the time “If you’re doing music I want to go for the long run” so they’d tell me “You need to sing” and I’d say “I can’t sing!” I recorded a song for Danny Browne and I was singing “SCREW FACE LEFT FROM BOUT YAH” and he stopped the tape and started laughing! I said “W’happen?” and he said “Haha you think you’re a deejay!” I said “Wha? I’m a deejay!” and he said “You’re wasting your voice man!” But he still recorded me and he still put out the song. So now I can sing, I can deejay, I can rap, I can play a little instrument, I’m on a roll! (laughs)

You’re a big fan of the singer Amy Winehouse. Did you ever get to meet her?

No, I didn’t and that was a big big bad bad bad thing. I wish I met her and I would love her to rest in peace. I am a big fan of Amy Winehouse for real - that is true!

You have lots of European tour dates lined up. Will you and the band be playing acoustic, electric, both?

Well the way I play it is, the tour was around before the album was around! So now

the tour and album work together because now we are on tour promoting the album. We’ve been in France for almost a week now doing acoustic sessions and they’ve been real good so that’s probably the whole of the acoustic part! But you’re still going to get the songs and it’s good because we play every kind of music - reggae, rocksteady, nyabingi, dancehall, the different diversity of the music and that’s what the show is all about. Where are you from?

London.

London! My place! I like to come to London. Mr Fraser is just telling me that the 4th August is his birthday and we will be going to England. And listen, let me tell you, I have a special love for London trust me! I come to London and all of a sudden I am an Englishman! (laughs) Every time I come to England it is a big deal. The last time I was there with Beres Hammond, trust me, I had the best time of my life! And I am working on a project right now that London is going to love! We are working on some music right now that London is going to just eat

up! You are going to love it.

All the while you have been making this acoustic album you have been stacking up tunes in the dancehall. Will these be collected on your next electric album?

(big laugh) Nah man! No dancehall album! I know you all love them but listen! That is just another part of me that I had to express and we give thanks that everybody love it. It’s nice because it makes the concert nice and it shows you the diversity of me. But I am Tarrus Riley and I have to surprise you. The minute I stop surprising you we have a problem! I have to keep you all on your toes so just as you think I’m doing it this way, I just switch it on you the next way. But one thing we don’t switch is the message. Even though the beat might change we are still telling you to love yourself, love your culture, self esteem. It’s all about BLAKSOIL and what BLAKSOIL represents - unity and gathering so you don’t have to worry!



Ital Horns Meets Bush Chemists History, Mystery, Destiny...

Ital Horns and esteemed colleagues hit top notch.

Review by Gerard McMahon

On receipt of this album for review I inquired from the musicians if there were any sleeve notes I might consult for reference purposes. This prompted a bemused and rather naive response that they ‘thought the music would speak for itself’. Proceeding perplexed, I spun the disc and was pleasantly surprised to find that in this gem of a collection, ‘the music’ does indeed ‘speak for itself’! Recorded and mixed by the Bush Chemists’ Chazbo at Conscious Sounds, the compilation avoids the monotonous drone effect sometimes associated with brass-dominated reggae albums. Of course one would expect no less from the Ital Horns (comprised of Zion Train’s brass section David Fullwood on trumpet and Richard Doswell on sax and flute, with the experienced ex-Army man Hughie Izachaar doing the strumming). The Horns are accompanied by the high profile trombonist Rico Rodriguez (M.B.E.), on a selection of the album’s tracks.

Comprised of 19 high quality tracks, each enlivening tune is hastily followed by its haunting dub version. The opening Mas Que Nada track sets the scene and would defy even the crankiest cripple to stay seated. Rico kicks in on the first of his three track contribution with Rico’s Blessing - a track that gallops along with soaring, slipping and even sometimes seemingly somersaulting brass riffs, taking some mesmerising twists and turns on the back of a steady ska beat. Ital Return then involuntarily transports one to other continents, as it brings a range of musical influences to bear in an eventful funfair type ride. Quiet Trust (featuring Sai) hots up the pace in a manner that only a brass section can bring to reggae, before Sound from Shinjuku does a ‘smash and grab’ job, as it reminds us of the prevalence of Jah Rastafari. Prince Iquela guests on the album’s title track History, Mystery, Destiny... where techno meets the reggae rhythm, before the distinctly Burning Spear (Jah Is My Driver) brass

influence launches us into the spongy quagmire that is the Temple of Fire. This prefaces what might be considered the album’s most experimental track, as a host of sounds converge in Code of Conduct (with Culture Freeman) almost creating the sense that one is treading through unknown jungle terrain, with all its dangers and delights. This trek is fittingly followed by the orientally influenced Sun Rising, before the collection closes with the Spirit Of Mountain bonus track - introduced with waterfall and nyabinghi drumming effects and succeeded by some seriously understated and pleasant melodica playing - courtesy of the irrepressible Chazbo.

All round, this is a job very well done by the Ital Horns and their ‘partners-in-crime’ the Bush Chemists and Rico. But when will this trance inducing combo take to the stage and give us some serious horns ‘live and direct’? As the connoisseurs tell us, live reggae with horns is in a different league to live reggae without. Bring it on please.



Clinton Fearon Heart and Soul

After the triumph of Mi Deh Yah this is a nice change of pace.

Review by Angus Taylor

Woody-voiced ex-Gladiator Clinton Fearon’s superb 2010 album ‘Mi Deh Yah’ (I’m here) was a high point in his solo career and told us unflinchingly what makes him tick. It would have been hard to follow such a definitive statement about his present so now the Seattle-based veteran has turned back to the past with an acoustic set of songs he wrote while in the Gladiators.

Unlike his 2005 unplugged longplayer, the aptly titled ‘Me An Mi Guitar’, ‘Heart and Soul’ utilises fulsome acoustic arrangements (all played by Fearon himself) involving guitar, percussion and a Taylor bass - whose big resonating chamber gives a deep boom that recalls the rhumba box of the mento era. In a way, this entire record is reminiscent of the final mento fusion recordings of the late Stanley Beckford, creating a more organic sound in Jamaican music than is usually possible. Clin-

ton’s engineer of choice Mel Detmer, who has been with him on an unbroken string of top notch grown up roots albums since 2004’s ‘Give and Take’, remains at the controls.

Fearon’s songwriting style values plain speaking rather than the proverbial words of his erstwhile colleague Albert Grifiths. The vocals are very clear against this backdrop and his messages and melodies have ample room to breathe.

The most well known song is the great Gladiators anthem Chatty Chatty Mouth: written about the politician Dudley Thompson, featuring a call and response between guitars and percussion that Fearon says he learned under Lee Scratch Perry. But the majority are compositions beloved of hardcore Gladiators fans such as Marvel Not from second Virgin album ‘Proverbial Reggae’ and Follow The Rainbow from another later, Prince Tony produced LP, 1982’s ‘Babylon Street’. Its lyrics could almost

be viewed as a prediction of Clinton’s decision to follow his own path to Seattle, where the sun shines through the rain.

This is a far less immediate album than ‘Mi Deh Yah’, but that is no bad thing. These songs, recast in an even more bucolic form than we expect from the rural-reggae master, take root in the mind like a slow growing, strong-willed tree.



Various Artists

149 Records #1

Only finalists on 149 Records' compilation.

