

UNITED REGGAE

MAGAZINE

#2 - November 2010

INTERVIEWS

Bob Andy
Neil Perch

Tiken Jah Fakoly
IN BAMAKO

Independent VoYces Literary Fair

Apple Gabriel ✦ UK Flu ✦ Dubmatix ✦ Sonia Pottinger ✦ On The
Level Volume 2 ✦ Irie Up ✦ Rise Up ✦ Lee Perry ✦ Tayo ✦ Adele
Harley ✦ Mikey General ✦ Dennis Brown ✦ Bushman ✦ Protoje

United Reggae Mag #2 - November 2010

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Sonia Pottinger passed away

As reported by Jamaica Observer, Mrs Sonia Pottinger passed away this week. She was the most important Jamaican woman involved in music business and the first Jamaican female reggae record producer. Ms P. opened the Tip Top Record shop in 1965 and began producing local artists the following year. Her first single production was Every Night by Joe White and Chuck. She produced artists from the mid 1960s until the mid 1980s : Bob Andy, Marcia Griffiths, Alton Ellis, U Roy, Big Youth and Culture among others on her Gay Feet, Tip Top, Rainbow and High Note labels. In 1974, she bought Duke Reid's Treasure Isle label shortly before his passing.

The works of Lee Perry, Coxsone Dodd, Bunny Lee are rightfully celebrated, but Pottinger's productions were always top ranking.

Another sad news for Reggae Community. May the grand lady of JA music rest in peace.

Irie Up new issue!

Back in January of this year we reported on the launch of a new bimonthly magazine called Irie Up. It would appear that the magazine has been a success and now as they edge towards their first anniversary they have just published issue 6.

In this time the magazine has grown to include CD and vinyl reviews along with its usual mix of technical insight into soundsystems and production, varied interviews from greats like Sugar Minott and U Brown to newer names like Japanese collective Tribe Sound and just generally keeping people informed of what is happening on the reggae scene the world over.

In this latest issue you will find interviews with Internal Dread, the Swedish analogue specialist and Ireland's Dub Investigation talks about productions and future projects. On the techy side they meet the Gaggeldubbers, who have developed a fully independent solar powered soundsystem that opens up a new range of possibilities for sound crews. Then there is a look at what is happening in the Czech Republic with the story of reggae, dub and soundsystems, from the fall of the Iron Curtain and the rise of the free tekno soundsystem scene to the roots and dub revival in Prague, plus an introduction to and brief history of the soundsystem scene in Manchester, England and much more.

Lee Scratch Perry: Secret Education

For those of you in the Los Angeles area, don't miss Secret Education, a rare exhibit of Lee Perry's art.

"Dem Passwords Art Gallery is pleased to present the first solo exhibition of paintings, drawings and video by Lee Perry. Perry began decorating his Black Ark studio walls in the 1970s with strange and eccentric writings, paintings and pasted elements alongside (and often over) the work of Jah Wise, the Rasta artist who adorned the Black Ark with its distinctive artwork. For the past 20 years, Scratch has continued to create, building found-object sculptures in his yard and covering every surface both inside and outside of his home with spiritual graffiti. In the 1980s, Perry added photography and video to the mix and began styling his wardrobe with mirrors and other objects of private spiritual signifiante." The exhibition runs from November 13 to December 11.

HELP Jamaica! 2011 Calendar

Last year the charity HELP Jamaica!, that aims to establish library and education projects in underprivileged Jamaican communities, released a calendar with all the proceeds going towards helping their projects, well this year they are repeating that and have just released their 2011 calendar.



As with last year all photographers who provided their photos and the graphic designer worked for free and offered their photo-material and time voluntarily. The money raised by selling this calendar will go directly towards HELP Jamaica! and helping them establish their first own Education Centre in Cassava Piece, Kingston 8. Hilmar Keding (Chairman of HELP Jamaica!) said "The making of this (our second) charity-calendar was again a very positive experience - everybody we asked to be involved in producing the calendar immediately and generously agreed to support the worthy cause and without this The 2011 HELP Jamaica! Charity Calendar would not have been possible."

The calendar, on high-quality DIN A3 paper, features some great photos of the colourful people and magnificent scenery that can found in Jamaica. There are only 500 copies of the calendar available, twice last years and that edition proved so popular it was sold out before the beginning of December.

Summertime by Sheya Mission

George Gershwin's Summer-time has to be one of the most covered songs in American popular music - from Billy Stewart's stuttering tic-infested horn fest to Sam Cooke's more leisurely campfire ballad rendition. It's also well represented in Jamaica: whether by Lloyd Clarke's jaunty ska cut, B B Seaton's brooding early reggae lament or Jimmy Riley's militant stalker for Dennis Brown's label DEB.

This summer brought a new addition to the ranks. Its singer is jazzy chanteuse Sheya



Mission, and its producer is Jonah Goldheart who helmed Daweh Congo's impressive last album 'Ghetto Skyline'. Laid down in Stockholm, the smooth, slightly chilly feel to Jonah's recordings works with Mission's cool stately voice over a very traditional swung roots reggae rhythm in the mode of Bob Marley's cut of Natural Mystic. The result is a lingering affair that recalls Manasseh's reworking of Lord Creator's Such Is Life with the singer Judith - particularly on the dub. An album, 'Nine Signs and Heavy Bliss' is slated for release in 2011, and on this showing, it's one you won't want to miss...

Billie Jean Riddim

Wasn't it just yesterday or . . . Oh maybe a few hours ago when the increasingly wicked Irie Ites from out of France dropped their most recent release, the Party Time & Take A Lick Riddims compilation? Well apparently they've absolutely no time to waste at all and were hard at work back on things immediately afterwards because what they've come up with this time, is arguably just as crucial. Billie Jean is far more than "just a girl who thinks that I am the one", she's also the namesake of a classic riddim which the team at Irie Ites has now remade.

As usual, they've lined up a stellar cast of big time modern acts with the star this time around being Sizzla Kalonji who brings forth the dominant Police Oppression and the Reggae legend is joined by the likes of Mark Wonder, Daddy Rings, surprisingly Konshens and Elephant Man as well as label regulars Lutan Fyah and Spectacular. Also, Irie Ites has done a mix of all the tunes in a Hip-hop style which is something that they're also becoming known for.

Anytime Irie Ites has something new, it's almost certain to be big and listeners can find out just how big their take on the Billie Jean Riddim is very soon on 7" Singles and in December on CD and digital downloads.



The New Day Riddim

A few years back with the arrival on the big stage of Reggae music of artists such as Queen Omega, Khari Kill and others, Reggae from out of the home of Soca, Trinidad, was going quite nicely. A few years on and while it seems things have slowed down just a bit, there're still very interesting occurrences, and one of the most recent would definitely be the New Day Riddim from up and coming Trini Reggae label, Jah Light Records. This smooth Roots riddim is now set to be released to the rest of the world very shortly.



Appearing on the New Day Riddim are veteran Trini artists such as Mr. Royal [formerly Royal Dainties], King Solomon, Ras Pilot and Gounzman whose tune on the riddim, What Monkey See, was reportedly quite the local hit in Trinidad.

Listen to a quick sample of the New Day Riddim courtesy of Jah Light Records and then pick up the full edition when it drops on etailers everywhere, December 7.

On The Level Volume 2

One Love records, the organization behind this summer's first big outdoor London reggae festival in nearly a decade are distributing a second release by Brighton based Future Dub records. The follow up to 'On The Level Volume 1', 'On The Level Volume 2' gathers many of the acts from the fest, taking in UK roots reggae, dubstep, drum'n'bass and everything in between.

On the reggae side of things, standouts include the mournful singer M.Parvez' Crossfire, produced by Vibronics (the same golden partnership that yielded Some Of Youths - perhaps the best British roots tune of the year), as well as I Know by King Solomon and Arkital Sound (AKA Future Dub headman Mark Evans and Finn "Lowki" Macairt). Parts of the UK scene have increasingly embraced dubstep and other bass heavy sounds, with David Rodigan even releasing his son's remix of Keith & Tex's Stop That Train. On The Level Volumes 1 and 2 are available for download at www.oneloverecords.co.uk

Eyes On My Purpose Riddim

Apparently French people love Reggae music just as much as they love . . . being French because it seems like pretty much every damn day there's a new label from out of the country which is not only involved in the music, but involved to the degree that the rest of us almost need to pay attention. One of the latest seemingly very solid French groups to pop up is Ghetto Scorp Productions who says "HELLO" to the world with the release of their initial project the Eyes On My Purpose Riddim.

Hopefully, to fans of this site, the very fact that a riddim release features the likes of Lutan Fyah, Sena and Spectacular is evidence of another, far more tenured, French label - Irie Ites - Who is on board as distributors of the project, which also features Black Warrior. To his credit, it is Spectacular, in a spectacular form, whose wicked tune, I Wish, takes top honours on the riddim. While putting together their own latest project, a relick of the Billie Jean Riddim, Irie Ites has already managed to get this one out as the Eyes On My Purpose Riddim from Ghetto Scorp Productions is currently in stores.

The Mighty Three's Sata and Rasta Business

Last month the French label Makasound re-issued the discomix Sata / Rasta Business by the group The Mighty Three's in a collector's edition. These two titles were originally released in 1978 on the album 'Africa Shall Stretch Forth Her Hand'. 500 copies of this limited edition release are available from the label website.

Moreover, Makasound also plans a Christmas and new Year mega-pack grouping together 18 albums including albums from Kiddus I, The Viceroyes, Winston McAnuff, Merger and Doniki for 49€.

Mikey General's Born To Rule

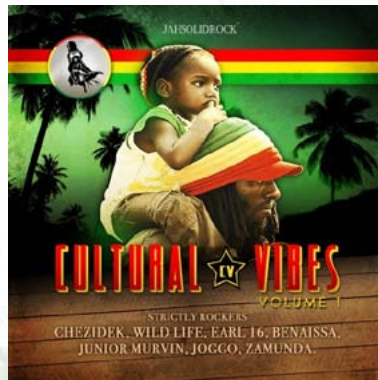
Class is a trait which can do absolute wonders for an artist's career and one of this current generation's classiest of Reggae singers, Mikey General, returns with a classy brand new album, 'Born To Rule'. The album comes via the Qabalah First Music imprint which is ran by General and his 'spiritual brother', legendary vocalist Luciano in association with Domacran Music from out of Germany and, as is his norm, it is full of top notch spiritually inclined Roots Reggae music. The General and Luciano (who also appears on a track) helm the project and, of course, they tap some heavy talent to accompany the singer so listeners should well look forward to musical accompaniment coming from the likes of the Firehouse Crew, Snowcone, Joe Fraser Records and most certainly Dean 'Cannon' Fraser.

A Mikey General album is pretty much sure to be winner so, if you happen to be one of the many smart individuals who enjoy good music, do feel free to check out his new album 'Born To Rule' from Qabalah First and Domacran Music beginning November 22.

Tayo Meets Acid Rockers Ft Pupajim

Out on the 22nd November from the Mungo HiFi led Scotch Bonnet label is the latest release from their Scrub-A-Dub subsidiary. The first batch of releases from this label were squarely aimed at the dub step market, but now we see a change of tact with this modern steppers offering. The song is called Vampayaa and is by Tayo Meets Acid Rockers and features Pupajim, the young vocalist from Brest in North West France who with his falsetto style sounds vaguely similar to Horace Andy.

As usual there are three remixes. Toronto based Marcus Visinoary gives it more of a tribal feeling riddim while Bristols RSD adds electronica and Philidelphia's Starkey dowses everything with swirling synths. This 12" heavy weight vinyl is a limited edition press so check with www.scotchbonnet.net for further details.



Cultural Vibes Volume 1

It almost seems like a prerequisite when it comes to Reggae labels that each and every one needs to have a compilation through which to showoff exactly what they've been up to. Besides everything else they do, be it artist's albums and/or riddim albums, if you have a Reggae label and you release albums, then you should have a big mixed compilation with your work on it. Obviously that time honoured

tradition is one which isn't lost on the boys and girls at the double-label Dutch label of Jahsolidrock and Not Easy At All Productions who waste no time at all in returning to the Cultural Vibesscene following the most recent release of their latest piece of work, 'Teach Them Right' by Apple Gabriel, with the big first installation of their own compilation 'Cultural Vibes'.

