

UNITED REGGAE

MAGAZINE

#7 - April 2011

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Spiderman from
Jah Observer
Eric Monty Morris

Little Roy
INTERVIEW

Kayla G
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NEWS 

Cover photo by Angus Taylor

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Roger Rivas Organ Versions Vol.2

Back in the summer of 2009 Roger Rivas, keyboardist with bands such The Aggrolites and The Bullets, released a free 5 track E.P for download titled 'Organ Versions Volume1'. After receiving a lot of positive feedback from this release he has decided to repeat this great deed with yet another 5 shots of classic boss reggae sounds.

This time he got together with some collector and DJ friends, such as Mark Morales from L.A and the Jurassic Sound System from Brazil to help with the selection of the tracks and you can download Vol. 2 here for FREE now.

Ziggi Recado New Album



Rock 'N Vibes is set to release what is undeniably one of the most anticipated releases of 2011, the eponymous third studio album from Dutch Caribbean superstar, Ziggi Recado. Following his extremely well done and extremely well regarded 2008 project, 'In Transit', Ziggi has really become one of the bigger names on the European scene and arguably one of

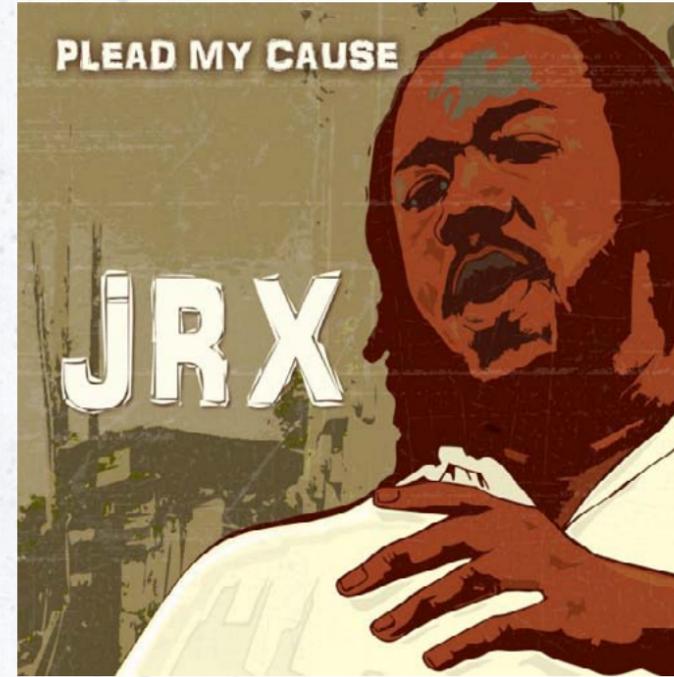
the most gifted in all of Reggae music across the globe. This time around he comes armed with big vibes and, as usual, a big group of guest artists as well. Joining Ziggi on the new album are Jamaican superstar Roots Princess Etana, UK Dancehall veteran Tippa Irie, Omar Perry (Reggae veteran and son of the legendary Lee 'Scratch' Perry) and finally Rock 'N Vibes delivers 'This Year', a long awaited combination between its two biggest names, Ziggi and Maikal X. Also on board are Dutch Hip-Hop talents, which may signal a direction in the vibes of the album (or it may not). Unsurprisingly, The Netherlands will get the very first taste of the new album as it is set to release regionally on April 15th (and is currently available for pre-order on Dutch iTunes) and in the rest of the world on June 6th.

The Step By Step Riddim

If you want to make a splash in Reggae music the best thing you can do is ... Well, make good Reggae music. You can also find a very nice and interesting way to present that music to the masses and should you do both of those well, then you shouldn't have very much of a problem. Rumble Rock Recordz isn't going to have "very much of a problem" at all. The latest creation of the Pennsylvania based label, the Step By Step Riddim, is an absolutely gorgeous Roots composition and the presentation? Apart from Anthony B, the roster of artists doing their respective bests on the SbS is full up of very talented vocalists who are only likely to be known by hardcore Reggae fans. Messenjah Selah, The Lambsbred, Arkaingelle, Zacheous Jackson, Zema and a most interesting group of others all appear on this sterling Roots set which may prove to be one of the best of this still very young year.