Review by Erik Magni

French label and production house 149 Records deserves wide attention. Their riddims Datta, Speaker and Brighter Day have all left me stunned. The label's first compilation titled '#1' compiles 20, of which twelve are previously unreleased, modern roots scorchers from both well-known and upcoming singers

and deejays. The melodic one drop riddims are skillfully executed by the BabycloneBand. Apart from the three riddims mentioned above five others are also included. All of the same high quality. It's rare to find a compilation where almost every track is a winner, but this is actually the case with this album. Trinibagoan singer and deejay Queen Omega impresses as usual. Same goes for Ras Mac



Bean, Juleen, Mark Wonder and Carl Meeks with his particularly delicious Jah is Alive on the Speaker riddim. The only disappointment is French singer Ti Rat with his Never Let Us Down. Not a bad tune at all, but it should have been sung in his native language instead of English. '#1' is a fitting title on this compilation, and I hope more people discover this small French label making big music.

Sizzla

Sizzla in Gambia

Yet another decent album from Sizzla.

Review by Erik Magni

Sizzla is back with his second album in just one month. February saw the release of the Caveman produced set 'The Chant', and now it's time for 'Sizzla in Gambia', mostly recorded in the African country during a visit in 2008, with post-production in Jamaica by DJ Karim of Stainless Music. Since 2009 Sizzla has dropped five albums. Three of these – 'Crucial Times', 'The Chant' and 'Ghetto Youth-Ology' – have been produced

by people said to have worked the deejay since the beginning, and marketed with a back to the roots type of campaign. And 'Sizzla in Gambia' differs from these sets – not only by its more contemporary producer – by being more dancehall-driven, even though hip-hop influences are also apparent. There's only one straight one drop – the previously released Blackman Rise. The other eleven songs are previously unreleased. 'Sizzla in Gambia' is far from solid, but contains a healthy dose of catchy



melodies and conscious and spiritual lyrics. The uplifting, yet frenetic, African chant Welcome to Africa opens the album and is later followed by the acoustic, yet furious, Make a Visit, which hits you like a punk rock song, while Where Is the Love is almost Barry White-like in its tone and mood. It's been a while since Sizzla dropped a real gem, but this album is together with last year's 'The Scriptures' his most cohesive set in years.

Various Artists

The Bristol Reggae Explosion 3: The 80s Part 2

The finest explosion in Bristol yet.

Review by Erik Magni

In early 2011 I didn't know much about the reggae scene in Bristol, a city in south west England with about a million residents. But thanks to the compilations 'Bristol Reggae Explosion' 1 & 2 from Bristol Archive Records I've been enlightened about the city's musical reggae heritage with bands such as Black Roots and Cool Runnings. The third edition in the series is titled 'Bristol Reggae Explosion 3 – The 80's Part 2' and digs deep in 80's Bristol, even though a lone track from 1979 has been included. It collects 15 tunes, of which no less than

eleven are previously unreleased, from a variety of mainly obscure singers and bands. This set leans more towards roots reggae compared to the previous compilations, and the opening track Jah Praises from Revelation Rockers – who later changed their name to Talisman – sets the standard and mood. Talisman is also represented with the less roots oriented Takin' the Strain and Lick & Run. If you have heard the previous editions you might recognize some of the names on the album. Bunny Marrett, Joshua Moses, Alfred McIntosh and Ron Green are some of the artists that happily enough



turn up once again. Two of the strongest cuts are however from Zion Band – later Restriction – with the relentless roots scorcher Babylon Fire/Babylon Dub, taken from a scarce vinyl release, and Popsy Curious' apocalyptic Chant Down Bobby Rome. Even though part of the title indicates an 80's vibe with lush synthesizers and bombastic syndrums, it's far from the truth. 'Bristol Reggae Explosion 3' provides an overview of the many reggae styles found in Bristol, but with a rootsy edge.

Documentary

Man Free

Man Free explores the Jamaican mentality.

Review by Erik Magni

There are few countries in the world, known throughout all hemispheres, with only three million residents.

Jamaica is one such country. The global knowledge of this tiny island is mainly due to extraordinary achievements in sports and music, with dominant figures being Bob Marley and Usain Bolt. But Jamaica is also known for drugs, political corruption and crime.

But what drives the men and women behind the media light and headlines? And is there a particular Jamaican mentality? These are two questions U.S. director and writer Kinsey Beck is trying to answer in his documentary 'Man Free'.

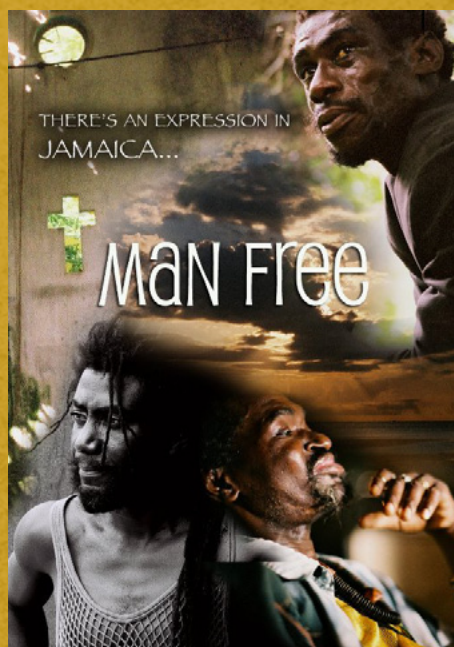
Meet a former taxi driver, a young female entrepreneur

running her own bakery and two brothers making their living as artists as well as a man struggling with cocaine addiction wishing he had more power to fight it. Legendary Jamaican film maker and director Perry Henzell is also featured throughout setting a narrative to the story.

'ManFree' paints a picture of the ordinary Jamaican struggling to make his and hers day to day living. It's picture full of ambitions and industriousness as well as hospitality and caring.

It's an interesting glance into everyday life and its challenges and opportunities. But 'Man Free' would have gained from having a harder angle, for instance by diving deeper into the life of one or two people.

The title is a Jamaican expression for somebody that does

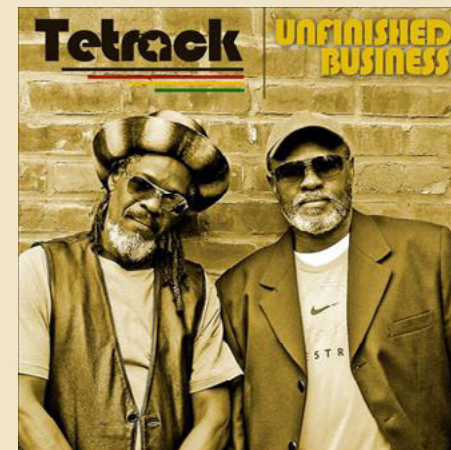


something you don't particularly approve of, and the Jamaican just say "man free". This expression sums it up pretty well – to get somewhere, you can't always ask for permission, you have to take the chances you get, whether some people like it or not.

Tetrack

Unfinished Business

A well penned, beautifully sung return which deserves to find an audience.



Review by Angus Taylor

February 14th is traditionally the time for a string of releases at the more slushy end of reggae. But this year Valentine's Day saw the long-awaited download issue of this tough roots and lovers recording by the harmony group Tetrack, reunited after over a quarter of a century. The title refers in part to the equivalent age of some of the songs.

Tetrack was originally Carlton Hines, Dave Harvey and Paul Mangaroo. They formed in the early 1970s, catching the ear of producer and instrumentalist Augustus Pablo, for whom they cut the strong singles I'm Not Satisfied (1975) and Let's Get Started (1977). The latter became the title-piece of their first album for Pablo in 1980, followed by a second for Gussie Clarke before the outfit called it a day towards the end of the digital decade.

The revived line up initially

featured Hines, Harvey and new recruit Norris Reid of the Viceroy's - but Harvey left prior to the start of the project. The regrouping came to the attention of another master producer (and colleague of Pablo's) Clive Chin who helped arrange download distribution from VP.