Hopefully it is crystal clear that this eighteen track set is full of examples of the heavy brand of Roots Reggae music the two labels have become known for, particularly in 2010. The album features artists such as Chezidek (of course), Mikey General, Earl Sixteen and even Junior Murvin mixing alongside Dutch standouts Benaïssa, Lloyd De Meza and Joggo over fine and familiar riddims such as the Collie Weed, the Anybody, the Paradise and the United We Stand.

With Apple Gabriel's (and maybe even Chezidek's) album still on your players, you won't have to wait very long for another round of Jahsolidrock and Not Easy At All as their 'Cultural Vibes Vol. 1' compilation is set to drop later this month.

Keystone Records to Deliver Roots and Culture

Keystone Records is a new label from Paris, France, whose aim is to diffuse roots & culture music across Europe and beyond. The label, in typical reggae style, has its own in house band the Keystone Players ably led by Dub Strider, chief riddim maker and producer who plays Bass, Melodica and Keys, with the help of musicians from various fields, Cedric J (Trombone), Greg B (Alto Sax, Melodica, Keys) and Stan R (Flute, Guitars). Despite their various musical backgrounds they are all united in the project to build their own home recorded dubwise excursions in the roots and culture tradition.

Their first two releases are now out on 12", with the first 'Break Down Babylon Walls' being a heavyweight instrumental stepper featuring sharp, stabbing keyboards and grand, triumphal horns. The B side softens down as melodica replaces the majority of the horns on a dubwise discomix.

The second 12" 'Highest Temple' is a meditative stepper with melodica and plenty of echo on side A. The flip 'Flute Warriah' features as the title would suggest a gentle flute on top of a more warrior style riddim. More is promised from the label in the new year.

New singles for Bushman

February 15, 2011 is the latest expected release date for an album which has been discussed seemingly from the beginning of time [all-time], 'Bushman Sings The Bush Doctor', which finds the current Reggae star singing some of the greatest hits of one of his idols, the legendary Peter Tosh. And while fans across the globe eagerly anticipate that release and wonder if it will really reach on that day, Bushman has offered a bit of stability and certainty by recently dropping a couple of selections from the forthcoming album, Brand New Second Hand Gal & Legalize It.

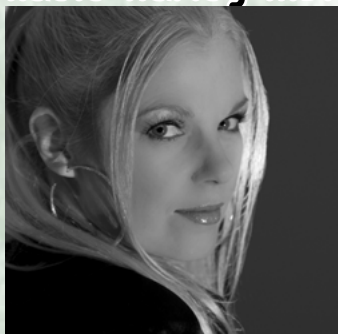


The release comes courtesy of industry leader, VP Records, Donovan Germain's venerable Penthouse Productions and the Bushman's own Burning Bushes Music imprint. And while Brand New Second Gal makes its very first appearance, Legalize It also appears on the recently released 'Hi-Grade Ganja Anthems Vol. 3' album from Greensleeves.

Brand New Second Hand Gal and Legalize It are currently available on 7" Single and certainly the album will

be amongst the most awaited in the new year.

Adele Harley invites you to Come Into Her Life



British lovers rock singer Adele Harley has released her long awaited debut album 'Come Into My Life'. Produced by the legendary duo Mafia and Fluxy, 'Come Into My Life' showcases the vocalist and multi-instrumentalist attending to the many matters of the heart.

The album includes saxophone duties from none other than Mr Dean Fraser, as well as vocal guest spots from Leroy Mafia and Glamma Kid. Adele even plays flute on some of the tracks.

It's been a busy year for Harley: recording with Rory Stone Love in Jamaica, working with Lloyd Brown on his forthcoming 'Cornerstone' long-player and supporting Bushman on the London leg of his European tour. We invite you to take a listen to two songs from 'Come Into My Life' - out on cd and for download now.



The Seven Year Itch Sampler by Protoje

The young, aspiring singer from St Elizabeth, Jamaica Protoje has just made available via his official website, www.protoje.com a free download sampler of his forthcoming album 'The Seven Year Itch'. The album has been produced by Don Corleon, with music supplied by Rory Yaadcore. It promises to be a new and fresh album that still manages to retain a strong vintage feel.

The sampler is nicely packaged and contains all previously released tracks that are appearing on the album, Arguments, Dread, JA, Roll, and Rasta Love (featuring Ky-Mani Marley), complete with their own artwork designed by Taj Francis. Also to accompany each track is an exclusive audio clip of Protoje explaining his creative process. Talking about the sampler Protoje had to say "These songs were written over a 7 Year Period, hence the album title 7 Year Itch. I want this Sampler to give people who wouldn't normally have access to my music, a chance to connect, and to understand why I choose to express myself in this way. All I ask is for ones to share this music. Spread music Spread Love". The album is due for release in early 2011.



The True Stories of Mark Wonder and Friends

Last year one of the most impressive, yet underrated, names in Reggae music, singer Mark Wonder, released a power packed album which featured himself alongside some of his most well known peers in a collaboration style. That album, 'True Stories of Mark Wonder & Friends', went far too overlooked by many as it was only released digitally and not given much promotion at all, so many fans didn't even know it existed.

So, if you missed it the first time around, the amazing voiced Mark Wonder has teamed up with the very reputable Irie Vibrations from out of Austria and Groove Attack to re-release 'True Stories of Mark Wonder & Friends' digitally as well as on CD this time around and do so with two new songs as well. Joining the Kingston native is an outstanding lineup which includes the likes of Sizzla Kalonji & Gentleman [on the same tune, Don't Worry], Luciano, Lutan Fyah, Capleton, Anthony B, Fantan Mojah, Chezidek, Ziggi Recado and more!

The album, which was originally produced by Jamaican label Al.Ta. Fa.An, arrives back in stores on November 26. Do not miss it this time around.



Strength of I Pharaoh by KA Records

After the success of their first vinyl record 'Forward From Roots', French label KA Records is back with a new one called 'Strength Of I Pharaoh'. It features Joe Pilgrim on Giving Some Praise, George Cloonie on Live Up Your Record Shop and The Maât Disciples who also appeared on their first vinyl record. This 12" is available on Ka Records website.

No To Guns! Yes To Life

International Awareness Campaign against Gun Violence



Gun and knives crime appears to be an increasing problem the world over with more than Three Million (3,000,000) lives taken by it each year and it is probably fair to say that Jamaica has more than its share. A campaign is now underway there to try and unify people into saying enough really is enough.

The "No To Guns! Yes To Life International Awareness Campaign Against Gun Violence" is being spear headed by Black Music Promotions from Portmore.

They believe that fighting crime is not just the sole responsibility of the Police, but of all citizens as well, and only through collaborated, committed effort can this be achieved.

It hopes that by getting its citizens and police to work together and unite as one they will diminish illegal gun trafficking, gun crimes and reduce gang culture within Portmore City. By achieving this they want to help fuel a domino effect that will spread throughout the Caribbean and the world.



Joshua

"Joshua grieved, and wanted to do a song, that would be used as a learning tool, for others. This is how he got the inspiration, to write this song", told us Randolph Fisher, Chief Executive Officer of Black Music Promotion. "GUN OR LIFE was recorded in 2006, as Joshua had a friend who was involved in illegal gun activities. Joshua on numerous occasions, ask him to quit and change from his way of living. At one point in time, Joshua ask him to come to the studio with him, to see if he could get the man involved in music recording, but he refused as usual. That same day Joshua invited him to the studio, he died the evening, he was killed by police after robing & shot some one." "Joshua grieved, and wanted to do a song, that would be used as a learning tool, for others. This is how he got the inspiration, to write this song."

The campaign does not end there though as the place where real headway can be made is by educating infant, primary and high school children about the horrors of violent crime. It is their belief that as children live what they learn, and music plays a fundamental part in the learning and development progress of a child, that by purifying the entertainment and music industry, of the lewd, negative gun related murder music, that is so widely been promoted, in our current society will fully ignite and generate the positive energy in the community, to work cohesively with the police in the fight against illegal gun trafficking and gun crimes. Not only will this be a plea to artists directly but they want to create a memorandum of understanding with the Jamaica Broadcasting Commission, for the media, radio, TV, Cable etc, to cease and desist from airing and promoting murder music,

songs and movies, that give off a negative impact.

Finally they want it to be known that they applaud the Police High Commission, in their new development, as they embark on a positive drive, to rid the security force of corrupted cops and to send this message to all political / non political and persons considered, potential elements that assist in fuelling these gangs, the police through this campaign and it's concerned citizens of Jamaica, will get you!



Sylford Walker is United

Venerable singer Sylford Walker from the 1970's is surprisingly back with a brand new single release for McPullish of Charlie's Records, United. The song comes as somewhat of a surprise as the veteran singer, perhaps most well known for tunes such as Lamb's Bread, Burn Babylon, Jah Golden Pen and Eternal Day, hasn't been very actively recording in recent times and his return to the booth is certainly a very big deal which is sure to thrill his hordes and hordes of most devoted fans.



Babylon Nightmare by Jahdan Blakkamoore



While not reaching as far, in the global sense, as albums from earlier in 2010 such as 'Distant Relatives' from Damian Marley & Nas and Gyptian's 'Hold You', 'Babylon Nightmare' from outstanding Guyana born chanter Jahdan Blakkamoore is definitely one of the most anticipated Reggae projects of the year and after much delay, it is finally set and ready to drop worldwide on December 7 from the solid US based imprint, Lustre Kings Productions.

Take a listen at United, set to be available on 7" vinyl as well as on digital retailers worldwide, beginning November 23. Previously, Blakkamoore well earned his stripes as a member of the well regarded Noble Society trio which would go on to produce 'Take Charge' [also from LKP], an album which iTunes would vote as Reggae Album of The Year 2008. Curiously, Blakkamoore would 'defend' the honour the following year with his solo debut, the much varied 'Buzzrock Warrior' and now he attempts to complete the triangle with this much anticipated of releases.

The hope here is that 'Babylon Nightmare' will prove to be a bit more Reggae-centric than his first effort, particularly with the very Reggae heavy Lustre Kings on the boards. All of that will be revealed on December 7, in the meantime check out the video for the album's first single All Comes Back To One.



Luciano's Write My Name

While it hasn't been very long at all since 'The Mesenjah', Reggae legend Luciano, released an album [only a few months actually], having even more of the famed singer can be no bad thing and credit has to go to the US based Footprintz Music Group for releasing his latest gem, 'Write My Name'. While his last effort, 'United States of Africa', certainly brought in a great deal of attention, it is this independent release which may just prove to be the better of the two projects.

'Write My Name' is headlined by its outstanding title track which features Luciano, specifically for himself and just in general, remarking on how important it is to give due credit to the artists who make this wonderful music while they are still living and able to appreciate it. The course of the album follows the same high level spiritual material which fans across the globe have come to expect and love from the singer.

Collectors should be well interested to know that the CD version of the album also includes a DVD full of interviews with Luciano and other nice features as well. Luciano's brand new album, 'Write My Name' from Footprintz Music Group, is in stores now on CD as well as digital release.



The Camel Riddim

Maybe it was earlier this year when you first caught on to the works of the big House of Riddim band and label from out of Austria as the group pushed what has been, arguably, its most high profile release to date, the 'Born To Be Free' album from outstanding Jamaican singer Natty King, or maybe you've been a fan from before. Whichever the case, all of the label's followers are sure to be interested in its latest creation and release, the beautifully intoxicating Camel Riddim.

This pulsing set features big artists such as, of course, Natty King [with the tune Don't Be Foolish from his aforementioned album], Perfect, the former Mr. Flash - Zareb, Fitta Warri, Anthony Cruz, Uwe Banton, Karli Owli and more.

This one is pretty good actually and a big deal. so definitely check it out when the Camel Riddim releases on December 17.