The Step By Step Riddim from Rumble Rock Recordz reaches stores on April 19.

Plead My Cause by Junior X



Chances are, if you're a fan of wicked chanter Junior X, that you've been waiting quite some time for his debut album as he's been on the scene and on the scene scoring hits for awhile now. Well, following a strong 2010 which saw him drop the massive 'Cross Me Heart' on the Box Guitar Riddim, X finally delivers his debut album, courtesy of Revolutionary Entertainment, 'Plead My Cause'.

Junior X is known for providing large social commentaries and the album is stocked with familiar such hits as the very clever opener, 'The Pill', 'Surfer' and the title track, perhaps still his biggest hit to date and newer tunes which are not to be missed such as 'Shoot The Prophet'. All in all, the album is very strong and a welcomed addition to the collection of any fan of modern Roots Reggae.

You need not wait any longer for 'Plead My Cause'. The album is currently available on etailers across the globe through Zojak Worldwide and reportedly the physical album release is forthcoming as well.

Takana Zion's Rasta Government

The very promising and very well regarded native of Guinea, Takana Zion, is back on May 6 with his third album to date, 'Rasta Government', for Soulbeats Records. Previously, the youthful Zion established himself and made his name on the strength of a mighty pair of releases, his debut set 'Zion Prophet' from 2007 (which is probably one of the most discussed and popular debut albums from an African born artist ever) and 'Rappel A L'Ordre' from two years on. That work has placed his name mighty high because of that, fans across the globe are awaiting this new set.

A nice 'wrinkle' they'll find on 'Rasta Government' is that the vast majority of the album has been recorded in English, which will open the vibes of Takana Zion to an even wider group of fans. The album was reportedly constructed in Jamaica and perhaps because of that it should be to no surprise that its only combination features Zion alongside none other than Capleton!

Takana Zion's 'Rasta Government' - In stores on May 6.



The JFX Dubstore Is Now Open

JFX Dubstore is a new website from French Dub label Jarring Effects based in Lyon, France which in their own words is "Created by dubbers for dubbers and dub fans". The site features single track dubplates in top quality WAV and AIF, not MP3, that are available nowhere else on internet from French producers such as OBF and Pilah, Root Massacre, AntiBypass (Dub Addict) and Fabasstone, Natural High, Twelve, Led Piperz, Roots'n Future Hi-Fi aka d.Dino and Aku-Fen (High Tone / Dub Invaders) and Uzul (Kaly Live Dub), with new plates and mixes appearing weekly.

The aim of all this is for the productions to be played at Sound Systems or used in remixes to which at the moment they are running competition for people to remix this Brother Joe Pilgrim accapella from Tribulations. Just send them your own remix before May 15th 2011, and the 2 favourite ones will be published on JFX dubstore.

Trojan Give Us Two More Beverley's Records Gems

This months strictly limited deluxe Trojan 7" brings together two more Beverley's

Records gems. The A side of this release is Easy Come, Easy Go by the Pioneers, which has been previously available on their 'Let Your Yeah Be Yeah (Anthology)' from 2002.



The song was recorded in a number of versions during the late Spring of 1968, but the trio and producer were not entirely happy with the session. They did however revisit the song a month or so later reworking it until confident they'd go it right and finally it was issued in the Autumn of that year. The song proved a big hit in Jamaica and provided the platform for further assaults on the Jamaican and overseas charts and most notably saw them have their best-selling hit Long Shot Kick De Bucket which peaked at #21 in the UK the following year.

On the B side of the single is an unissued Rock Steady version of Don Covay's R&B smash, Mercy, Mercy record as a duet by Derrick Morgan

and Desmond Dekker. Why this was never issued is unknown, but needless to say this duos partnership proved disappointingly fleeting

Due out on the 11th of April and presented on the much-missed Doctor Bird imprint the single is now available to pre-order at the Trojan Store, with pressing strictly limited to just 400 copies.