The harmonies between Carlton and Norris are sublime. Hines' cherubic voice has matured to almost Bim Shermanesque level of portent and mystery while Reid is his perfect foil. As you'd expect from the man who wrote for Gregory Isaacs, Hine's songcraft is faultless: there are no off the cuff improvisations or couplets thrown together under studio time pressure. Deep cultural topics like Dem Can't Get You Out (atop the Declaration of Rights rhythm) rub shoulders with rootsy lovers material such I Need You (on a bouncy semi-relick of Unchained).

Purist fans of the group's 70s heyday may struggle with the

computerized drums to these otherwise instrument-based tracks - particularly due to the inclusion of the fully organic Same Speed which sticks out from with the rest. Hines had hoped to record everything this way but budgetary considerations came to bear. Yet it would be a shame to dismiss these recordings on these grounds - for this is quality digitally driven reggae as epitomised by the productions of Clarke, with whom Hines worked as an artist and songwriter during the 80s. Last year's single Dread Out Deh is actually a reworked song from Clarke's archives, while two further songs Nah Give Up and Shirley are unreleased Pablo collaborations. The remainder have a similar well-crafted sound, with Hines' engineer brother Jimi bringing the best out of the kickdrums and synth-toms. This is a well penned, beautifully sung return which deserves to find an audience so a completely live album can follow.

Various Artists Compilation

Jah Golden Throne

Jah Golden Throne is a cohesive and soulful journey.



Review by Erik Magni

U.S. production trio Zion I Kings – David Goldfine from Zion High Productions, Alfred Laurent from I Grade and Andrew Bain from Lustre Kings – have over the past two years delivered several accomplished sets from Jahdan Blakkamoore, Perfect and former soul singer Toussaint.

And now comes a compilation with 16 tunes signed and delivered by these extremely talented and passionate producers.

‘Jah Golden Throne’ features original and contemporary roots riddims voiced by old and new artists from across the reggae spectrum and from around the world. It’s a set with a rich, full-bodied and rootsy sound set to stimulate heart, mind and soul.

All tunes are recorded with live instrumentation with particularly tasteful horn arrangements and a laid-back soulful vibe, especially Toussaint’s Crown I Got with its powerful harmonies or UK veteran Lloyd Brown’s Just So That You Know, a tune perfectly suited for a hammock on the beach.

On multi-faceted singer Jahdan Blakkamoore’s World Needs Love it gets more progressive and up-tempo, while still with a gentle tone.

Other notable tracks include Puerto Rican singer Chet Samuel’s Empress Omega, the Tippa Irie and Lloyd Brown combination Make it Work with its rolling bass line, Jah Bless’ beautiful saxophone instrumental Highway To Zion or raspy voiced singer General Jah Mikey’s Set A Way.

The weakest track is surprisingly the U Roy and Cornell Campbell combination Babylon Yuh Wrong, their first ever studio recording, and the only tune that has been previously released.

Compilations are usually not as cohesive and solid as ‘Jah Golden Throne’, which makes this is a highly impressive album from a trio that obviously knows how to work as a team.

Ras Daniel Ray and Tu Shung Peng

Ray Of Light

A traditional roots reggae album from Ras Daniel Ray.



Review by Erik Magni

Jamaican singer Ras Daniel Ray – since a decade expatriate in France – met up with French reggae band Tu Shung Peng in the late 90’s and a close creative collaboration started and resulted in him voicing a bunch of tunes on their albums ‘Around Tu Shung Peng’ and ‘Trouble Time’.

But this wasn’t Ras Daniel Ray’s first recordings. As a teenager he performed for three Jamaican sound systems. Starting with Echo Tone Night Rider and then moving on to work with Kil-lamanjaro and Jahlovemusik. In 1993 his debut singles Bubbling Pot and Jamaica Nice was put out produced by veteran Harry J. These recordings were followed by singles for Mafia & Fluxy and Reggae On Top.

His debut album ‘Ray of Light’

is however recorded together with Tu Shung Peng and contains 13 fresh tunes in the traditional roots reggae vein. Jazz and soul inspired live instrumentation, organic mixing and tasty horns arrangements are some of the main ingredients.

You can trace a hint of reggae legends Dennis Brown and Garnett Silk in Ras Daniel Ray’s tone. But his voice isn’t as powerful and sounds a bit thin at times. Lyrically he also lies close to conscious reggae singers – spirituality, equality, love and repatriation are themes Ras Daniel Ray sounds comfortable with.

Highlights include the pleasantly skanking Deliver Us, the soulful Same Dream and Lesson the Ants, especially the dub breakdown towards the end of the song. Also don’t miss out on the hidden dub version of Trust

in Jah with its echo laid melodica floating in and out the mix.

‘Ray of Light’ is a well-crafted roots album that probably appeals to fans of classic reggae music.

Peter Spence

I'll Fly Away

Whether you love God or just good music, this is a real treat.

Review by Angus Taylor

Gospel, as well as being the sound track of enthusiastic Christianity, is a real music lovers music. It has a strong connection with reggae: being popular in Jamaica, one of the most churchical countries for its size in the world. But it also touches both soul and country - making a mockery of the heavily segregated recording industry of today where liking all four genres can be viewed as radical rather than a common sense move.

The Birmingham lovers rock singer Peter Spence (in what could be seen as reversal of the church-to-secular path of US singers like Marvin Gaye, Sam Cooke and R Kelly) has decided to put out this Godly album featuring compiled tracks from a variety of producers. It's overseen by executive producer Clive Dunkley of Gospel In The City Produc-

tions - and if you appreciate both styles it's a real treat.

Source material includes the Bible itself (for a Peter Hurnigale produced The Lord's Prayer); the poet John Paul Moore's Drinking For My Saucer (for James Crosdale of Yllavation Productions) and Amazing Grace helmed by Kemar Flava McGregor (and written by the slavery abolitionist John Newton). There are also two covers of troubled US gospel singer Donnie McClurkin - Great Is Your Mercy and Only You Are Holy. The Peckings rhythmmed title track is one of the most recorded sacred songs in history: written by Albert E Brumley in 1929 and voiced by old-time country and blue grass artists like the Chuck Wagon Gang, James and Martha Carson, and Alison Kraus (showing that in gospel there is no "black" or "white" music - only God's). Spence's voice, similar in range



yet slightly rougher than angelic colleague Lloyd Brown's, takes full ownership of every song. He even writes some fine cuts of his own - such as the acoustic guitar and (somewhat oddly) autotuned He's Come.

It would be nice to hear Peter cut a second gospel set with the more organic vintage rhythms of Peckings (their cover of Border, over Duke Reid and the Melodians I Will Get Along Without You sets the standard for their work). Also, the otherwise wonderful Give God Praises sounds like a very compressed mp3 even on CD. But this is a compilation rather than a straight album (and an unusual and welcome project in these uncertain times). Whether you love God or just good music, you will be forgiven for thinking somebody up there likes us very much.

Busy Signal

Reggae Music Again

Everything modern reggae can be today.