TIKEN JAH FAKOLY



INTERVIEW

BY VALENTIN ZILL

Bamako, Quartier Cité des Enfants

When I reach the studio H. Camara, Tiken Jah Fakoly is sitting relaxed on the bumper of his VW Beetle, painted in the panafrican colors. The superstar from Côte d'Ivoire is in the best of mood. He asks me to take a seat next to him. In the uniquely atmospheric light of the late afternoon in Mali capital we talk about his career and his points of view concerning Ganja and Rastafari. The short interruptions when Tiken greets his fans passing by do not disturb us.



Tiken Jah Fakoly, let's start at the very beginning of your career. You teamed up with your first band, called the Djèlys, in 1987. What was your motivation to start doing music in the first place, what inspired you to do music?

My motivation was coming from African people suffering. I wanted to talk about that and I was trying to find a way to talk about that. When I listened to Bob Marley's music and his message, to Burning Spear's music and his message, for me that was the road to talk about this continent. When we formed this band in 1987, it was just after my father's death. We did the rehearsing at home for three years before we played the first show. We were in Odienné, far from Abidjan, and without radio and TV we couldn't do anything.

How did you get to Abidjan?

I went to Abidjan in 1991. There was a music competition at the national TV station for upcoming artists that I wanted to win. I went there and lost. But I didn't want to return to Odienné with nothing, as most everybody there thought I would win anyway. So I recorded a tape in a small studio and went back home to sing playback shows in night clubs. Even those who hadn't believed in me were confident now. We did our first show in April 1991 in Odienné's cinema. A lot of people came to watch our show. We received a lot of encouragement.

Which obstacles did you have to overcome at the beginning of your career?

Getting started was very, very difficult for me as I'm coming from a Muslim family. Many people here think that Muslims shouldn't sing, as that would

"Whenever I had some leisure time, I did my rehearsals in secret, as I couldn't tell my family I was still into music"

hinder them from entering paradise. But I wanted to sing. So when my family forbid me to do so, I asked them what else I should do, as I definitely couldn't go back to school. After my father's death in 1987, we couldn't afford tuition fees. My older brother wanted me to become a trader. He gave me some start-up money. I bought eggs in Côte d'Ivoire and sold them in Guinea Conakry to buy other goods I then sold back at home. I did that for three years, till 1999. But at the same time, whenever I had some leisure time, I did my rehearsals in secret, as I couldn't tell my family I was still into music. I didn't want to discuss with them.

Did you adopt the Rastafari faith at some point of your career?

No, not really. I never saw a real Rastaman in Odienné, I couldn't talk to any. And, you know, I didn't like people who smoke Ganja. I wanted to do Reggae music without smoking Ganja. Reggae music was important to me because of its message. So I told myself I didn't need to smoke Ganja to say what I wanted to say. I read some books about Rasta and realized some people saw it as a religion, but I already had my religion – I was Muslim. I pray in the mosque, not at Nyahbinghis. For me, Rasta is a movement fighting against injustice, fighting against slavery and colonialism, fighting to teach African history. But I have nothing against Ganja smokers, sometimes I smoke



it myself! But I don't want to promote it. It's too easy for politicians to denounce Ganja smokers, telling people not to listen to what they have to say. I never smoke outside of my home, and never in front of young people. I don't want to encourage the youth to smoke herb, I want to tell them to go to school and to work hard to develop our continent. And I don't want to talk about Ganja. Many artists sing Ganja love songs. I-man a warrior, I fight, and there are not enough artists out there fighting.

"It's too easy for politicians to denounce Ganja smokers, telling people not to listen to what they have to say"

Would you compare yourself to Lucky Dube, who said: *"If Rastafarianism is about having dreadlocks, smoking marijuana and believing that Haile Selassie is God, then I am not Rastafarian. But if it is about political, social and personal consciousness, then, yes, I am"*?

Yeah. You know, African societies are different from the Jamaican one. It's not easy to talk about Ganja here. Ganja is not a bad thing in Jamaica, but over here your parents really don't want you to smoke it. African parents think Ganja will drive you crazy. So I respect Lucky Dube's point of view. We Africans living in Africa need the Rasta movement but we need to protect our culture and society.

Was there ever a moment in your career where you thought about quitting the music business?

No, never. Never ever! Music is my life, mon.

Reggae music is my life. Reggae music is my arm. I'm fighting with it. Sometimes people ask me if I'd think about stopping to talk about politicians because it's dangerous. No. Reggae music is the voice of the majority of Africa's people. We have to do our revolution, we have to fight. So this music is very important for us, it's important for me. You know, most African music is about dancing and bigging up the big bosses. Our mission is to wake up the African people. I will never give up! I'd rather die than stop doing music.

"I-man a warrior, I fight, and there are not enough artists out there fighting"

Did you received support from other Reggae artists at the beginning of the road you took?

No. I asked Alpha Blondy to help me, but he didn't do it. I asked other Ivorian singers like Waby Spider, but nobody wanted to help me. They didn't believe in me. They said we had Alpha Blondy and Bob Marley and that would be all. Even in my family, when they finally accepted that I was a singer, one of my cousins told me if I wanted to be like Alpha Blondy, I had to go to the US to learn and study English like Alpha did. But I've always been a warrior. I wanted to be were I am today. I spent my small money to organize shows. When I heard about anything going on inna di town, I went there and begged to sing, even if I didn't get a penny in return. No artists helped me, but some white men who worked in Odienné supported me. They heard me sing and when they went back to Paris, they invited me to their wedding and decided to help me after that. They organized my first show in Europe in a small club in Paris. We did the show in front of about a hundred people, half of them were journalists. So I got featured in big newspapers.

These white men you're talking about are Sophie and Thierry Gros.

Sophie Gros and her husband, yeah. He was my friend for about three years when Sophie came to Odienné to visit her brother and met her future husband. They support me until today. Her husband was my manager at first. He's a maths teacher. In 1997, Sophie became my manager. I'm very proud as it's not easy to find people you trust for this job. We are like a family today. We share a beautiful history. They were surprised to see how famous I was in Côte d'Ivoire when they saw one of my concerts in a stadium. Nobody knew me in France at that time. Sophie and Thierry

recorded one of these shows on video and sent the tape to labels in Europe. We waited for their answers for about three months. One morning, we were surprised by a letter from a small label called Globe Music that was interested in what I did. It was a big party this day!

What was the first album you recorded that was released in Europe?

Mangercratie was the first album released in Europe. It was my third album in Côte d'Ivoire. Its recording quality was much better than that of my first two albums. We started touring small clubs in France then with the French Reggae band Sinsemilia. After the small clubs, I did a show in La Boule Noire. 500 people showed up the first night, and 500 again the second night. The next step was Elysée Montmartre, with about 1,800 people attending the show. After that, people began to know me. I got my first gold CD for 'Françafrique' in 2002. Today I have three gold CDs.

Today you're one of rather few Reggae artists with a major label contract. You're a superstar of international recognition now. How does your family think about you being a singer now?

They are very happy today. Everybody is happy in my family. One day I saw my elder brother's business card, the one who didn't want me to sing. It read "DOUMBIA Alassane FAKOLY". He's really proud of me now. But I can still understand their objections. They thought I wouldn't be a good Muslim when being an artist, I would drink alcohol and smoke Ganja. They just wanted to protect me.

What was the most memorable story you experienced?

The craziest thing was when I did this small show in Odienné. Most people in the audience told me I wouldn't go anywhere as there are Alpha Blondy and Bob Marley. One or two years after I released 'Mangercratie', I went back to Odienné for a big show of the national radio station of Côte d'Ivoire. Big promotion, you know. 35,000 people showed up in the stadium. I recognized people in the audience who had told me at that small show that I'd never make it. They were really enjoying my show now, dancing and singing with me. That was a very important day for me, I'll never forget it.

"The youths respect me because I never changed, I didn't go with the politicians, I didn't ask for money in the president's office"

Alpha Blondy used to be the superstar of the youths of West Africa. You have replaced him pretty much, being the spokesperson of the African youths now.




That's a big responsibility for me. The youths respect me because I never changed, I didn't go with the politicians, I didn't ask for money in the president's office. I didn't change my message. I hope I'll have the energy to always continue my fight. For me, that's the real Reggae music, the people's voice. It's important for me to follow Bob Marley's road, being with the sufferers. That is the mission of Reggae.

When relaxing at home, what music are you listening to?

Jamaican Reggae. Bob Marley every time, you know. He's our prophet. I listen to Peter Tosh. And I listen to a lot of Mande music, traditional African music, because I always want to create original Reggae music. Reggae music is African music, because it has been created by African people in Jamaica. But we in the Motherland are obliged to do something different, so I add traditional instruments.

Which African artists do you prefer?

Salif Keita, Mory Kante, Amy Koita, Oumu Sangare. But I also listen to young artists, like Sizzla and Capleton from Jamaica. Actually I listen to a lot of different music. Indian music [laughs]. I want to have inspiration, you know.

A man with long dreadlocks and a serious expression is the central figure. He is wearing a yellow tank top. The background is a dark, textured wall with horizontal bands of color. In the lower right, a motorcycle is partially visible. The title is written in a stylized, white, hand-drawn font across the middle of the image.

MAN A WARRIOR FIGHT

Tiken Jah Fakoly

With which artist would you like to record a combination?

With Damian Marley, for example. I invited him to record a tune with me for African Revolution, but it didn't work out as he was busy touring. I really respect his works. But I could do combinations with everybody. A combination tune is exchange between two artists. Take Damian Marley. He's not well known here, people know he's the son of Bob Marley, that's all. So he could profit from my popularity here, as people would say "you know, he did a tune with Tiken Jah". But in America or Jamaica, people would say "that's the guy who sang that tune with Damian Marley".

Tell us about your upcoming album African Revolution.

This album is talking about African intelligent revolution. We need to build up, not to break down. Too many young Africans have been killed, we don't want to kill anybody. No bloodshed. But we can do our revolution going to school. Our children have to study to understand the way the Babylon system works. We need to know the system. The intelligent revolution is about unity, too. We need to speak with one voice. One economical power, one political power. So this album is talking to Africa's youth. In the last album, I talked about being proud of being African. Now I say yes, we are proud to be Africans, but that is not enough. We are proud to be Africans but we have to fight to get all the things we want. All the young people here want to go to Europe, to America. I tell them that nothing people have there is coming from the sky. People fought there to get what they have today. God gives us the sunshine and the rain. It is never really cold in Africa. We can fight to get it all, too. Nobody will change Africa for the Africans. If we want to change Africa, we have to fight for it. If we want to change this continent, there's a price to pay for that. This price is the revolution.

How can this change, this revolution actually be done by the people?

The first thing we have to know is that we are all brothers. We are all victims of the politicians, so we have to unite to fight against the politicians. For me it's very, very important to begin the fight. The new generation will continue it. African unity is impossible today. Young people, little boys are asking me on the street to give them money. I tell them, work for me and I'll give you money. I ask the boss later if they worked, and if they did I pay them. If they didn't I tell them to go home. We have to wake up. Nobody will



give us our rights. We have to fight for them. That is my message in the African Revolution album.

With who did you worked on this album?

I wrote some lyrics with some artists in France, like Féfé. I can write and compose myself, but I'm very popular today in France, some people in Germany know me. So it's important to write lyrics in a way that people there can listen to them. We worked with some Jamaican musicians. The drummer tours with Shaggy. Glen played the bass, he's big there in Jamaica. Sticky, Bob Marley's percussionist, did the percussions. We went to Bamako to record traditional instruments like the kora. Petit Conde from Guinea played the Mande guitar. We didn't work with Sly & Robbie this time because we did the last two albums with them and wanted some variation. Maybe we'll work again with them one day. Jonathan Quarmby and Kevin Bacon from England arranged the album. They worked with Ziggy Marley on his album that won the Grammy. We had a good team for this album, I'm very happy.

What was working with Sly & Robbie like?