Our Favourite Beres Hammond Songs

One of Reggae's most legendary crooners, the great Beres Hammond, is honoured by the venerable Penthouse Records and a large collective of his peers and admirers alike on the forthcoming 'Our Favourite Beres Hammond Songs'. This big double-disc project is set to have full on and straight forward covers of some of Hammond's biggest hits to date from, likewise, some of the biggest names of all kinds Reggae has to offer.

Earlier this year, one of the Dancehall's most inventive stars, Busy Signal, tackled 'Tempted To Touch' as the very first single from this project and Busy is joined by a stellar cast which features the likes of Jah Cure, Tarrus Riley, Alaine, Romain Virgo, Nadine Sutherland, Marcia Griffiths and even Beres Hammond, himself.

The most interesting 'Our Favourite Beres Hammond Songs' is set to release by VP Records on April 26th.

Several Treats from Jahdan Blakkamoore



Jahdan Blakkamoore - one of Brooklyn's finest reggae singers - dropped his sophomore album 'Babylon Nightmare' in December last year, to wide critical acclaim. The album included the sweet single All Comes Back to One.

Now production crews Lustre Kings and LionDub International are releasing a remix EP of All Comes Back to One, which includes versions with influences from dubstep, drum & bass, one drop and nu-soul.

The remix duties are handled by Nate Mars, Potential Badboy, LionDub, Nick Fantastic and Ticklah. The funky and soulful version BoBos Remix is available as free download. Check it here.

If that wasn't enough, DJ Theory has just put out the refreshing Quick Money for free download, a tune full of reggae, hip-hop and soul. It uses a sample from Amadou & Mariam's Sabali - also used by Nas & Damian Marley for the mellow Patience - and comes with a lethal soca version courtesy of So Shifty.

South Florida's Legends Easter Fete

The Firm and No Limit Promotions present Legends Easter Fete on Easter Sunday, April 24, 2011 at the Miramar Regional Park in Miramar, Florida. Showtime 2-10 PM.

This is a day for fun, music, food & culture bringing together the best of Jamaica's old and new in one venue. Hosting 4 events within the same venue, creates something for every age group. For the youngsters, a Kids Romping Zone with unlimited games, rides and face painting.

For the teens is Swagg Jamz Fete presented by 99 Jamz with music, dancing, games & Karaoke.

For the dancehall fans, the Bamboo Lawn Day Fete, with Rory of Stone Love, Renaissance, HMV Soundz, Sound Sweetness & Eccentrix Sound.

The legends performing are Third World, Barrington Levy, John Holt, Ken Boothe, Frankie Paul, backed by Ruff Stuff Band, Byron Lee & the Dragonaires and Merritone.





Bunny Rugs EP

One of the busiest people in all of Reggae music, Bunny Rugs, is in the process of setting forth an extremely active 2011 for himself. Along with fronting the mighty Third World, touring with them and currently being involved in promoting material from their latest release, the very well received 'Patriots' album, Bunny is also exploring solo works this year, which will ultimately lead to... Yep - Another album.

In the meantime, however, fans who just can't get enough of Bunny Rugs can look forward to getting their hands on a three track digital EP/album preview from the sweet singing and incomparable veteran through Raw Edge Productions. The EP includes Love is Blind which was Rugs' cut of the Tune In Riddim from the famed Sly & Robbie. Also present is the lovely Just Can't Deny which features production from the great Dean Fraser and was actually penned by Richard Bell of Star Trail. And finally, the EP also contains the big social commentary, Kurfew, arguably the best of the trio, which is produced by the venerable Mikey Bennett along with Rugs, himself.

The new EP from Bunny Rugs is set to reach digital stores across the globe on May 3, with the album, 'Time', coming later this year.

The Return of Machel Montano

If you missed out the Carnival season in Trinidad this year, a chunk of the biggest hits of its greatest star for 2011 is now available as certified Soca Supernova, Machel Montano, releases his new album for the season (and his 35th to date!), the fittingly titled 'The Return'. Montano was largely absent from the 2010 season, preferring to let the light shine on younger stars and members from his camp (such as Patrice Roberts), but he didn't repeat the disappearing act this year and, instead, had arguably the most dominant year of his career.