Review by Angus Taylor

Busy Signal's albums 'Step Out' (2006), 'Loaded' (2008) and 'D.O.B' (2010) have seen the deejay-turned-autotune-crooner strike out beyond hard dancehall with increasing diversity. We've heard Busy turn Latin, go country and warble late night love, so one drop and other roots reggae was never going to be a stretch. His trumpeted 2012 throwback release 'Reggae Music Again' has rarely been out of the news since it was announced back in 2011. Several tracks were leaked and the promo championed by David Rodigan MBE, whose criticisms of recent Jamaican dancehall have caused much discussion. Whatever you think of Rodigan's appraisal of the music in general, his golden ears have served him well here. The album is mixed by Busy's manager Shane Brown

and his father Errol Brown (engineer of Treasure Isle and then Tuff Gong). Another key player is drummer Kirk Bennett, a possible latter-day Sly, who co-writes some of the rhythms. He is joined by various members of C-Sharp who are very much the cream collective in Jamaica. Even when chatting reverberated backings Busy remains earthy and frank. Open-er Run Weh, sounding free of pitch correction, warns that the wicked will have "the skin stripped from them face" by Jah (he doesn't invoke Selassie). Fiendishly catchy single Come Over (Missing You) and the moody minor key Royal Night (featuring a lovely Chinna/Al Anderson style solo from Lamont Savory) are clean but leave little to the imagination. Most fascinating is the dubby, Barry Brown sampling Kingston Town, which seems to



actively recast Alborosie's reality anthem of the same name, changing the perspective to that of an island resident from birth. 80s inspired combination 119 features a rather raspy veteran hype-man Joe Lickshot and an unchanged Anthony Redrose. But it's not all about looking back - Fire Ball synthesizes rapid fire deejay delivery with dub, whilst the R&B flavoured Running From The Law pairs Busy with another byword for class in Jamaica, Romain Virgo, who has his own longplayer ready to drop.

Rod Taylor, Bob Wasa and Positive Roots Band

Original Roots

Original roots is the best kind of music.

Review by Erik Magni

In the last couple of months several French backing bands and production teams have hooked up with Jamaican singers to release albums. Derajah and Ras Daniel Ray teamed up with The Donkey Jaw Bone and Tu Shung Peng for their debut albums 'Paris is Burning' and 'Ray of Light'.

The latest vocalist teaming up with a French band is the culturally themed Rod Taylor. His 'Original Roots' is recorded together with Positive Roots Band and their singer Bob Wasa.

Rod Taylor started his career in the mid 70's with Greenwich Farm-based producer Bertram Brown, with whom he cut the rough and tough singles Ethiopian Kings and In the Right Way.

His talent was soon recognized and he began recording together with Mikey Dread, Linval Thompson, Prince Jammer and Henry "Junjo" Lawes. Fast forward 20 years and his album 'Shining Bright' for UK label Jah Warrior. And since the early 2000's Rod Taylor has been recording for various producers as well as being the object of two excellent compilations with hard to find material.

'Original Roots' collects 14 cuts, seven sung by Rod Taylor and seven with lead vocals from Bob Wasa. Both singers vocal style suits the one drop backing well with the mood often set by a delicious keyboard loop. Rod Taylor's playful style rides the riddims perfectly, while Bob Wasa's more laid-back deeper voice gives his cuts a darker tone.

Lyrically this album leans strong towards culturally conscious roots dealing with justice, inequality and the state of the world today.

'Original Roots' is a strong set of hard roots reggae and one of the best albums so far this year.



Various Artists

Cos I'm Black riddim

A backing that makes it very hard to deliver a bad song.

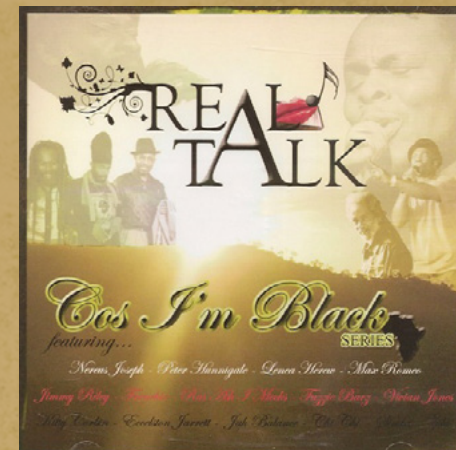
Review by Angus Taylor

Rhythm albums are a bone of contention among reggae aficionados. Depending on who you speak to their rise or decline represents everything that was or is good or bad about the industry. At worst they can be dull repetitive affairs. But with the right rhythm like this thumping relic of Ken Boothe's cover of Syl Johnson's Is It Because I'm Black, produced by female duo Diane White and Caroline Williams AKA Real Talk Productions they can hit the spot.

The first track by British St Lucian roots and lovers 'fine wine' Nereus Joseph (who also co-produces and engineers) is the original vocal revisited in a way that does neither Ken nor Syl injustice. He's joined

by fellow veteran singers Peter Hunnigale (for a lovely Curtis Mayfield period throwback with Do We Believe), Max Romeo (with the somewhat improvised-sounding Another Day) and Vivian Jones (for the cleverly-conceived state-of-the-industry do-over of Johnson's words Black Thing). However, deejays such as the pairing of Eccleston Jarrett with Jah Balance, and younger names like melismatic singer Lenea Herew, also contribute to a backing that makes it very hard to deliver a bad song.

Recorded with Nereus on drums and keys, White on bass, plus Gideon Family's Jerry Lyons on guitar, welcome trumpet from Barbara Snow and mixed by Ruff Cutt's Bubblers, this is a UK rhythm album that slipped under the ra-



dar but should be being heard.

The promo has very slight distortion on some of the harmonies and a couple of clicks when skipping between tracks. But a few rough edges never did the era this music captures any harm.

Tarrus Riley

Mecoustic

Tarrus' voice and writing are given ample room to breathe.

Review by Angus Taylor

Tarrus Riley's 2009 third album 'Contagious' was a sprawling, ambitious work that catered to all comers - from smooth pop balladry to hard dancehall. It was also something of a departure from the self contained unity of his well-received second longplayer 'Parables'. For their fourth outing together Riley and his musical sven-gali Dean Fraser have dialled everything back down a notch with this unplugged collection of cuts from the prior three records, plus new compositions, played on by Fraser, Riley and his BLAK SOIL band. 'Mecoustic' is being released in Europe first, as if to test such a non sound system targeted approach, before coming out in the US and Caribbean in June.

This is no rough edged "voice and guitar" jam however. Tarrus and Dean have put a lot of love into these gentle arrangements - with piano often tak-

ing the lead, and horns, choral harmonies and tree percussion strategically layered as garnish. Some of Tarrus and Dean's past work, particularly on 'Contagious', was so heavily produced and hook driven that it could feel overblown. More lavish than your average acoustic set, but more subtle than their usual methods, on 'Mecoustic' Tarrus' voice and writing are given ample room to breathe.

A major source is Tarrus' debut CD 'Challenges' (Larger Than Life, an ironically gospel based anti Western Christianity rebuke Marcus Garvey) giving tracks that may have been overlooked a different, less commercial flavour. Likewise there are great re-castings of highlights from his second and third efforts (She's Royal's impact is undiminished amid military drums and sweeping strings, while the messages of I Sight and System Set - with added exposition on the "Willie Lynch Syndrome"

from the dub poet Cherry Natural - are scaled back yet hit their emotional cues). But we also find covers (Tarrus and his father Jimmy reunited for the latter's hit Black Mother Prayed) and fresh material, in the form of the Beverley's era reggae of Paradise (stretching the definition of acoustic a little, but never mind!)

'Mecoustic' has been far less hyped in its build up than Busy Signal's 'Reggae Music Again', but if anything it has just as much chance of being a game changer in Jamaican reggae. Dean Fraser said he devised the concept of an acoustic record to appeal to the casual listener (rather than the "hardcore reggae" fan). While it's not sound system fare, in fact this album could also do the opposite: its classic Bill Withers/Stevie Wonder feel offering sticklers for harder, less poppy roots an opportunity to rediscover how wonderful these songs are.



Joshua To Jashwha

30 Years In The Wilderness

An album that will hopefully go a long way towards rightly establishing Joshua's reputation internationally.