It was very relaxed for the second album, Coup

d'Gueule. But it was hard for the first album we did together, *Françafrique*, because Sly didn't arrive in time. We met at ten a.m. on the first recording day in studio in Kingston. Sly said he would be there in 30 minutes. He was in Miami and arrived three days later. But when he arrived and started to play, I forgot everything. They are great musicians, it's everybody's dream to work with them. It was my dream and I did it! And I'd like to work with Tyrone Downie again. I did two albums with him, too. Sly said he would be there in 30 minutes. He was in Miami and arrived three days later.

Where was *African Revolution* recorded?

We began working in Paris, in the studios De La Seine. We did the programming there. We continued in London, working in the Rock studio. After that we went to Tuff Gong Studio in Jamaica, then to H. Camara, my studio in Bamako. Then we went back to London for a month of mixing! The mastering was done in the US, but I don't know where exactly. My artist director went there.

What are your impressions when comparing life in Jamaica to life in West Africa?

The way of life is the same, I'd say. When I went to Jamaica the first time and left the airport, it was just like in Abidjan or Bamako. People were coming, asking "do you want a taxi?", "do you want some Ganja?" or "do you want some whatever?" I respect this song from Alpha Blondy called *Afriki*. [He sings] *Jamaica ye ah, Afriki le ye*. It's really like that. Last time I was in Jamaica, in February, we bought some fish in the streets and ate it on the road like in Bamako, you know. Nobody knows me as an artist in Jamaica, so I was free. Jamaica is Africa, because people there live like in Africa.

What do you say to Jamaican Rastas who want to repatriate to the Motherland?

It's a nice idea, but I don't think it's possible. Repatriation should be spiritual, not physical. We are very proud to have black people everywhere in the world. I'd never say that slavery was a good thing. But I say, look at Barack Obama being the president of the USA, nobody would have thought that was possible just five years ago. This is something positive. When I go to Jamaica, to Martinique, to Guadeloupe, to St. Lucia, all over the world you have islands with black people. Today, nobody could bring them to Africa. And Jamaican artists shouldn't just talk about Africa all the time. I hope they will come to Africa to learn to know it and to

play there. They can encourage Africans to love their continent.

Have you performed live in Jamaica?

No, never. I should have done that once five years ago but it was cancelled. I would have performed in Haiti first, then proceed to Kingston, but there was a revolution going on in Haiti so we couldn't go. But I'd really like to play in Jamaica and build a school in Trenchtown because I know they need that.



One concert one school operation. Tiken Jah Fakoly offers a building to Biafra school.

Photos © Prisca pour Abidjan.net

Right, your campaign "Un concert, une école".

I started this campaign in France, where I did two shows to build two schools in Africa. And I wanted to play concerts in Africa to build schools in Africa to show that we can help ourselves. The West isn't going to help us. It's part of the African revolution, you know. We did it, but didn't get any money to build the schools. I will continue. I just need sponsors. My dream is building one school in every African country before I die. I hope I'll have the energy to get there.

Do you prefer working in the studio or performing live on stage?

Performing live, definitely. Performing live is like a political rally for me. I meet the people and tell them what I want to tell them. Live and direct.

Would you say that Côte d'Ivoire's thriving Reggae scene is more creative than today's Jamaican one?

No, not really. Nobody can play Reggae music

better than Jamaican people. Bob Marley once said in an interview that Reggae music would return to Africa one day. And today, you can find the real message in African Reggae. You know, the Jamaican artists are fighting for Grammy awards now. They want to be famous in America and try to please the American audience. The real fight is led by African Reggae. We have a mission, talking about the majority of the population that is suffering.

You will soon open a Reggae club here in Bamako?

We need a Reggae club here. I am living here for eight years now and wanted to put Bamako on the Reggae map. If you go to Bamako and want to listen to Reggae at two o'clock in the morning you'll come here, to Radio Libre. I'll perform here and many others, too. The particularity of this club is that you can easily record all live music here as the studio H. Camara is just downstairs. There is a connection between the studio and the club.

You're living here in Bamako for eight years now. A couple of weeks ago, somebody intentionally burned down two of your cars and tried to set your home on fire. Are you still feeling safe here? Yeah, I'm safe in Bamako. I like to live here with the people. I don't want to be protected like a president. I have more security guards now, but I don't want to live with bodyguards everywhere. But I'm not afraid. I have an enemy somewhere who can't talk to me because I'm a lion, so he comes at night and sets fire to my house. He should come to me and talk or fight with me.

Why would somebody hate you that much?

I don't know, I really don't know. But I know it's nothing political, I don't have any problems with the government of Mali. If he reads your magazine, he shall come and face me personally!

Thank you very much for the interview, Tiken Jah!

Thank you very much! Big up United Reggae.



NEIL PERCH



INTERVIEW

BY ERIK MAGNI

He was on his way to a PhD in biochemistry and a lucrative career in the pharmaceutical industry. Instead, he became one of the most prominent producers and songwriters in the field of dub. Neil Perch, the man behind Zion Train and Abassi All Stars and labels Universal Egg and Deep Root, tells his story and predicts the future of dub.

Neil Perch is a bona fide dub pioneer. He started Zion Train about 20 years ago and has since then produced rough and tough tunes for himself and for others. But none would have thought that he'd become a musician.

In the mid 80's, Neil got his Master's degree in biochemistry and was ready to begin his doctoral studies. But something happened. He went to a sound system dance with Jah Shaka and was blown away. Today he describes it as a supernatural and spiritual experience.

"I'm not religious, but there is some form of higher energy in certain types of music. Jah Shaka did something extraordinary that night. My whole family thought I was crazy when I quit my studies and a safe way to a high salary and a career. But I've never regretted the decision", says Neil on the phone from Cologne, where he lives with his wife and dog.

Working with something he loves

Before he dropped out, Neil had never set foot in a studio. He has no formal training in music and is entirely self-taught - which has been demanding - but he says he doesn't mind working hard doing something he loves.

Neil started his music career to produce dub exclusively, a genre he describes as psychedelic reggae.

"Dub is about inducing synesthesia and to create an experience that depends entirely on emotions", he explains poetically and adds that it's not about drugs.

Cultural aware

When I talk to Neil, it is obvious that he's an academic. He is articulate, politically aware and philosophical. He speaks German, Italian, Spanish and French and complains about the British and the Americans because he believes they're lazy and don't care about other cultures.



"Cultural change provides a lot of knowledge and wisdom. It's important to travel and learn about other cultures and languages. I don't think you can get to know a person until you speak the same language."

During our conversation, Neil comes back to politics, apparently a beloved subject. Not party politics, but more conspiratorial thoughts about politics behind the decisions we make in life.

"We're all slaves in the economy. It's the JP Morgans and the Rothschilds that decide."

However, it was party policy in England that prompted him to leave and move to Germany - a country with a system he's not satisfied with. But he still believes that Germany is better than other countries.

Do it yourself

Neil is a typical DIY-profile. He does most things himself and is keen on giving something back to the reggae scene. He, among other things, promotes unknown bands and artists.



Key ingredients in the development of dub

How dub will evolve is difficult to predict.

Neil believes that it is partly a technology thing, but also due to the environment in which music is produced. He raises a more unexpected reason for the development of dub.

– I believe that the supply of marijuana or what other substances are available in the creative process, will play a role in the development. I also believe that there will be more influences from world music and that producers from countries like Brazil will play a key role. It's those who are the newest and most hungry that will make the most exciting stuff, Neil concludes.

Be sure to check out the new Deep Root compilation consisting of hard to find 7" and the new single from Zion Train – a recut of Aswad's classic Rainbow Children. These may not be the future of dub, but a great addition to the record collection.



Neil insists that it's in the underground scene things happen. He's fascinated by the fact that there is so much dub being produced in the world, when most people don't even know the genre exists. But even if dub is an underground phenomenon, it does not prevent the music from being distributed worldwide. According to Neil, Mexico is one of the countries where dub is in high demand.

– The last time I was in Mexico, we did nine concerts. The audience likes a lot of brass and dub music that goes back to the roots, he explains.

Rooted in 70's dub

Neil's own musical roots go back to the 70's and King Tubby. But he also highlights UK producers Adrian Sherwood and Mad Professor as inspirations.

– King Tubby is the best that has existed. A genius who could twist and turn everything. I think his greatness is that he didn't try so hard, says Neil, and explains that the combination Tommy McCook, Yabby You and King Tubby created magic.

Although Neil's heart is in dub from the 70's, he's



A close-up, profile portrait of Bob Andy, an older man with a full grey beard and long, thick dreadlocks. He is looking slightly to the right with a gentle smile. The background is a textured, warm-toned wall. The text 'BOB ANDY' is overlaid in a dark brown box at the top left, and 'INTERVIEW' is overlaid in a dark brown box at the bottom left, with 'BY ANGUS TAYLOR' in smaller text to its right.

BOB ANDY

INTERVIEW

BY ANGUS TAYLOR

Ask a random person for the greatest song-smith in reggae and they'll likely say Bob Marley. But try someone immersed in the music and they'll doubtless tell you it is Bob Andy. A founder member of the rocksteady group the Paragons, the man born Keith Anderson became a songwriter for Coxsone Dodd's Studio 1 label then formed an international hit-making duo with Marcia Griffiths as well as being a celebrated artist in his own right. Peerless compositions *Too Experienced* and *My Time* would be covered by later greats such as Gregory Isaacs and Barrington Levy, yet, sadly, legal wrangles with Dodd over his tour-de-force album *Bob Andy's Songbook* have resulted in his deceptively simple writing not being sufficiently recognized in wider, non-reggae, circles. Nonetheless he has remained a hallowed figure in the Jamaican arts: becoming an actor, getting heavily involved in the island's copyright issues, and receiving the Order Of Distinction in 2006. Angus Taylor was granted a short interview with the legend after performing at Rototom Sunsplash 2010, where, despite feeling unwell, he enjoyed rapturous applause. Thanks are due to Teresa Fontanelli and Nicole Jewitt for helping make this and other Rototom interviews possible.

How did it feel to play at Rototom and see the songs you wrote decades ago still touching and moving thousands of people, many of whom were born generations after?

I'm still flabbergasted, as they would say, it blows my mind. I was so pleasantly surprised. I was sick when I went on stage and the response was so medicinal that I was able to get better and better and better. It's going to take me a long time to come to terms with what happened last night. I'm still surprised.

So you've been unwell?

I got sick in England [where he played at the Jazz Café in London the weekend before] and I wasn't even sure if I was going to be able to sing. But once I got here and saw the audience I knew I had to make the effort and I was so glad I was able to complete the show. A wonderful experience.

You've praised as one of the great songwriters in reggae and in all popular music. But who's your own personal favourite songwriter?

I would have to say it's between Curtis Mayfield, Bob Dylan and Smokey Robinson – with Bob Dylan probably topping

"My favourite songwriters are Curtis Mayfield, Bob Dylan and Smokey Robinson with Bob Dylan probably topping the list."

the list. And also, as far as I'm concerned, all my contemporaries in Jamaica: Beres Hammond, Gregory Isaacs, Bob Marley and to some extent Leroy Sibbles and Junior Byles. These guys are also great songwriters.

Now you have worked harder than most to help ensure that Jamaican artists are paid what they are owed. But at the same time your great *Songbook* album is still very hard to get hold of. What would be your ideal solution to get this crucial album to the people while ensuring you are recompensed for what you have done?

Well as we speak Studio 1 and myself are in the courts trying to determine who owns what. Ideally, I'd love for them to just grow up and give me my album – because I think they've already made enough money from it – so I could make it available to the people at large.

It's been 40 years since you cut *Young Gifted and Black* with Marcia Griffiths who is also on the bill for Rototom here in Spain. Would you consider doing anything with her to celebrate?

Oh yes! This minute! We've talked about it so it's still possible. While we're alive anything is possible. As a matter of fact, Marcia made a big fuss over the fact that we weren't playing the same night here. We would have loved for us to play on the same night because we could have done something together.

Your songs have been covered many times. What would be your favourite version done by someone else?

I would say Barrington Levy has done me great compliments as has Sanchez. But I would have to say, Eddie Lovette, an American R&B singer, did a cover of *Too Experienced* that was an amazing rendition.

What would you say has been the greatest honour of your career?