Machel Montano hauled in both his fourth career Road March [The season's most popular song] and his very first ever Soca Monarch title with the same song, Advantage, which is on the album. It is joined by big tunes such as So High [A.O.A], Coming Again, Spin Class and others. Diversify your listening landscape and check out 'The Return' from Machel Montano which is currently available around the world through Ruf Rex Productions.

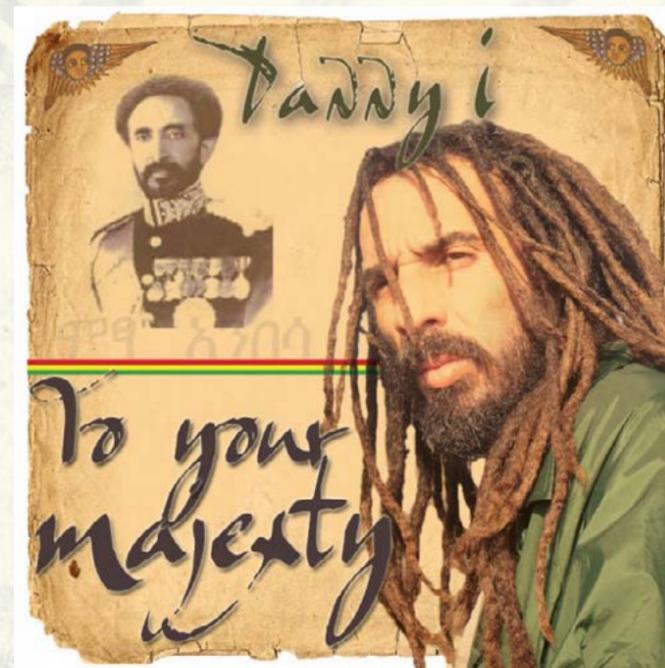
Danny I's To Your Majesty

The forthcoming 'To Your Majesty' is the latest release from one of the more hidden, but absolutely undeniable talents on the Virgin Islands Reggae scene, Danny I from out of St. Croix. The album, his third to date, is the second for the leading VI Reggae label, I Grade Records (who continues their awesome momentum from 2010, which featured albums from both NiyoRah and Toussaint), following 2007's 'Unchangeable', while his first, the most poignant 'Jah Fury', remains all but impossible to find. This album, like its predeces-

-sor on the label, figures to take full advantage of the wide scale of abilities from the gifted vocalist.

To help in that Danny I and I Grade tap a most interesting trio of collaborators - The up and coming Dushane. The mighty wordsmith, Sabbatical Ahdah (who appears on the very interesting 'Sometimish Rastaman') and one of the most popular artists from out of the VI, veteran singer Ras Army.

Danny I's 'To Your Majesty' is in stores on April 12.



Jah Free 12 Out In May

Jah Free is to release a new 12" on his Jah Free music label at the beginning of May.

The release features four tracks with the title track being the digital horn led Devils Playground taken from last years album 'Rebel In This Time', plus new cuts from Sister Simiah with Come Out of Babylon, In Zion by Sista Sherin and a ruff dubmix.



First Ever Rockers Rockers Rockers Festival

The First ever Rockers Rockers Rockers Festival is taking place in France from 25th to 28th of April, but unlike most other festivals that tend to stay in one place this festival will travel to four cities over the four nights.

It all starts in Paris at Zenith with biggest selection of live acts:

- Vybz Kartel**
- Gyptian**
- Jah Cure**
- Richie Spice**
- Tanya Stephens**
- Chaka Demus And Pliers**
- Duane Stephenson**
- Gappy Ranks**

The following night the show moves south to Le Phare in Toulouse where Vybz Kartel, Gyptian, Jah Cure, Chaka Demus And Pliers and Duane Stephenson will be appearing, before just Vybz Kartel, Gyptian and Chaka Demus and Pliers visit Transbordeur in Lyon and then finish in Nice at Théâtre de Verdure.