Review by Karl Pearson

Joshua Moses is another one of those Bristol based reggae artists that had he been recording in Kingston rather than Bristol would probably have gone on to become an international star whose music would have been avidly collected and lauded with praise. Now those good people at Bristol Archive Records have gathered together 15 tracks by this devout Rastafarian recorded between 1978 and 2003 that will hopefully go a long way towards rightly establishing Joshua's reputation internationally, for this is as strong a roots reggae album as you are every likely to hear and one that is full of Rastafarian principles from a unique artists that can enthrall you with a voice that contains such conviction you truly believe in what he is saying. As seems to be a common theme with this company's releases only a few of these tracks have been previously released before. These are the rocking, repatriation drive of Africa (Is Our Land) and its dub version Home plus Rise Up, which calls upon people to fight oppression and injustice wherever it is found. Both Africa and Rise Up have also fea-

tured on 'Bristol Reggae Explosion' volumes 1 and 2 respectively with another track Stick It Up a track that brings under attack all hypocrites, parasites and evildoers (vampires and old pirates) for having caused so much suffering throughout history appearing on volume 3. If you have been fortunate enough to have already heard these tracks then you'll be pleased to hear that the rest of this album is just as lyrically strong and full of Rastafarian sentiments. Suffering Is In the Past continues on Stick It Up's theme by telling a tale of life's struggles and overcoming suffering. House of Dread, a live recording and apparently one of the highlights of his shows in the early eighties, turns attentions to praising Jah as he invites all of humankind to embrace Rastafari in universal unity, although there is a warning that the rich may not be quite as welcome. Jah Time Has Come skillfully adapts Aswad's Promised Land riddim as Joshua looks forward to the coming of Jah and universal justice, whilst Protection says if you embrace Jah he will guide, protect you and show you the way. Steel calls for love to triumph over evil, with Joshua then proclaiming his Rastafarian, Jamaican

and African identity in Bobby Wrong. Towards the albums close we see different sides to Joshua as he displays his vocal versatility with a change to a Junior Murvinish falsetto voice for Children Of the Light and Nothing To Lose, while final vocal track Distant Guns sees a return to his more usual vocal style but a complete change musical direction as this stripped down song of bass drum and guitar has a country, bluesy feel with lyrics that recount how love will triumph over adversity come judgment day. Joshua Moses is still around today, though now reborn as Jashwha Moses, writing new material that is reportedly just as good, with lyrics that remain as conscious and spiritual as ever and also has seen him booked as support, with The R.A.S Band, to The Skatalites at the Exeter Phoenix on May 19th. This album therefore can be seen as drawing something of a line under the career of Joshua Moses while also heralding the gateway to a new one for Jashwha Moses and I for one hope that this time round it brings him the success and wider recognition that his talents have always deserved.



Stephen Marley in Pinecrest

Report and photos by Gail Zucker

Stephen Marley up close and personal in Florida

The Community Garden Charitable Fund's Six Annual 'Soiree in the Garden' was held on February 24, 2012 inside the Banyan Bowl Ampitheater at the lavish Pinecrest Gardens.

Grammy winner Stephen Marley, along with his all star band performed an acoustic set with Stephen alternating between chanting on a nyabinghi drum and playing guitar. Squidly Cole, aka 'the singing drummer' played a bass drum. He is also a solo artist in his own right, with his latest album 'Bloodlines' and previous release 'Babylon Days'; the humble and talented Christopher Meredith on bass and Ronroy Gordon and Bagga Trak on guitars, and Denver on congo.

Most of the evening the band members were seated and a spiritual presence was omnipresent. The ampitheater vibe and the raw creativity of the acoustic environment made this concert one of the most intimate and universal concerts I have ever experienced.

When Stephen sang The Chapel, I felt goose bumps. The drums played by Stephen,

Squidly and Denver gave the performance a Nyabinghi vibe, as if Bob was smiling in awe of his legacy's talent. Cedella Marley joined Stephen onstage and it was heartwarming to see her sing a few duets with her younger brother. Stephen

Marley was in jovial spirits the evening, as many long time friends and relatives supported the event. Pinecrest is the area where most of the family that live in Miami reside, and it appeared he was pleased to feel 'at home.'



JARIA Reggae Wednesdays Week #4 - Singers and DJs

Report and photos by Steve James

The event took place at Emancipation Park, Kingston on February 22nd during Reggae Month.

The weekly concert series staged by the Jamaica Reggae Industry Association and the Jamaica Tourist Board continues to be a success as the weeks go by. The most recent, held on public holiday Ash Wednesday, was no different.

Due to the holiday festivities this event started in the afternoon and drew a much larger crowd to Emancipation Park. For most of the night Warrior Lord and Kurfew Bands provided backing for several of the artistes. Among those who ignited the stage that night were Johnny Clarke, upcoming singer Prophecy, Big Youth, Ken Boothe, Singing Melody and female artiste Alaine.

Each artiste who performed brought the audience to another level. The show was closed by the steadily rising young singer Cherine Anderson. At the end of the night patrons left Emancipation Park feeling well fed with a good dosage of quality reggae music.



Earl 16 in Leeds

Report and photos by Flavio Oliveira

Earl 16 and Big Toes Hifi on 17th March 2012 at The Railway Club, Leeds, United Kingdom.

The show was not very crowded, probably something around 100 people. However, the good atmosphere at the club combined with an excellent sound system and the great voice of

Earl 16 made it a nice Saturday night out. Earl 16 is playing a lot of old school reggae classics and sang classics such as Chase the Devil cheering the audience. Earl said that this year promises to be a very busy year in the UK, specially during the Olympics upcoming in July/August 2012 in London. Earl 16 also commented on an upcoming project he is going to realize in Brazil in mid-2012 with DubMastor.



JARIA Reggae Wednesdays Week #5 - Dancehall and Alternative

Report and photos by Steve James

The event took place at Emancipation Park, Kingston on February 29th during Reggae Month.

On February 29th the curtain came down on the final staging of Jamaica Reggae Industry Association's month long Reggae Wednesdays. Reggae Wednesday Week #5 was titled Dancehall & Alternative music. Among those who were billed for the show were the Mojah Rock Band lead by Gibby and the increasingly popular Nomaadz. Rootz Underground had the crowd on their feet and when the lead singer decided to sing one of Buju Banton's songs, while holding a poster of the artiste high in the air, the audience wanted more and started singing along. Protoje, Teflon and the fire man Capleton all turned in good performances.

One of the main highlights of the night was when a homeless man appeared out of the audience and asked MC Tony Rebel if he could get a chance to sing. Tony Rebel obliged, gave him the microphone and the crowd applauded to his lyrics. At the end of his stint the homeless man asked the crowd to "Leave something with me nuh?" To his amazement there was an outpouring of appreciation and several persons went up to give him a donation. According to MC Tony Rebel it was a great symbolic gesture of how we should treat those who are willing to work for what they want. At the end of the final show patrons could say that for the past month they were treated to some of the finest performances in Reggae music .



Junior Toots' Album Party

Report by Ari Sandoval

Photos by Lee Abel

Junior Toots shares A Little Bit Of Love. Record Release Party in San Francisco on March 24, 2012.