Well last night certainly was one of the greatest honours of my career! For me, though, it's that they say a prophet is not praised in his own country but in Jamaica the amount of respect, admiration and love I get on a daily basis from all strata of the society is just overwhelming. It continues to be an honour.

Finally, you've been a singer, a songwriter and an actor. Do you have any more hidden talents or career options up your sleeve?

Well I'm sixty-six years young – we'll see! (laughs)



Mortima Hardly by Natural Black

Coming from what is, arguably, the most interesting set of circumstances to be found on the landscape of modern Roots Reggae music, the Guyana born Natural Black has spent the better portion of the past decade and a half or so establishing himself as one of the most dependable artists in the business. His career has been marked by outstanding stretches of not only activity, but consistency as well and his presence has become quite the fixture on the scene during this current era. Perhaps that would explain the fact that while it was only early 2009 when Black released his most recent album, 'Guardian Angel', it's seemed like ages since last the world received a full length studio album from the virtual production factory known as Natural Black.

Well, apparently the artist himself agreed as he recently brought forth, via Rippa Blaxxx Productions and Grillaras Productions [and digitally via Zojak Worldwide], his latest creation, the pseudo eponymous 'Mortima Hardly'. In 1975 Natural Black was born Mortimer Softley and the very fitting title to his new album seems to suggest a 'harder' edge to his well known style and while "harder" is debatable, one could very easily make the point that it shapes up to be his most colourful effort to date given the varied nature of the vibes on the album. Take, for example, the opener Running Away. The tune, with its nearly hypnotic and trance-like backing, borders on Jazz and the sorts, but lyrically, as he does throughout the album, Natural Black really turns things up.

The album's first single, Beautiful Lady, is another very differently vibed song. This one comes with a very 'large sound', before settling into a very nice sound to which Natural Black locks his words. Throughout 'Mortima Hardly' the chanter is provided with such 'genre-bending' backdrops and, for the most part, he does quite well over them. Tunes such as the Hip-Hoppish Open Your Ears, the smooth All Over You, the bouncing Distance Yourself and the final vocal track in particular, Who Selassie I Bless should find an audience with the more Reggae-centric individuals [such as those of you who frequent this site], given the proper amount of time. While some of them may not register immediately, the keenest of listener of the album may very think this album one of Natu



ral Black's better efforts because of how different it sounds over time.

For those who have come seeking a full on Reggae album, however, don't worry - 'Mortima Hardly' has something for you as well - And has it in the form of the best material to be found on the entire album. At the absolute pinnacle of the set is the peerless Nyah drum backed Straight With.

**"Haile Selassie you fi straight with
Know who you fi go through di gate with
Cover yourself, no x-rated
No Queen no fi go through naked"**

Along with this big tune are other scintillating numbers like the lovely early piece Ethiopia Awaits. There is also a tune in Ready Your Mind which is almost perfect lyrically, Dog Nyammings and Sunshine Glory, probably the second largest moment to be found here. Still, with all of that being said, the tune which is certain to monopolize the attentions of Reggae fans is actually a Hip-Hp tune, Sufferation, as it just so happens to feature Natural Black rhyming alongside Reggae legend Sizzla Kalonji. What is to be stressed in the case of Natural Black's 'Mortima Hardly' album is patience. Anyone with a great interest in this album is almost certain to be a deeply involved fan of Reggae music and because of the nature of the music here, it is very tempting to just past the songs which add a bit of spice outside of the normal one-drop. Doing so, however, would mean missing what just may be not only Natural Black's most unusual release to date, but also his most lyrically impressive as well.

Review by Ras Achis

Rise Up

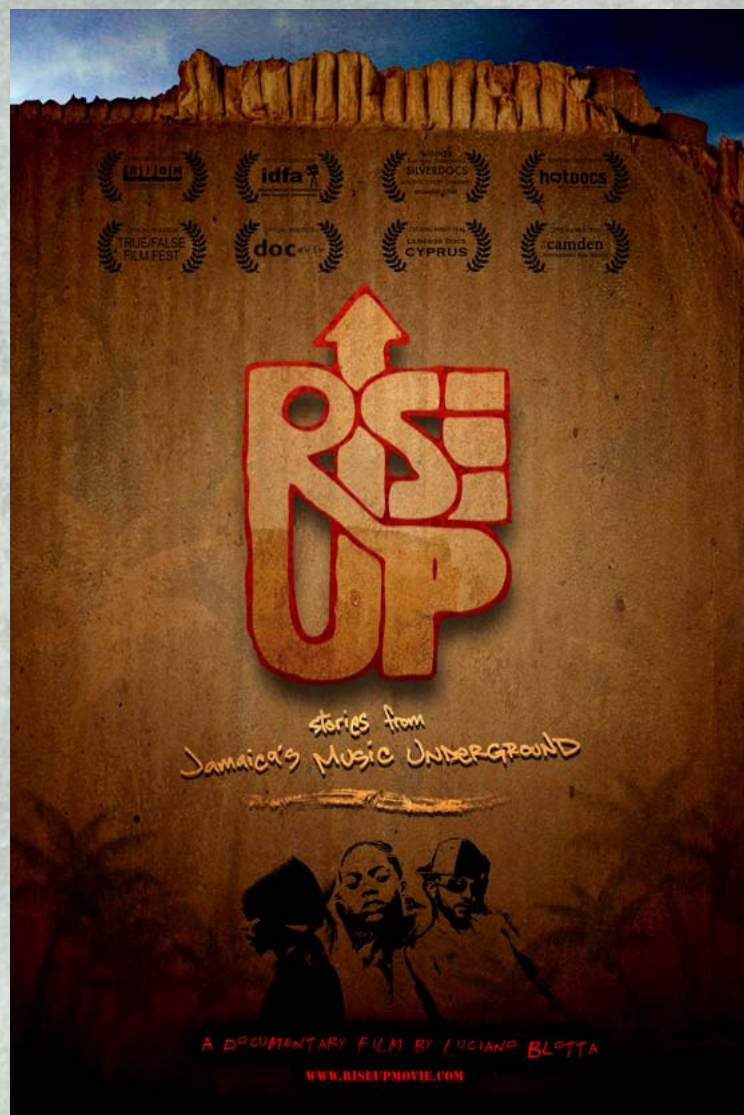
'Rise Up' the newest Jamaican film and - surprisingly - a documentary, premiered in Kingston at the Carib, the city's main cinema and the reception was very positive. It's rare - if ever - that a documentary film is screened at the Carib, and even rarer that a documentary film goes on island-wide release. But 'Rise Up' is no ordinary documentary; the three stories of the three artists in the film make it feel like a feature film, as we follow each from the early years of their careers seven years ago.

Kemoy is an innocently beautiful country girl with a simple, unprocessed hairstyle and a pure angelic voice, singing songs with unique high notes that have flowed naturally out of her. She smilingly dismisses the neighbourhood boys who seek her company, holding out for which looks like a promising career. But when we return a year later, Kemoy is now pregnant. The film makers take their pregnant protege to seasoned performer, singer-pianist Suzanne Couch for some training, and then to audition for Sly & Robbie, who say she has massive potential. But when we next meet Kemoy, her singing dreams are on hold for motherhood of her 2 year old son.

Turbulence was a skinny, brash-talking teenager living at his mother's humble home in the Hungry Town ghetto, when 'Rise Up' director Luciano Blotta first started filming. But he was sure he was going to make it and prepared to wait for his moment. After several songs that made little impact on the charts, as well as touring as opening act for Sizzla Kalonji, Turbulence burst into the reggae superstar galaxy with the video for his single Notorious, which went to No1 and established him as an artist. 'Rise Up' enables the viewer to follow this journey from beginning to now, and we smile to see Turbulence showing us the additions and improvements he has made to his mother's house and to the upgrade of the Hungry Town community.

Juss Ice has a different story. As narrator Malakat explains in the film, some people feel that reggae music 'belongs to poor people', so Michael 'Ice' Lewis — a white-skinned teenager from the same privileged uptown origins as Sean Paul — constantly has to prove he is just as entitled as any other Jamaican to pour out the music within him, and worthy to be taken seriously. Ice has joined with two other white uptowners to form Ice Anastasia, a group whose CD is good enough to get them booked as an opening act on Reggae Sumfest 2005. As he drives his 'criss' car and visits his 'downtown' friends, we see a cocky, rootsy and talented artist whose song lyrics come from real life experiences.

But despite all preparations, the first-time-ever-on-stage debut of Ice Anastasia is an out-of-tune flop. Ice tells his team it was a bad show after all their rehearsals, but he throws his shoulders back and says "This is only the beginning."



The audience at the premiere applauded this scene loudly, and one person shouted "Don't stop!"

Ice has continued his career nonsstop since then, making several singles and performing occasionally at clubs in Jamaica. He has built up a name for himself as one of the new crop of upcoming artists and 'Rise Up' will help him get closer to his objective to fulfill the promise of the film. The day after the premiere, Ice and his new management invited me to the set of a video shoot for his new single.

The film shows three strong characters: one who made it, one who didn't make it because of circumstances she couldn't control, and one who is determined to make it, no matter what. 'Rise Up' spreads their musical lives before us and invites us to continue watching. Director Luciano Blotta has done an excellent job, skillfully placing his camera as a fly-on-the-wall in some of the moments that make the film special.

Praise must also be given to Jamaican producer Carlo 'Amlak' Less, who carefully negotiated all the many roads necessary to enable the director to capture the scenes and personalities of this charming film. I loved it.

Review by Barbara Blake Hannah

UK Flu



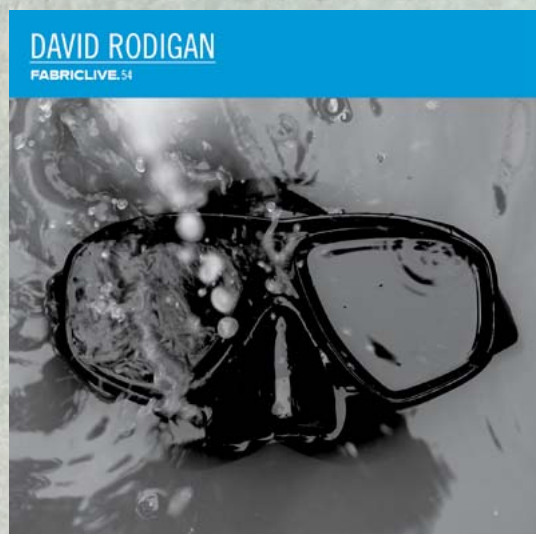
UK colds, flu and other viruses are an occupational hazard for the visiting reggae performer. Yet just in time for the sickly season, comes a "Flu" of a more welcome kind, an uplifting 12 track rhythm album out of Tippa Irie's Croydon-based Lockdown Productions.

The title might suggest a UK-only showcase but this is a truly international release. The original template for the rhythm is Jamaican (Alton Ellis' Break-ing Up), the band is UK-meets-Germany (drums and horns from Marco Baresi and Steffen Zimmer from Leipzig's Far East Band, Bubblers from Ruff Cutt on keyboards) while some of the voicing artists hail from the Netherlands (the rich, soulful Maikal X), Belgium (Lee Perry's late-blooming deejay son Omar), Sweden (a Jah Cure like turn from Joey Fever) and even LA (rapper and protégé of the Eurhythmics' Dave Stewart - Nadirah X).

In the end though, the British-based artists are not to be outdone. From Colour T's Bobo message Pure and Clean to JC Lodge's straight-up home-grown lovers rock Love Rewind, there are enough takes on this perennial backing to keep everyone happy Veteran Maxi Priest sounds unchanged on Bonafide Love (co-written with Mr Irie), while the catchiest and most immediate efforts come from Dan I with his Auto-Tuned Come Back To Love and Angel by the honey-voiced Jojo Mack. Tippa's fans will know his own Truths and Rights from latest album 'Stick To My Roots'. United Reggae's UK office was hit by a virus literally the day this promo arrived. That it didn't halt the pleasure in a single piece of this classic relick series tells you all you need to know. Take the day off work and enjoy...