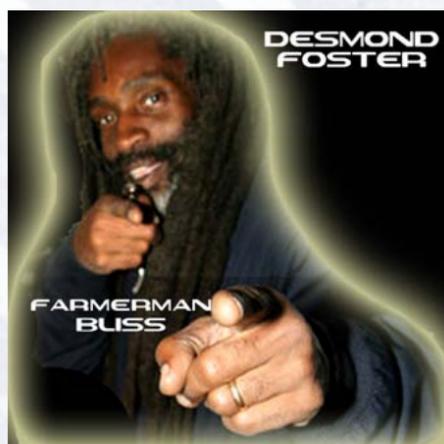
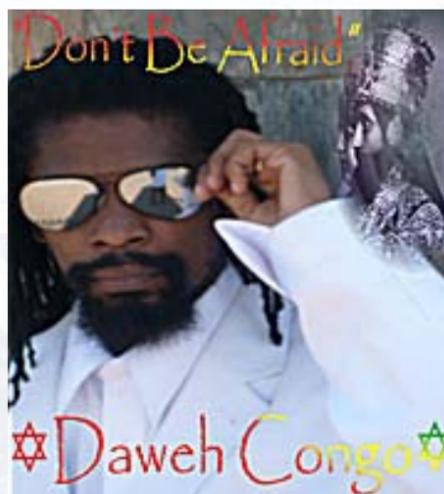
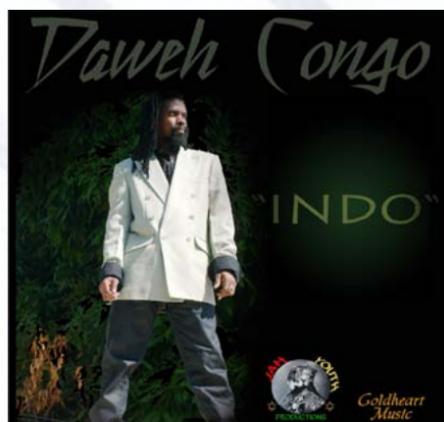
Throughout the festival these acts will be supported by the Ruff Cut Band from the UK, who have also toured with acts such as Freddy McGregor, Dennis Brown, Al Campbell, Alton Ellis Prince Far I, Dillinger and U-Roy.

Debut Releases From Jah Youth Productions (Hawaii)

Swedish producer and musician Jonahgold, who recently produced the ambitious debut album 'Nine Signs and Heavy Bliss' by Sheya Mission, has teamed up with Jah Youth Productions to bring you two new releases from Daweh Congo, with whom he worked with on his 2009 album 'Ghetto Skyline' plus one from the former UK lovers rock band Arema singer Desmond Foster who is now based near Jonah in Stockholm.

The Daweh tracks were composed from two a cappellas recorded for Jah Youth Productions, to which the music was then built around. The first of these is Don't Be Afraid, an intense stepper with solid roots vocals, while the second track Indo is an upbeat modern, organic one-drop, with lamenting harmonica, supplemented by witty herb-hymn lyrics in the tradition of "Herb Tree", "Coconut Chalice" and "Ganja Baby". The Desmond Foster release is called Farmerman Bliss and is a take on the "Indo riddim" to which

he plays both bass and rhythm guitars; he will also be releasing a solo-album this spring on Rub-A-Dub records, which will feature a few more tracks produced by Jonahgold.



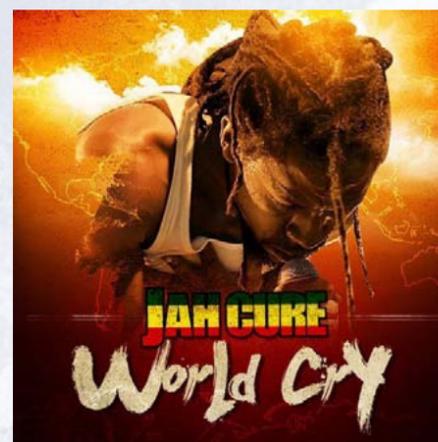
All tunes are available on digital download from CD Baby.

Garance Reggae Festival 2011 Update

Last month we reported on the line up for this years Garance Reggae Festival taking place in Bagnols-sur-Cèze, France between the 27th and 30th of July and as promised the promoters have now announced the names of some further acts that have been added to the bill.

These are on the main stage Lutan Fyah, Johnny Clarke, Horace Andy, Clinton Fearon and Twinkle Brothers while in dub station corner South East London's Jah Shaka will be bringing his roots reggae sound system to the proceedings.