On a rainy Saturday night, Pier 23 saw the record release of 'A Little Bit of Love' the new album from Junior Toots, the son of Toots Hibbert of Toots and the Maytals. The close and intimate setting made Pier 23 in San Francisco a great place to catch the show. It was a wonderful experience feeling warm and sheltered under tents while outside listening to the music and the rain fall. The weather even served as a blessing, as all who came did so for the love of the music and brought only the best vibes. Midnight Sun Massive got the crowd warmed up with tracks ranging from roots reggae, dancehall, to all out African sounding dance jams with full on percussion including timbales, congas and even agogo. Sugar Boom was just one of the infectious rhythms that got everyone in the place moving. In between sets Jah Warrior Shelter Hi-Fi was spinning, keeping the vibes groovin. Before Rocker T came to the stage, Bishop Gad performed a couple songs. "Burn, Burn,

Burn Apartheid!", Rocker T belted with an Acapella intro to his set. He worked the mic skillfully, chanting riddims and even playing the melodica in a dub-style groove. In an aside, T reminded the crowd of his ceaseless mission to promote the full decriminalization and legalizing of herb. Junior Toots moved onto the stage with the energy of a lion, starting off with Solid As a Rock and kept the crowd moving all night. Backing him as they did Rocker T was The Fyah Squad Band, who played to perfection, with bluesy guitar solos and a rhythm section as steady as it was precise. Taking advantage of the proximity of the crowd Toots invited on stage a few queens throughout the night, respectfully dancing with them. Toots' diversity was shown moving from grooving rocksteady jams to full on dancehall, and even a song featuring Sol Atash singing in Farsi. Truly genuine, he even announced the birthday of one of the crowd members (Tara). Rocker T joined Junior Toots onstage for an encore song, sending the crowd home in higher spirits in the perfect climax to an irie night. 'A Little Bit of Love' Junior Toots' new album, is as full of soul and diversity as his performance was. From rocksteady to dancehall Toots delivers a truly enjoyable and uplifting audio experience.



9 Mile Festival 2012

Report and photos by Gail Zucker

2012, 9 Mile Festival, Rastaman Vibration, Positive!

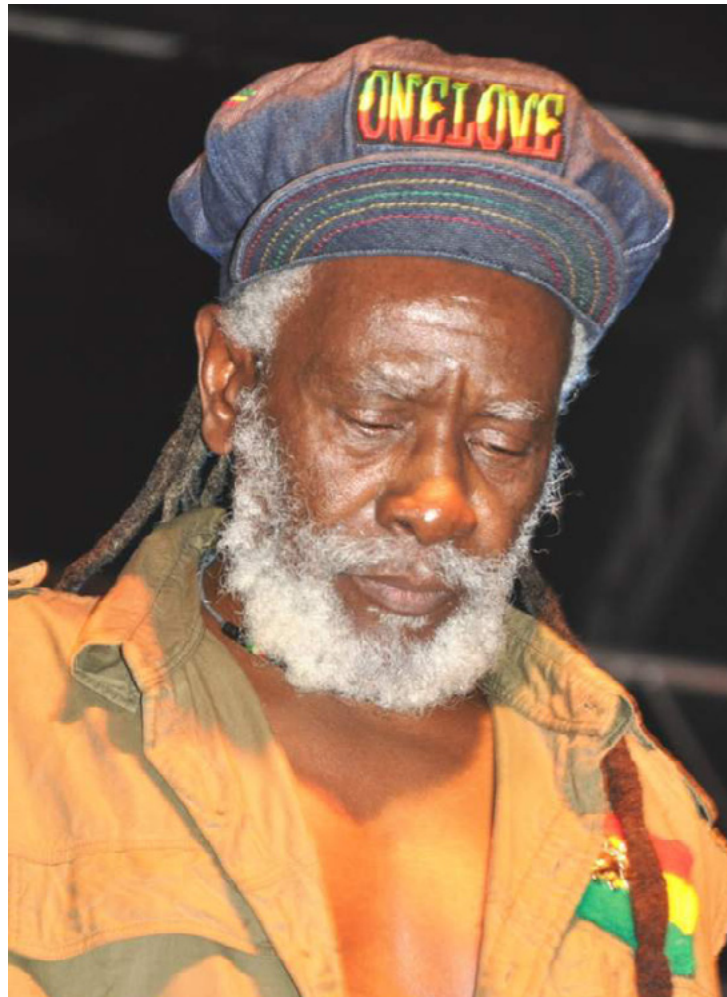
Virginia Key Beach hosted this year's 19 Annual 9 mile Music Festival on March 3, 2012. About 9,000 fans enjoyed the beautiful, sunny Miami day and breezy, balmy evening on Key Biscayne. Miami is such a diversified ethnic mix of people and all that attended enjoyed the event, just the way Bob Marley would have wanted it. More than 40,000 canned goods were collected and donated to Curley's House Food Bank and distributed to families in need of assistance. Kehv "the Prince of Reggae Soul" opened the show with a strong set. His original style and relevant lyrics are making him a featured artist on concerts these days. The back up singers and band did a fantastic job and his humble but energetic stage presence entertained the audience. New Kingston Band is made up of three brothers. These 'young veterans' performed hits from their second album entitled 'In the Streets To Africa'. Richie Spice was a delight to the stage! He seemed happy to be on the festival and gave probably one of the best performances I've seen of him. He pranced about the stage and sang the tunes that made him famous. He graciously posed for pictures, and enjoyed the day. Collie Buddz from Bermuda, sported 'blind to you' (haters) tee shirts, along with his whole entourage. He performed his best known tune "Come Around", amongst others. Next up was Tarrus Riley with Dean Fraser on Saxophone. Braided locks and a baseball cap and studded attire was a different Tarrus than we are used to seeing. His rise to 'super stardom' didn't deter from the jokes and romping between Dean Fraser and Tarrus. Abundant laughter and cheers from the audience supported the appreciation from

their performance. Cocoa Tea entered the stage with vigor and chanted 'Break down the Barriers!' The crowd lunged forward and the security had to regroup and allow the audience to move closer, right up to the stage. Cocoa Tea's tunes can't done from the 80's to the present and he thrilled the fans with a good portion of them. Capleton's energy is boundless. The Fireman leaped and pranced about singing a lot of his hits. His outfits are always original and this evening he wore a shimmering red, green and gold ensemble. Wale and Melanie Fiona delighted the hip hop enthusiasts. Foundation artist Burning Spear mesmerized the audience with his presence. His signature drumming and Nyabingi style chanting created a spiritual atmosphere throughout the park. He even did some dance steps and the audience was thrilled! After a long break, the Marley's entered the stage with vigor and 'nuff positive energy. The three brothers alternated singing tunes of Bob and their own original songs. Melanie Fiona joined Stephen Marley for a duet of 'No Cigarette Smoking.' Their band is so tight with drum & bass duo, Squidly Cole on drum and Christopher Meredith on bass. Nicholas Laraque gives a special touch to the band, playing sax and his new flute addition. Erica Newell and Rochelle Bradshaw, the back up singers energy is never ending! Donovan the flag waver always delivers maximum energy. As Spragga Benz, dressed in full white attire, entered the stage, the crowd broke into a frenzy. The Marley legacy youths added another delight to the performances.

This years 9 Mile Festival turned out to be one of the biggest and best! Everyone seemed to enjoy the positive vibe of the event and the artists excellent performances.







JARIA Honour Awards 2012

Report and photos by Steve James

The ceremony took place on February 25th at Emancipation Park during Reggae month.

JARIA in association with the Jamaica Tourist Board and the Chase Fund presented the JARIA Honour Awards 2012 which was held at the Emancipation Park. The red carpet affair honoured several key personnel who have made their mark in the progression of reggae music. Among some of the awards were: Sound System – Tom The Great Sebastian, Engineers – Philip Smart & Errol Brown, Songwriter – Bob Andy and Artiste of the Year – Romain Virgo. Veteran road manager Copeland Forbes who will shortly be celebrating 50 years in the music business

received the Lifetime Achievement Award. Clement “Sir Coxone” Dodd and Duke Reid were given awards in the Producer category.

The event was well attended and attracted several persons from the music fraternity and also key players from France’s reggae industry. Backed by the JARIA Orchestra and band, the audience was treated to performances by Freddie McGregor, Kenyatta Hill, Tristan Palmer, Mary Isaacs and an impromptu performance by Bob Andy & Marcia Griffiths.