Review by Angus Taylor

David Rodigan - Fabriclive 54



Champion British selector David Rodigan has been bringing his deep bag of specials and innate ability to work a crowd to the world for 20 years. An appearance at London super-club Fabric spurred him to mix some of his favourite sides for their 54th Fabriclive release – where his eclectic tastes, with no one big label calling the shots on his choices, make this the best celebrity-endorsed reggae compilation since Jah Shaka's The Positive Message for Greensleeves in 2009.

There's a lot one can learn about Rodigan from listening to this disc. Basically, anything goes: whether it's roots and dub from the 1970s (King Tubby and Augustus Pablo), 2000s dancehall (Cham's brutal but brilliant Ghetto Story), or even dubstep (David's son Cadenza's remix of Keith and Tex's Stop That Train), so long as it rams the dance, it's in.

Rodigan's well-publicised disillusionment with modern Jamaican product means most of the island's output here is pre-2007. Of the later material, two of the productions are by veterans Sly & Robbie – Chezidek's Borderline and Bitty McLean's Plead My Cause.

He's a big backer of non-Jamaican singer-deejays he deems "real authentic reggae music". The Sicilian Alborosie's 2006 self-produced hit Kingston Town rubs shoulders with Bermudian Collie Buddz's Bobby Konders-helmed Come Around, and Sweden's Million Stylez on UK wunderkind Curtis Lynch's update of the Junjo Lawes classic, Police In Helicopter.

In fact, Lynch's productions occur more than anyone else's, illustrating Rodigan's support of British talent if it can reach beyond its shores. Interestingly, there is none of the heavy UK sound system, Shaka-influenced dub that splintered off from mainstream reggae in the 80s; yet dubstep, which shares many of its traits, has the man's golden ear.

Too often celebrity collections are just a company trying to push their latest reissues and new singles. By sourcing tunes from multiple publishers (that they all got licensed confirms Rodigan's industry standing) this selection avoids these pitfalls while, crucially, showing that in the right hands all styles of Jamaican and Jamaican-inspired music can be friends.

Review by Angus Taylor

Dubmatix - System Shakedown

Earlier this year Jesse King aka Dubmatix won the 2010 Juno Award for Best Recording of the year with 'Gonna Be Alright' featuring Prince Blanco and I am sure he will win many more plaudits and fans with the release of this his fourth album 'System Shakedown'.

For me the Canadian reggae / dub artist and producer has returned with his best album yet and for lovers of bass-heavy, well orchestrated old skool feeling riddims that have been sprinkled with the use of new technologies and musical styles this is where it's at. Just as with 2008's 'Renegade Rocker' he has collected together a mixture of recognised and respected vocalists from the reggae establishment with some of those that perhaps don't trip of the tongue quiet so easily yet, unless that is you have followed Dubmatix for a while.

Of the maybe less recognised performers here first up is Toronto raised Kulcha Ites, who has worked with Dubmatix on previous projects. He kicks things off nicely with the jovial Wobble Weeble, with his smooth vocals riding a top a head bobbing predominantly drum and bass powered riddim that invites us to get down and learn the latest dance craze. Another Canadian and former Dubmatix cohort is Ammoye. Originally born in Jamaica this in demand and multi-genre vocalist, who released her first debut long player 'Haffi Win' with Rise Ashen earlier this year, gives an authoritative singjay performance on the brooding electro pulse Lock Down.



Completing the Canadian connection is Jay Douglas on Celebrate My Love. Again originally from Jamaica this veteran artist immigrated to Toronto in 1963 where he fronted local R&B combo, The Cougars. His voice possesses a slightly gravelly soulful quality that has real warmth and is perfect for this driving upbeat roots rockers riddim.

Flying the flag for the UK are the popular Brother Culture and Hackneys finest the London UNITY sound system veteran MC's The Ragga Twins. Brother Culture, who toured with Dubmatix throughout the summer, brings us Rough Likkle Sound which is anything but with its melodic bass line, sparking keyboards and understated horns, while the twins chat to a graceful and dup steppy anti gang culture themed Gun Down. Of the those names that are more better known or established are Omar Perry, who continues to make a name for himself in his own rights with the dancehall hip-hop fusion of Dem no Like. Then there are the big guns like the Mighty Diamonds on a classic one drop emphasizing their golden harmonies on Give a Helping Hand. Dennis Alcapone and U Brown bring fine deejay style to full on steppers tune Struggle and the contemporary drum and bass beat of What Ya Gonna Do To Stop Me Now respectively. The resurging Tippa Irie chips in strongly, with the appropriately named Happy, a love song with a late '70s early 80's rub-a-dub vibe.

Two nice dubs / instrumentals are included on the album with Kingdom Dub, a nice rootsy bass burning, echoing / reverb effect laden offering that closes the set, just stealing it over the mid way interval Deep Dark Dub, a steppers dub that is true to its name. Both of these dubs feature blazing, triumphant horns and touches of ghostly vocals phrases wafting in and out; dubs just the way I like 'em. This is an album firmly planted in the here and now, but is also full of classic golden age of reggae vibes from the late '70s and early '80s, which means it does that great trick of having a warm and homely feel while still coming across as exciting and fresh.

Review by Karl Pearson

Gregory Isaacs on System Shakedown?

Last month I was asked to review the new album from Dubmatix 'System Shakedown'. The album, like 2008's 'Renegade Rockers', featured a collection of vocalists from across the reggae arena, with what was thought to be legendary Gregory Isaacs singing the title track. Unfortunately, for all concerned, it has since transpired that the vocalist on that track is not in fact Gregory but a Jamaican scammer who has been pretending to be him. Dubmatix told United Reggae :

"I'm of course very disappointed, shocked and angry that it is not Gregory but rather a shyster, taking advantage of people, their hard earned money and good names. I also am upset for those of you who now have a copy of the CD or Album download that includes a track that is not by Gregory. I've worked with some of my favourite artists over the years including Sugar, Alton, Linval and more, and it's disheartening to think that someone would do this". Dubmatix went on to say *"On our end we've been working hard to remove his name from the track. References on all existing websites under the Dubmatix name have been removed, an updated CD cover and liner notes issued. All online retailers will also be making the correction as soon as possible and all future CD pressings will have the track removed. It's a very unfortunate situation, however there are 12 additional songs on the System Shakedown album with legit singers such as The Mighty Diamonds, Tippa Irie, Brother Culture, Dennis Alcapone, Jay Douglas, Ammoye, U Brown, Kulcha Ites and more that all worked hard, as did myself, and I wouldn't want their efforts to be diminished. Now that I know for sure that it is not Gregory, it's important to set the record straight out of respect for Gregory's family, the fans and myself."*

Penthouse Showcase Volume 7

Penthouse Records just released the 7th volume of his Showcase series. The compilation begins with 2 songs of female singers Elaine and Sherieta Lewis on the latest riddim released by the label : the Big Stage riddim, played by the young and talented multi-instrumentalist Bunny-Ann Fletcher. Buju Banton's fans will be delighted to find the previously unreleased song Checking Out, recorded in 1993 on the Get In The Groove riddim from The Heptones. Another surprise, Daville presents us the variety of his talent in a real singjay style on the same riddim than the Sanchez's hit Won't Surrender.

The sentimental songs are for the honor, as often with Penthouse, with Marcia Griffiths, Maxi Priest, Nikki Burt and Cameal Davis (Rising Stars 2008 winner). The Mighty Diamonds pursue their collaboration with successful producer Donovan Germain begun more than 20 years ago with their new Back-A-Wall demonstrating their subtle vocal harmonies. Penthouse new artists are also represented. The gospel artist Prodigal on a new version of the Time Will Tell Marley's riddim and Torch who delivers us an outline of his debut album which will be in stores next year. The compilation ends with the recut of the famous Duck riddim played by Cleve himself with Romain Virgo, Busy Signal, the new talent Khago, the veteran DJs Galaxy P and Flourgan (in combination with Buju Banton's sister Adena Myrie).

Review by Guillaume Huyard

Teach Them Right by Apple Gabriel



We've heard the Dutch double-team of JahSolidRock and Not Easy At All Productions put their glossy but undeniably rootsy rhythms behind a modern throwback to the age of the reflective Rastaman (for Chezidek's 'Judgement Time'). Their latest venture, however, features a genuine elder statesman from that era - Israel Vibration's ex-frontman Apple Gabriel, no less.

Gabriel's back-story is one that puts most Reality TV singers in the shade. Since his split from the group he met in a Kingston polio clinic, further health problems left him homelessness on the streets of Georgia. That he has recorded an album at all even would be remarkable even if the music were of middling artistic merit. All the better then, that it is a considerable success.

Apple's delicate dried-honey voice - with its trademark stuttering vibrato - takes both lead and backing vocals, over the two production houses' gleaming arrangements, heavily processed horns, bubbling sfx, and those lengthy tape delays. Like fellow album-of-the-year contender Gappy Ranks, Gabriel's rough-sleeping life informs his perspective. First track Mr Conman warns "Same man you pass on the way up, you pass on the way down" to a coolly menacing swinging backbeat; while In The Jungle (on Not Easy's rhythm for Wildlife's Too Tuff) uses the

familiar phrase "cold ground was my bed" with a bite and conviction not often felt in recent years. Even during the record's lyrically upbeat second act the performance never drops its passion and punch. On Gifted Ones - essentially a list of quotations from soul singers past and present - Michael Jackson's "want to be starting something" line takes on a newfound fire.

At a time when the Jamaican media seems belatedly perplexed by the foreign success of the B side as a stand-alone art form (instead of a perfunctory canvas for deejays to ride) the two labels have taken the much-missed sensible middle ground. They've continued their tradition of the "showcase album" where each tune melts into a Nether-never-land of dub.

As a sufferer of polio and destitution Gabriel is no stranger to prejudice. On the same rhythm as Chezidek's Hypocrite World, Give Them Love speaks out unashamedly against anti-gay and religious intolerance. Proverbial lyrics aside, there is much to learn from these righteous teachings. The label duo demonstrate once more how co-operation can get results in these uncertain times while Apple Gabriel gives his younger peers a lesson in consummate vocal craft. Though there's nothing that quite matches Chezidek's blazing opener Ganja Tree, this is a more consistent album than 'Judgement Time' and one you should own.

Review by Angus Taylor

Reggae Bubblers

Man Heart So Cold

The Reggae Bubblers are a Roots and Culture band from the little island of St. Croix in the U.S Virgin Islands. The island they live on may be small (even if it is largest of the U.S. Virgin Islands), but they have a big, big sound.

The album they have produced here is entrenched in the finest roots traditions and full of Rastafarian sentiments, in fact I'd go so far as to say this is probably the strongest Rastafarian inspired album I have heard in a long, long time.



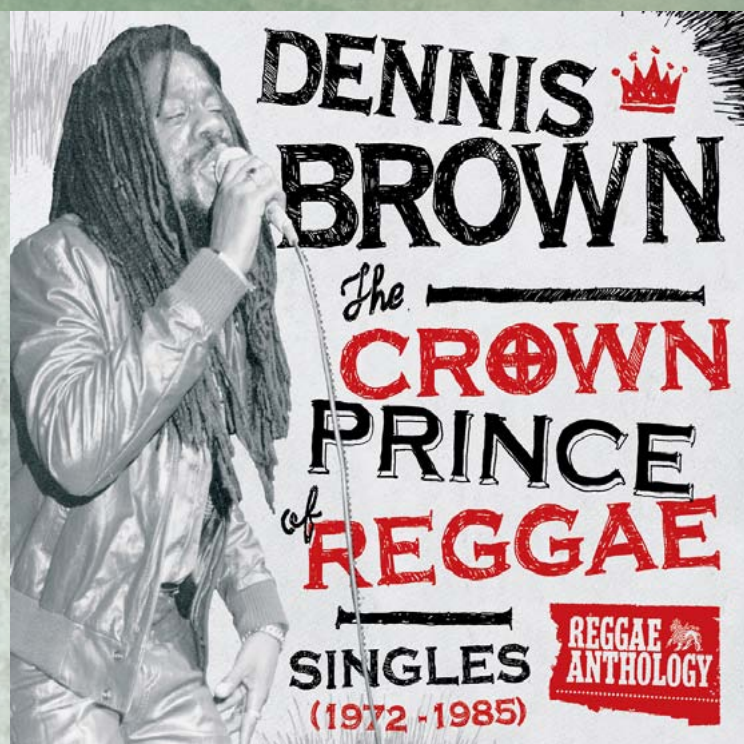
Musically the album is assured, as it should be I suppose from a band who have now released around 11 albums, with founding member Hayba Warner's bass at its powerful beating heart. On songs like High Society and Hope & Pray it comes like fire and brimstone raining down while even on lighter numbers like opener Zion Is A Holy Place and Love Life and Live there is a sense of restrained menace that drives their messages on. Drums are lively, with keyboards that are bouncy and while Hayba and Cheech may not be the most refined vocalists in the world they have an honest quality about them and the female backing harmonies are bright and soothing.