With artists such as Burning Spear, Jimmy Cliff and a Studio One revue that features many of its past recording stars confirmed to appear the line up at this festival continues to impress and it is believed another thirteen artists will be named soon.



Jah Cure's World Cry

Tired of waiting on the new album from Jah Cure? Of course you are, it's been postponed several thousand times.

Well in order to help in the wait, the Cure is freely giving away the title track to his forthcoming album 'World Cry' on his official website. The tune, which features US Pop star, Keri Hilson, as well as MDMA, is quite impressive and anticipation for the album named after it is, presumably, at an all time.

Jah Cure's 'World Cry' album is now set to be released in June (though holding one's breath on that is not encouraged by the staff of United Reggae) and the title track can be found through Jah-Cure.net..

Errol Organs Tours Europe With Leroy Horsemouth Wallace

The Trench Town artist Errol Organs and his band the Trench Town Experience have announced a European tour.

And for extra drum power they will be bringing none other than the famous skins man and film star Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace to sit at the traps.

Errol is a producer, arranger, composer and singer who has worked with Capleton and Anthony B.

Alpha Boys School pupil Horsemouth has drummed on some of the great roots records of the 1970s, played the lead role in the 1978 film Rockers and works with Groundation's side project Rockamovya. So if you want to catch Errol and Horsemouth in action, the Trench Town experience will be stopping in the following places.

21 May
Attalens, Switzerland
Salle Communale

27 May
Neuchâtel, Switzerland
Bar King

3 June
Geneva, Switzerland
Chat Noir

4 June
Czestochowa, Poland
Reggae day Festival

17 June
Geneva, Switzerland
Fête de la musique

2 July
Ruighoord, Holland
Future Reggae Ruighoord

10 July
Gdansk, Poland
Festiwal Kultur Swiata

15 July
Montreux, Switzerland
Montreux jazz festival

16 July
Vallée de Joux, Switzerland
Back to the roots fest

13 August
St-Julien, France
Come fam fest

The Embodiment Of Truth by Mooji

Mooji is the name of a Jamaican born spiritual guide in the Hindu-tradition of Advaita which is oneness-teaching beyond all religions. He has many videos on youtube where he holds "Satsang" (association with the truth) a meeting where spiritual seekers come and are given a chance to do self-inquiry. Jonahgold of Goldheart recordings has been very taken with this mans teachings and has decided to put some of his words to music in this case namely the riddim from recent Daweh Congo offering

'Don't Be Afraid'.

Jonah said of the recordings "I have made three cuts featuring Mooji and I intend to make many more. I think he's the ultimate dub-vocalist. I'm deeply in love with his teaching and vibe. It's my number one inspiration for all music. I know he has heard and approved of his lyrics being adapted to my reggae-dub and being originally from Jamaica he likes his reggae of course."

There is no doubt Mooji does have a very deep, soothing voice which gives the song a very peaceful and meditative vibe and it will be interesting to hear what lies ahead.

No profit is being made from this release as it is being given away free with people encouraged to share it around. You can download it here.

Rub-A-Dub Market by Luciano

After critical success with his 'United States Of Africa' and 'Write My Name' albums in 2010 Luciano is back with yet another impressive long playing release.

He continues the trend for working with non-Jamaican producers, using Austrian production house IrieVibrations - who put out Perfect's stellar second album 'Born Dead With Life' in 2008.

'Rub-A-Dub Market' features new songs alongside previous IrieVibrations rhythm releases (the Work Off, Love Bird and Caribbean rhythms).

The label has also recorded an album with Anthony B in Jamaica at Anchor studios (see studio session video below) alongside one from Konshens - both slated to be issued this year.

This promises to be a hat trick of strong releases for Jah Messenger, but don't take our word for it, listen to the title track and Only You Jah from the album out on June 17.



Miami Reggae Festival 2011

Rockaz MVMT presents a FREE Miami Reggae Festival, featuring an eclectic line up of international music genres. Over the course of the day, over 10,000 people will attend the concert at Peacock Park in Coconut Grove Miami. This highly anticipated cultural event was designed to cater to all genuine cultural expressions in a celebration of Peace, Love and Unity - building a positive spirit in our community.