Spirits were a bit dampened however when news circulated the following day that Okeene Brevett, who collected an award on behalf of his ailing father Lloyd Brevett of the Skatalites, was gunned down later on that night.



Marley Movie Premier in Miami

Report & Photos by Gail Zucker

“Marley” Movie Miami Premier gives a candid insight into the Reggae Superstar.

“Marley” premier took place at The Colony Theatre, Miami Beach on April 9, 2012. Cedella Marley was presented a proclamation from Miami Beach City Commissions Michael Gongora declaring April 9, BOB MARLEY DAY on Miami Beach. The movie “Marley” was directed by Academy Award winner Kevin MacDonald. His movies include “One Day in September”, “The Last King of Scotland” and “A Day in the Life.” It is the story of Robert Nesta Marley’s rise to stardom to become a reggae legend. The movie depicted Bob Marley from a youth, including the trials and tribulations he overcame, being the offspring of a white father and black mother. It explained how he was always “different”

even as a child and the candid interviews of the people who knew him best gave insight into his life. Included in the movie is rare footage of the chaotic events surrounding the 1976 attempt on Bob’s life when gunmen came to 56 Hope Road, just days before he was to perform on the “Smile Jamaica” Concert. In 1978 the “One Love Peace Concert” was held at the National Stadium in Kingston, Jamaica. Also included in the movie was the clip of Bob Marley joining hands of political rivals Michael Manley (PNP) and Edward Seaga (JLP) at this event. The movie had full support of the Marley family. The exclusive footage of Rita Marley, Ziggy Marley, Cedella Marley, Bunny Wailer, Neville Garrick, Allan Skill Cole and many others persons close to Bob, gave the viewers a better understanding of the life of this reggae superstar. “Marley” will be released tomorrow in theatres, on demand and on Facebook. This is a ‘must see’ for all Marley fans!



Cecil Reuben's Birthday at Brixton Hootananny

Report by Angus Taylor - Photos by Laura Forcucci

Michael Prophet closes this community show in style.

During the small hours of Easter Monday, wild-eyed master showman of roots reggae Michael Prophet gave a typically memorable headline performance at the third of Hootananny promoter and Jah Revelation Muzik soundman Cecil Reuben’s birthday dances.

A Jamaican born UK resident like Reuben, Prophet’s appearances are so familiar and consistent that it is easy for Londoners to take what the one time Yabby You protégé does for granted. But it was worth stepping back mentally and marveling at his drum-tight control of the audience and the venue’s composite Artist Band, sinuous dancing and howling, wailing voice as he sang hits like Creation Rock and Gunman, as well as an a capella Happy Birthday to the smiling promoter who came on to thank the musicians, artists and fans for turning out.

They had witnessed a community bill of local acts and visiting Jamaican names who turned out to pay tribute to the man whose reggae

promotions have made cultural reggae a more visible and audible force in the London live music scene.

Standout PA’s included the close harmony trio Kwest who performed a note perfect a capella of the Abyssinians Yim Mas Gan; Mystik Reuben being joined on stage by the deejay New Flowah; the honeyed R&B stylings of Jamaica’s diminutive Nuchie and the extraordinary voice of visiting Union Island born, NYC based singer Qshan Deya’. The latter wasn’t even scheduled to appear but wowed the crowd with his gigantic vocal range - moving from a rumbling Bushman bass baritone all the way to a Junior Murvin “true-setto”. Prior to his appearance, Qshan had already impressed the judges at Britain’s X Factor, getting a callback to the second round of auditions for the reality show.

The master of ceremonies for the night was the great journalist and producer Mandingo who fired up the crowd with powerful exhortations and introductions. He also showed a tender side, however, putting his arm around upcoming songstress Queenie, during an attack of shyness after her appearance on stage.



Jamaica Round Up: March 2012

Report & Photos by Steve James

Back A Yard: Wayne Armond at King Plaza, Bonafide launch, Western Consciousness launch.

Kings Plaza located on Constant Spring Road continues to be a buzz on a Tuesday Night. Recently the atmosphere was no different when lead singer of Chalice, Wayne Armond performed. Throughout the night he delivered several hits from the vast catalogue of Chalice. Also present in the audience was Beres Hammond who was there to experience some of the interpretation done by Wayne Armond of his songs.

Reggae group Bonafide which is based on Las Vegas took time out to do their album launch in Jamaica. The event was held at the Terra Nova Hotel, Kingston and attracted a number of media personalities and well wishers. The audience was also treated with a short performance by the brand and Hawaiian singer Fui.

While Bonafide was holding their album launch at the Terra Nova Hotel. The launch for Western Consciousness which is scheduled to take place April 14, 2012 in Savalamar Westmoreland was also being held at the Knutsford Court Hotel. The line-up which is as strong as ever includes singer Marcia Griffiths, Beres Hammond, UK based singers Levi Roots, King Sounds and many more.



Michael Rose in Portland

Report & Photos by Kuakea Ali'i

Michael Rose performed at Mt. Tabor Theater in Portland, USA on April 6th. Check the photos of the show.

Check these photos of Jamaican singer in Portland.



Sizzla in Hasparren

Report and photos by Benjamin Delong

Check these photos of Sizzla in South France.

Sizzla is actually doing an European tour backed by the Firehouse Crew. On March 8th, he was in Hasparren, South France. Support was done by Diana Rutherford.



Ras Daniel Ray, Tu Shung Peng and Friends in Paris

Report & Photos by Franck Blanquin

Check these photos at Le Plan, Ris Orangis, France on March 16th.

At Le Plan, near Paris, supported by Wake Up Sound System and Ganja Tree, Ras Daniel Ray with the French band Tu Shung Peng presented the new album they did together 'Ray Of Light'. Guests were Vin Gordon and Clinton Fearon who also worked on some of Tu Shung Peng albums. A night of modern reggae with roots foundations.



Anthony Joseph, Horace Andy and Raggasonic at Chorus Festival 2012

Report & Photos by Christian Bordey

Check these photos of the artists in Puteaux, France.

On March 23, 2012 the Chorus festival near Paris put on a reggae night. The evening saw performances from Anthony Joseph & the Spasm Band, Horace Andy and Raggasonic. For one

hour, Anthony Joseph delivered a nice set with roots rhythms and sounds. Horace Andy & the Homegrown Band then closed their French tour with, beauty, boundless energy and an exceptional voice. Finally Raggasonic came on stage and set the place on fire. Their set was made up of classics and new material from their forthcoming third album.



Sugar Minott's Early Days

Article and photos by Beth Lesser

United Reggae offers an excerpt from Beth Lesser's book about Sugar Minott and Youth Promotion.

DELACREE ROAD

Sugar Minott was living on Delacree Road with his mother and siblings. Life wasn't easy in the "13". "Sometimes, in the ghetto where I grow, Maxfield Park, it's a rough ghetto, you know" Sugar recalled. "Lots of people robbing people, and, lots of guns, and, all the bad elements of a project, you know." But the gift of a guitar, from elder deejay Big Youth, kept Sugar safe. "Before I had that guitar, the boys used to try to call me to do all kinda things and I used to have to make a lot of excuse to get out of it. Or some guy would give you a gun and say, 'Stay here and watch this place,' and as him turn him back, you gone! Like, 'Oh my mother call me!' And all that. But, when they saw me with this guitar that Big Youth gave me, they didn't bother to do that again. They said, 'This is a singer, man', and they start taking care of me. Bad boy, you know, have a little heart for people who play music. They not going to push you up in no badness."