Lyrically as I say at the beginning it's all about praises to Jah and fighting for the rights of people suffering in the system of Babylon, where man heart so cold. The thing with roots music and probably what draws myself to it most is that it is rarely down beat and despite songs like the title track and Time, Time being concerned with the plight of the sufferers it is never morose, but always looks for positives and draws strength from the firm belief that righteousness will prevail not matter what. Also in these times of troubles and growing mistrust the call for unity and one love is loud, helping to give it a strong feel good factor.

Production is unfussy and arrangements simple, leaving the whole album with a bit of an old time, feel especially on the songs that contain those old skool string sounding synths. This simplicity and lack of modern technology may not appeal to all and indeed to some seem a bit tired, plus the messages in their lyrics could be deemed a bit preachy in parts.

All in though, despite some slight misgivings, this is an album of good, forthright, uncomplicated roots music that imparts a just message not just for Rastafarians but for all.

Review by Karl Pearson



Dennis Brown

The Crown Prince of Reggae

The record market is flooded with compilations and it's sometimes hard to distinct the good ones from the poorer.

One artist that has been subject for a number of compilations is the late and great Dennis Brown. During his prolific career he recorded several wicked albums and singles.

Last year saw the release of 'Dennis Brown & The DJs - Joe Gibbs 12" Selection'. This was a nice eleven track compilation of hard to find duets where Dennis Brown had teamed up with deejays such as Big Youth, U Brown and Welton Irie. Now it's time for another supposedly good compilation of Dennis Brown material. This time it's put out by 17 North Parade - a subsidiary of VP Records.

'The Crown Prince of Reggae - Singles (1972 - 1985)' is a three-disc compilation of many of his hit singles. Two of the discs collect 40 tunes, both anthems such as Revolution and Created by the Father and lesser known works like Praise Without Raise.

The third disc is what makes this release stand out. It's a DVD from a Dennis Brown concert in Montreux in 1979. This concert has been available on vinyl, CD and DVD before, but is now part of a great package. The live version of The Drifter is one of the best performances I've ever seen and is highly recommended.

In 2003 Trojan Records released an album titled 'The Crown Prince of Reggae' collecting 20 tracks. Even though a number of tunes are represented on both albums, this new one seems to be a good investment.

Review by Erik Magni



Lee Perry - Kiss Me Neck

Reggae historian Steve Barrow once described his role as the A&R man for his venerable reissue label Blood & Fire as “rescuing music from vinyl oblivion”. Certainly any serious fan of Jamaican music will be familiar with “vinyl oblivion” as they spend years building up a decent collection of records. Even a humble collector like myself (who only discovered reggae well into the CD era) will soon learn about the often bewildering world of collecting Jamaican music: hundreds of labels, limited edition pressings, songs mistakenly credited to another artist, mysterious blank label records and other fascinating enigmas.

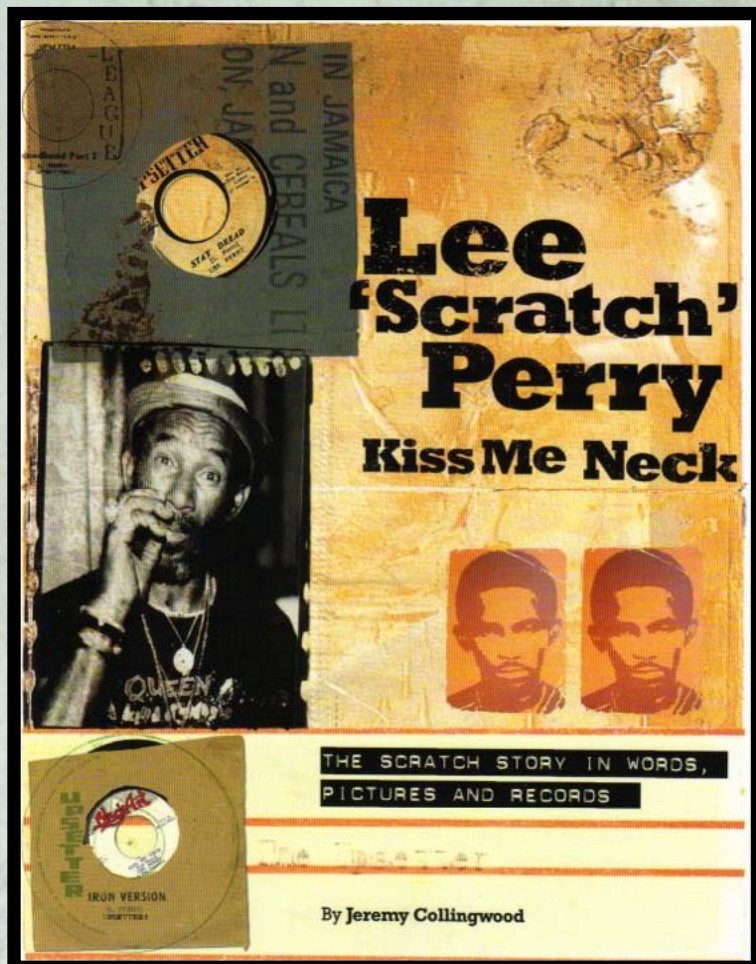
Beyond collecting, creating any discography of Jamaican music can be difficult, given the often haphazard nature of record production in Jamaica. When it comes to tackling a discography that accounts for the hundreds of releases that producer Lee Perry has been involved with over a 40-year career, spanning decades and continents, you are left with a Herculean task, or at least a task best performed by the very dedicated and the very patient.

Jeremy Collingwood spent more than 10 years creating *Kiss Me Neck*, drawing upon an earlier discography he co-authored with David Katz, *Give Me Power*, in 2003. With so much new information on Perry’s music being discovered over the past decade and shared in an unprecedented way through the internet, in Collingwood’s own words, he had to start from scratch with *Scratch*. *Kiss Me Neck* comes packed with hundreds of rare photos, label scans and newspaper clippings from Collingwood’s personal collection. It presents Lee Perry’s music as more than just a dry list of labels and matrix numbers; these records - and their related empha - are pieces of history.

The book contains a two part biography that gives a breezy overview of Perry’s career from his Studio One days until the present, nicely illustrated with many rare photos. The heart of the book, the discography, is broken down into six sections: Jamaican Singles, Albums, UK Singles, UK and European Discos, US and Canadian Singles, and US Discos. Most fascinating are the sections that deal with the aforementioned “vinyl oblivion”: 50 pages of appendices that include a listing of obscure records with a Perry connection, dub plates, a listing of the samples Perry used, a comprehensive listing of blank label singles, a list of reissued singles and more.

In short, *Kiss Me Neck* is a remarkable accomplishment. It’s a book for serious Lee Perry fans written by a serious Lee Perry fan. It goes without saying - given the obsessive nature of record collectors - that reggae nerds and trainspotters will marvel at the detail it goes into, even if they will no doubt find omissions, errors and finer points to quibble about. (For example, I noticed that Perry’s 2003 Jamaican single “Heavy Respect” on Yam Euphony, listed in my discography, isn’t included in *Kiss Me Neck*). But can there ever be a book that gets everything right?

While it pains me to be too critical about such an impressive endeavour, *Kiss Me Neck* is unfortunately marred by several flaws that distract from the wealth of information in the book. These have less to do with the content itself, but the way that it is presented on the page. The main critique is that the text throughout is in drastic need of an edit.

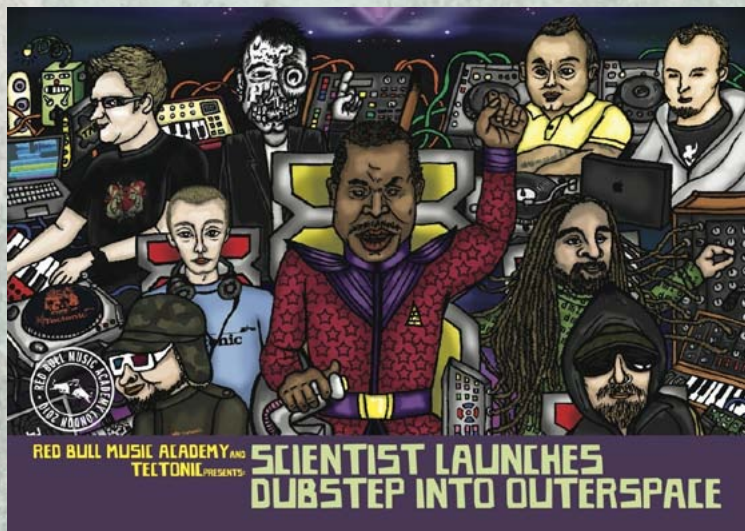


While Collingwood’s informal style of writing is quite likeable, it could certainly do with some edits to tighten it up for readers. Also, the entire book is filled with distracting typos and spelling mistakes (for example, Vivian Jackson’s name being misspelled as “Vivain”) as well as odd capitalizations and punctuation throughout. Given that every word processing program has a spell checker and every publishing house has a proof reader, these errors are really unforgivable. The layout of the book also needs a critical eye cast over it. Since we are dealing with hundreds of pages of listings, it’s important that they should be laid out in a logical and clear way. While the section on Jamaican singles has an easy to follow layout, the UK singles section has a different, more obtuse layout - why?

Ironically, the “What About?” appendix - where Collingwood makes

an attempt to sort out the confusion surrounding the many obscure records that may or may not have a definite Lee Perry connection - ends up being confusing to navigate due to the choice of letters and numbers to define the various sections and listings. Once again, the information is fascinating, but the way it’s presented leaves something to be desired. The “What About?” section also includes a four page Aston “Familyman” Barrett discography, listing records that have nothing to do with Lee Perry, so it’s unclear as to why it was included.

Despite these oversights and unfortunate distractions, *Kiss Me Neck* is a monumental survey of Lee Perry’s music. Whether you’ve been a dedicated Scratchologist from the 1970s and have most of these records on your shelf, or - like me - are a serious fan who wants a comprehensive listing of almost everything in the Lee Perry catalogue, *Kiss Me Neck* is essential.



Scientist Launches Dubstep into Outer Space

From Scientist comes this serious double-CD of dubstep rhythms. One CD consists of 'dubstep originals' in the shape of 12 unreleased tracks from producers including Kode 9, Shackleton, Pinch and Mala; the other comprises Scientist's mixes of the same rhythms.

It opens with Pinch (ft Emika) and the atmospheric '2012', the synth intro opening out into a dubstep percussive sound, before reverting to its outer-spacey themes in the outro. The Scientist mix adds much echo and a very heavy treatment of the rhythm to generate another take on the same track. Guido's 'Korg Back', a fairly straightforward three chord rhythm, retains its simple structure in Scientist's hands, along with a haze of electro sounds. The collection closes in cosmos style with 'Abeng' from Kode 9 and Spaceape, the feel justifying the 'launch into outer space' theme of this release. Overall it's an ambitious bunch of tracks but interestingly it remains accessible to audiences that might not yet be fully signed-up to dubstep.

Although Scientist (Hopetown Brown) has been working in-dub since his mid-70s experience at King Tubby's studio's in Dromilly Road, Kingston, Jamaica, there is nothing retro about this urgent mix of ultra-contemporary dubstep rhythms and their unprecedented remixing and redefinition by one of the masters of the arts of dub.