Two cans or more of non-perishable food items is requested for admittance to feed the needy, proceeds benefiting Curley's House.

Artists performing include Morgan Heritage, Cultura Profetica, Bonnie Casey, Spam All Stars, Jahfe, Connis Vanterpool, Ephniko, Kulcha Shok Muzik, and more.

The concert is Saturday, April 30, 2011 2PM. To 11P at Peacock Park, Coconut Grove, 2820 McFarlane Rd. Miami, FL 33133.

Tickets are free but guests must register at <http://miami-reggae-festival.eventbrite.com> Or call the general hotline at (305) 763-4509.

For more information about the Miami Reggae Festival please visit www.rockazmvmt.com or www.facebook.com/rockazmvmt.

I-lodica blazes on Separation is Illusion

Brighton's own Augustus Pablo I-lodica has just put out an EP titled Separation is Illusion on the Dubbism label. The EP contains five tracks, where of Melodica on Fiya - a relick of Lee Perry's 70's classic Soul Fire - is available as free download on Soundcloud.

I-lodica has been recording for many years and has made some heavy tunes with various producers, including Iration Steppas and Alpha & Omega. On this new effort he has teamed up with Dutch producer Tony Dubshot. The result is some upbeat, skanking tunes.

Separation is Illusion is available today from etailers worldwide.

INTERVIEWS ★



RAS JUMBO

INTERVIEW

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY
VALENTIN ZILL



Without any doubt, he's one of the best bassists in the Reggae universe: David Jnr. Baptiste a.k.a. Ras Jumbo. You've surely seen him live on stage several times, whether with Alpha Blondy, Tiken Jah Fakoly, Jimmy Cliff or Burning Spear, to name just a few of the most important artists he worked with. His own projects he works on in Paris with Charly Laubé, Alpha Blondy's drummer, and Fariband enrich the European Reggae scene like few others. It's high time to let the virtuoso from Dominica have his say. Next to the swimming pool of Bamako's hotel Dafina - "I'm an island boy, yuh know, I love water" - he recounts the rocky path he took to become a professional musician and talks about repatriation, his numerous tours, today's projects and why water is as important as fyah.

What brought you into contact with Reggae music?

Well, don't forget I'm born in the English Caribbean. I'm born in the Commonwealth of Dominica. I make a bit of publicity for my country: it's the land of 365 rivers, don't forget. We call it the nature island of the Caribbean. It's the very special island where you have one river per day of the year. We have natural spas, we have hot baths, we have waterfalls. Reggae... I always had contact with Jamaica, it's part of the English Caribbean like Dominica. We have one national cricket team together - the West Indies - to compete against England, against Australia, against India, against Pakistan. So Jamaica was no secret for me. I grew up with Jamaicans, I grew up knowing Jamaica, I've been working and performing in Jamaica. From my earliest childhood days, I always had Reggae at home. It's part of our culture. So meeting guys like Tiken was like, you know, bringing my part, my knowledge of how to do it into African Reggae.

When did you start playing music?

I began to do it at a very young age. My dad was a pianist in church, so I grew up in the

church really. Like most Afrocaribbean people, we have lots of religions, protestant churches, catholic churches, gospel churches. You know, we grew up singing. My dad played the guitar, better than me. He played accordion, violin, banjo... So at home we had instruments. I have an elder brother who is in Miami. He's a bass player. I grew up in the music, very early. But I never knew I'd be a professional musician one day. I wanted to be a doctor!

Did you get formal musical education?

I did some theoretical music at high school. And I learned drum music in a military band at school. I learned what I had to learn. I took what I could take. But then, music is all natural. You learn this theoretical thing because you need to know the notes to work faster. But music is inside of you. You gotta feel it, you gotta have to have the beat. And if you listen to Reggae music you know there's something particular. The beat, the silence, the pauses... It's not like Jazz where you run for scales. Reggae is more like the heartbeat. You don't always play on the beat or in front of it, sometimes you play behind it.

How did you become a professional musician?