Musicians were still considered off limits, in those days. They could pass through political areas and remain, officially, neutral. Even if they were identified with a particular side, they were excused because the music was so compelling. As Sammy Dread explains, "In those times, when you stick up an artist, or rob an artist, you were in trouble. A singer was like a god to the bad boys. The artist alone coulda just cool them when the bad man is bad. He go to the dance, he just quiet, he just listen to the music, have a drink and then go home."

There were three main sound systems playing the Maxfield Park area in the 70's, Keytone, Sound of Silence, and, later, Black Roots. Keytone was owned by Sammy Barnett. "Keytone was a beautiful sound," Deejay Daddy Ants remembers. "That was the sweetest sound in the area. Those times Barry Brown was around there too. He used to come a Maxfield Pak every night same way. Barry Brown sing on all of the [sounds]. We [used to] have all competition, you know- Barry Brown against Sugar Minott. Nuff niceness and thing. It wasn't anything vicious. It was just nuff niceness! People used to cheer. Obviously, Sugar was the better singer."

Sound of Silence was owned by a Mr. Ruddy who lives in the US right now (Not the same Ruddy who worked at Joe Gibbs). Sugar, drawn irresistibly to the music, hung around Keytone and Sound of Silence both selecting and singing. Sugar just couldn't resist music. "When I feel the vibes to sing- money, it's nothing," Sugar explained. "You just sing. You don't even know whose dance it is. You just get the mic and sing."

AFRICAN BROTHERS

Music became the neighborhood export and the top local activity. Singer Ashanti Waugh recalled how the friends would all gather in a yard or under a shady tree and just harmonize –himself along with Sugar, Buddy Bye, Dennis Reid and Tuffy..

Right at the corner of Delamere Avenue and Delacree Road, in Maxfield Park, was a little bar owned by a man named Tunny Martin. Every evening, local residents would congregate there to play cards, enjoy a beer, talk and relax. Sometimes they would play football around the back.

One night Derrick Howard, later known as Eric Bubbles, the name that stuck to him when he



was in London, was walking in the neighborhood when he heard the sound of a man playing a guitar over by Tunny Martin's corner. He was intrigued by the sweet sound of the melody and was curious who was playing. When he came to the corner, he saw two men sitting together and singing. So, he asked around, "Who is that?" The response came, "It's Tony and Sugar." Tony was the bigger of the two and was playing the guitar. The youth they called Sugar was just a skinny little boy, maybe 14 years old. But he could clearly handle the harmonies and had a smooth voice. So, Derrick asked them if they wanted to record a song. "They never believe me, you know. They see a lot of people tell them lie and nothing nah gwan," Derrick recalls. He explained to the two young men that he really could back up his words. So Tony Morris [later Tony Tuff] invited Derrick to sit in and help work out the song they were rehearsing. So, Derrick fit himself in on harmonies while Tony remained the lead. The result sounded good to all three so they began rehearsing the song together regularly. "Tony write that song and we work a couple nights – like for a week or two- and we went to Tubby's to voice the song." At first, Sugar was shy. "He wouldn't go up to the mic," Derrick remembers. But they managed to cut their first side, Mystery of Nature, for Rupee Edwards.

Derrick already had experience recording. He was then a member of the group, Charles Hanna and the Graduates (C.H. Hanna had the label, Graduate) which included Desi Roots (Desmond Young, now President of the Jamaican Federation of musicians), and Cornell Campbell on guitar. They played the hotel circuit and at clubs, and had made a record with Harry J, Behold I Live. Derrick had also recorded with the In Crowd Band, a tune named Good Samaritan.

Now, with the addition of Derrick, a real group began to take shape. Many afternoons, Tony and Derrick would pick up Sugar after school and take him to the park where they played football, to do a little rehearsing. Oddly, a couple of people had been buried in the park, and the boys would sit on top of the tombs and sing.

Soon, they were ready to appear in local talent shows. In 1974, they entered a competition held at the Pink Lady Club on Maxfield Ave and won.

The Trio had a interesting and professional sound. Tony made a solid front man, even at a young age. Their next 45s were recorded for Micron Music. Before the advent of Pete Weston, Micron was run by Ronnie Burke, who now sells insurance, and by Mike Johnson, a dreadlocked white man who opened his heart and his wallet to the three youngsters. Derrick has fond memories of the way he dealt with the newcomers, "The only man we ever get money from is Micron. Every week we would go get money from Mike Johnson. He come around and check us at nighttime and invite us to his home and we would go up there - New Kingston- and rehearse, and he left to go to the studio and we would have the whole house to we self."

The three followed up the three tunes for Micron with records for several popular producers of the day, Rupie Edwards, Winston "Meritone" Blake, for Clive Chin at Randy's and an eccentric, one-footed man named Jimmy Radway, who enjoyed a short burst of popularity in the 70's, and whose unique rhythms have been preserved on a CD named 'Dub I', released by Pressure Sounds. Radway, at the time, had the labels Fe Me Time and Capricorn Rising.

The group was supposed to record for Jack Ruby, then at the height of his popularity with his Burning Spear releases. But the day they were scheduled to go to the studio, Ruby took sick and never recovered.

By the mid 70's, disappointed with the financial results of recording for other people, the group began to explore the idea of self-producing, something that several notable artists were doing, including Big Youth, Gregory Isaacs and Dennis Brown. Out of their efforts came Torturing, their biggest hit - although Want Some Freedom and Practice What You Preach were popular as well. Torturing was very well received and sold a good quantity overseas as an import. But due to some discrepancies in the distributor's

record keeping, and their loss of control over the original stamper, the group was only paid for 500 copies, according to Derrick. The economic pressure hastened the demise of the trio who were already starting to 'want some freedom' to pursue their own musical ambitions. Besides, the era of the harmony group was drawing to a quick conclusion. The 80's were to be ruled by the solo artist-singers like Barrington Levy, Frankie Paul and Sugar Minott.

This article is excerpt from the book 'The Legend Of Sugar Minott & Youth Promotion' by Beth Lesser (page 8 to 14).

Published in 2011 by Muzik Tree and available at Small Axe.



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!**

Conception, design and creation

Xavier Simacourbe & Camille Monchicourt

Special thanks to:

All United Reggae authors and photographers from all over the world : Angus Taylor, Andrew Thompson, Anna Thunander, Anthea McGibbon, Ari Sandoval, Aude-Emilie Dorion, Barbara Blake Hannah, Bartek Muracki, Benjamin Delong, Benjamin Peronne, Catherine Fearon, Charlie Pelham, Christian Bordey, Claudia Berthier, Colin McGuire, Cree, Daddy Matty, David Katz, Davina Hamilton, Demian Hartmann, Doug Heselgrave, Ed Kapp, Emmanuel Parata, Erik Magni, Flavio Oliveira, Franck Blanquin, Frederic Weinum, Gail Zucker, Geoffrey Philp, Gerard McMahon, Gibsy, Greg Ward, Guillaume Huyard, Horace Campbell, Irie Dole, Ishangophotos, Jan Salzman, Jennyfer Papin, Jerome Forney, Jessica Dore, John Fenwick, Karl Pearson, Kokumo, Kuakea Ali'i, Laura Forcucci, Laura Gardner, Lee Abel, Max-Him, Maral Amiri, Marc Ismail, Marc Marino, Martial Labarthe, Martin Monchicourt, McClain Johnson, Michael Grein, Mick Sleeper, Nadia Bestjamaica, Norman Darwen, Paco Van Leeuwen, Phunked-up Photography, Randolph Fisher, Ras Achis, Sarah Soutar, Sista Irie, Siobhan Jones, Steve James, Susan De Leon, Tom Orr, Tomas Palermo, Valentin Zill, Veronique Skelsey, Viktoria Spratter and Zapo, our partners and all those who help us spreading reggae vibes **every day.**

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