Label boss Pinch says "This project has taken over a year to put together from its conception late last summer. The final results are worth every minute of effort that's gone into this – this is definitely my proudest moment for Tectonic to date. The influence of dub swings round full circle".

The album is supported by a short UK and Ireland tour 18th – 25th November 2010: live, 'SCIENTIST VS THE UPSETTERS' with DJS Pinch, Mala, Loefah, and Pokes, beginning at Fabric, London before taking in Dublin, Bournemouth, Glasgow, Nottingham, Brighton and Bristol. On the tour Scientist will be live dub mixing rhythms from the one and only Upsetters, bringing past and present together.

Review by John Fenwick

A Waterlogged Soul Kitchen by Taj Weekes and Adowa

There is a certain style of roots reggae pioneered and popularized by the late Bob Marley, where many latter-day cultural singers rightly fear to tread. Its swung rhythms, bouncy clavinet, Scratch Perry-inspired, curiously-phrased vocals and rebel stance can easily sound hackneyed in the wrong hands.

Yet once again, the NYC-based St Lucian singer Taj Weekes and his band Adowa (named for the Ethiopian victory over the Italians in 1896) have stepped up to the plate with the confidence that sires success. Just like 2008's predecessor 'Deidem', third album 'A Waterlogged Soul Kitchen' indicates the kind of special talent who can update this archetypal persona and make it work.



As before there are three key elements to Taj's achievements: his songwriting, his lyrics and his voice. His grainy, otherworldly falsetto could imbue even the most trite doggerel with deep meaning, yet his words have depth all locked down. Again, his focus is on the big bleak events that have affected the world: war, natural disasters, terrorism, and environmental destruction. His love of dichotomous concepts still features strongly: opening track Just A Dream ponders, "when in life, death is all that's seen" while Before The War weighs up its protagonists life "before and after the war". Meanwhile Adowa's clean, crisp rhythms still channel classical roots reggae through modern studio technology with the added bonus of extra horns. But there are also more daring departures from Deidem's template, suggesting a new level of assurance and maturity here. Like Clinton Fearon's 'Mi De Yah', also cut in the States, strings create an at once bucolic and global feel for both Janjaweed (referencing the Sudanese gunmen of the same name) and abuse tale Sunny Innocents (which also assimilates abrupt dancehall stabs – think the Stepz rhythm - into its beat). The acoustic shuffle of Anthems Of Hope even bears a verse sung in a child's voice – mirroring Weekes' own ageless tones. And there are familiarities. Two Joints is a breakup song similar to Deidem's Hollow Display. Shadow Of A Bird has a pre-roots tempo like the previous record's Since Cain, and Rain Rain revisits the effects of Hurricane Katrina, which Taj first examined on piano ballad Louisiana. This time the closing ballad, Drill, targets the oil industry, marrying driving chords and BP-spill-evoking gull sounds. At a trim 11 tracks there's no filler to be heard. The phrase "a Waterlogged Soul Kitchen" makes for a catchy if strange album title - yet listen to the music behind it and it makes perfect sense. Out for download since October 26th 2010, this predictably impressive follow-up is now available as a physical release..

Review by Angus Taylor

Errol Dunkley: Live In London

"Rest in peace Sugar... Live on Gregory," was Errol Dunkley's tribute to his fallen friends during his hit packed performance at the Hootananny on Thursday night. After the gun braps and cheers for the latter (with whom he had co-founded the famous African Museum label) and the former (who he recorded with right up to his illness) Errol couldn't resist a cheeky reminder that his own career had taken off first. The crowd took it in good humour, and rightly so, for in a year when so many veterans have left us, there was still one legend with an exquisite timbre and extraordinary back catalogue in our midst.

Often producing his own music and licensing it to the big labels of the day, the diminutive Dunkley never carved out a niche for any one producer and is perhaps not as well known as his contemporaries as a result. But on the upside, unlike many, he has stayed both consistent and in control of his royalties for the big tunes that, one after another, drove the three-quarter-full Brixton pub wild.

Backed by the solid Borderline Band, and dressed in a sleeveless shirt, straw hat and bandana, the former dancer offered up some slinky moves as he took us on "a trip down memory lane". Highlights included his second teen hit for Joe Gibbs, Please Stop Your Lying; Movie Star, his cover of fellow teenage sensation Delroy Wilson; and Black Cinderella, based on a poem written by the one-legged West Kingston producer Jimmy Radway. Even stronger were the awe-inspiring Created By The Father and individual's anthem Little Way Different (sung in response to the public getting confused between him and Dennis Brown) - rendered as the later cut (voiced for the UK's Dennis Bovell) by the band.

Support came from the riotously popular Jimmy London who sang his own raw yet heartfelt Gregory tribute a capella, and Anthony "Gunshot" Johnson, who showed there is much more to him than his huge dancehall smash.

An encore of the Philly-soul cover Betcha By Golly Wow closed what had been a select gathering with many important UK figures in attendance. Many of the key players in Errol's career, from Gregory to pioneering female producer Sonia Pottinger may have moved on but there was no sadness, only joy, as we followed him down the lane one more time.

Review by Angus Taylor





Independent VoYces Literary Fair



Showcase for Jamaican Authors

Authors came out in numbers to support the first Independent VoYces Literary Fair, organized by Judith Falloon-Reid in association with Bookophilia – the innovative Kingston bookstore that has become the favourite meeting place for Jamaican lovers of good books. The fair was organised specifically to support Jamaican authors and self-publishers, a growing field in a country where it is difficult to find publishers willing or able to print and distribute the growing number of locally-written books. As, especially at a time when books by Jamaicans or with Jamaican themes are topping the home best-seller lists.

Strawberry Fields, the venue, is a beautiful eco-adventure resort at Robins Bay, St. Mary on the north coast of Jamaica, within an hour's drive of Kingston. The setting was spectacular – a broad, green hillside sloped down to a white sand beach on which huge, white-foam waves crashed into turquoise sea, luring a bather or two. Patrons sat under tents strategically placed on the lawn, surrounded by a building housing the Bookophilia bookstore and crafts booths, while a food court perched on the hillside offered fish, jerked chicken, roast yam, bammy, corn and festival, washed down by coconut water chopped open from a huge pile resting under a coconut tree.

Readers and Books

Among the visiting authors were Yvonne McCalla Sobers, Erna Brodber, soon-to-be-published Horace Peterkin and Marcia Forbes who was promoting her new book *Music, Media & Adolescent Sexuality* – the first-ever examination of the ways in which contemporary music and music videos influence and affect the sexual behaviour of Jamaican youths. The launch of Marcia's book at the Pegasus Hotel last week was the biggest and most spectacular launch of any Jamaica book, with an excellent speech by Minister of Education Hon. Andrew Holness.



I was impressed by the poems read by dreadlocked Resident Magistrate Her Honour Lyle Armstrong, who in her other life is a quite an adventuress. Veronica Carnegie had the audience laughing and singing along as she read from her book *"The Tie Came Back"*, while broadcaster Tomlin Ellis gave a blast-from-the-past with his poetry. Jill Roberts not only gave

us a recipe from her cookbook *"A Hamper of Recipes from Jamaica"*, but offered all a slice of delicious carrot cake, while Mitze McPherson delivered delightfully from her poetry anthology *"Words"*. It was not all prose, as there were performances by the Jamaica Youth Theatre, as well as a virtuoso musical moment by Joe Tapper & the Speaking Sax. Among the special moments, I cannot forget a spectacular presentation by dub poet Kavel the Psalmist.

All praise is due to the two writers honoured at Independent VoYces. First was Hon. Melita Samuels, who was awarded the Order of Distinction in the recent Jamaican Honours. The second honouree was Dr. Jennifer Keane-Dawes, a former journalist now Dean of Graduate School at the University of Maryland, who made her literary name writing a weekly column of Letters to Jamaica in our native patois dialect, while studying in the USA. Her book *'Dear Jamaica'* is a compendium of the funniest and most popular of these columns written between 1991-2008, and is a welcome addition to the growing number of books that celebrate and acknowledge our native language. She tells how, homeless and with a baby to support, she slept on the floor with her son on a pillow, while mopping floors to support her studies for a degree at the University.



'One day I was so lonely, I began to cry. And then I started writing the letters. The more I wrote, the better I felt. I continued to write the letters, commenting sometimes on the difficulties facing me. Whispered a proverb: "Learn fi stay pon crooked an cut straight'. In other words, Do not complain, make the best of the opportunity that presents itself."

Bookophilia is to be congratulated for presenting Independent VoYces. The day was full of laughter, good vibes and friendly encounters in a venue that was a beautiful place to be on a bright, sunny Sunday. We authors all agreed that we look forward to next year's event, which we are certain will be bigger and better. I can't wait.



Meantime, I will return to Strawberry Fields to relax in its cosy cottages, ride the adventure trails on horse-back, shower in the waterfall and swim in the beautiful seaside beach.

Growing out reviews

My book *GROWING OUT: Black Hair & Black Pride*, was launched last week by Mrs. Beverley Anderson Manley, former First Lady of Jamaica and my former London flatmate. I have been fortunate to receive some complimentary comments about the book. Here are some:

"Growing Out is Blake-Hannah's wry compendium of her life-altering experiences, wit and vivid storytelling."
TALLAWAH Entertainment blog

"In the Liv-ication she says this book is not for white people because it will surprise and anger us. I think this book is written precisely for us, so that we understand and overcome any prejudices we still have and forgive our parents and ancestors for their mistreatment of Jamaicans and other non-whites. I am very much aware of my British ancestry here in Jamaica and fully aware of the inequalities of the past finding myself wanting to apologize for past injustices. We should be shocked and angered at our crimes."
BUNTY HAMILTON, in her online blog.

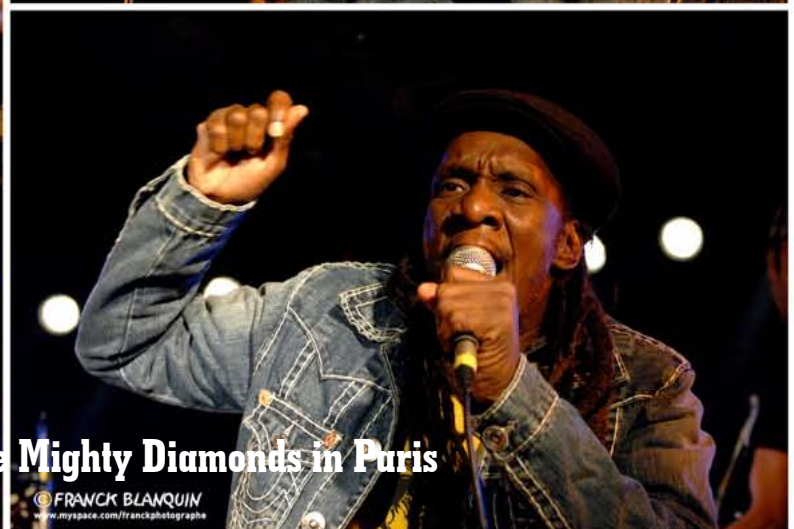
"Growing Out is very good indeed. Its only in the last ten years or so that memoirs have come into vogue in Jamaica, and in that still-growing field, this tome stands out. Fluid, witty and heart-felt, Growing Out is important for the present generation of Jamaicans (adolescents included) who have little or no clue of the travails endured by Jamaicans who went to the UK in the 50s and 60s, nor of the breadth of their impact on that society. Memoirs are also distinguished by inside info, and whether its on the BBC, London High Society or the international marketing and promotion of The Harder They Come, Growing Out succeeds in this regard. Poignant too, are the scars of racism that overlie the book, as well as the "backstory" of Mr Jones that runs concurrently."

MICHAEL EDWARDS, journalist & reviewer.

Thank you all so very much.

WRITE ON!

Report by Barbara Blake Hannah



Linval Thompson and The Mighty Diamonds in Paris



Linval Thompson and The Mighty Diamonds in Paris

UNITED MAGAZINE REGGAE

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

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

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

Conception, design and creation

Xavier Simacourbe & Camille Monchicourt

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