It might have been in 1977. I was quite young, just finishing high school, and I had a band, called Wax Power Vibrations. We had an album, recorded in Martinique in the Three A studios, in Fort de France. We were invited to tour Martinique. I saw Jazz concerts there, and I wanted to play like the guys I saw on stage. They were virtuosos. I thought if I wanted to be a musician I need to learn to play like these guys. But it took me a long time. A long time of hard work, perseverance and personal sacrifices also. It's not an overnight thing. Music is my passion. I was a teacher in primary school, but I quit because my passion overtook. I love teaching, it's the key to life. Education is the key to life. But my passion for music overtook

me. So I became a professional musician. I moved from Dominica to Martinique, from there to Guadelupe. Then I went to France though most of my family lives in America. In the French Antilles I got an offer to play in France. I went there as a freelancer and played for everybody to get known. I met many, many people. I met Alpha Blondy and performed with him, I performed with Jimmy Cliff, Jah Mason, Determine, King David, lots of opening shows for Third World, for Aswad, for Steel Pulse. I toured with Burning Spear. I recorded three albums with Alpha Blondy. I worked with almost all of the French top Reggae stars, Tonton David, Pierpoljak, Princess Erica, Neg Marons, even with most artistes from the French Antilles. I love music. And I couldn't work for a boss, you find so much injustice in workplaces. I could never stand a boss. I never had a boss in my life. Only music has been my boss. It's important to be disciplined for musicians. Now I'm touring with Tiken Jah Fakoly all over the place, mostly in Europe and Africa. It's OK for now. But hopefully it will be better in the future [laughs].

What obstacles did you have to overcome to become a professional musician?

Well, I had to do a lot of personal sacrifices. I left home, didn't have money, I couldn't work every time... But when you have a passion you don't always do it for money. I played a lot without getting paid. I think it's important to have this money attitude, but I never had it. I went through a lot of sacrifices. I lost my first family, because my ex-woman wanted me to get a job. I was sad. I love her, but I had to do what I had to do, I couldn't just look for any job. I went to a country where I couldn't speak the language, where I didn't have a home. But I kept on. I didn't go selling illicit stuff, no illicit business. I think that Rastafari saved me from a lot of negativity. Being a Rasta and learning about the values of Rasta saved me. Many people call themselves Rasta but they don't really study it or get the philosophy, the teachings of Rasta. It's not just a being black and having dreadlocks thing. It's

a heartical thing, it's a discipline thing, it's a loving thing, it's a respectful thing. You know, the value of life, the love of humanity, respect. Rastafari is noble. You can't be a Rastaman and do wrong things to people all day. That's a fake. My parents taught me to be honest.

When I went to Europe, everybody told me nobody was gonna help me there, nobody would give me anything there. But when I arrived it was not like what I had heard of it. I met wonderful people, people who helped me, who opened their doors. That made me love France. It made me be more open towards humanity. When you grow up in a society without many differences, you don't know that there's good in every nation. You find heartical and criminal people everywhere! I never let obstacles bring me down. I learned from my struggles and my mistakes.

But I'm still the same, still passionate for music. I still have my dreams and my projects.



You know that tune from Beres Hammond, "Journeys": "If I had to do it over, if I had to live it all again...". Would you do it over all again?

When I think of it, yes. Because I don't have regrets. Music has been good to me. I've travelled around the world twice! If I was a teacher, I might have my little home, my wife and kids, I might be a headmaster now and lead a peaceful little life. But I've been to Africa, mon. I've been to Ethiopia, I've been to 17 African states. I'm so proud of this! I travelled through the United States, through Canada and South America. I've travelled the world playing music. I've been to most European countries. I'd do it all over again, yes. The only thing is, you know, I lost the woman I love... But I accepted it. Maybe that was the way it had to be.



You're still based in Paris. Why don't you repatriate to the Motherland?

My parents always told me America was the country for music. It's true. But I'm already there in Africa. I have built a home in Ghana. I'm already there spiritually, and parttime physically, too. But I'm an ambitious person. I need financial freedom. That's the reason why I'm still living in Europe. In Europe, I can be a professional musician, I can work, I can earn some money and advance with my projects. I come to Africa many times a year. I have my family and a home in the Caribbean, too. But I have repatriated to Africa, I am in Africa today [laughs]. And my home is in Ghana, in Kumasi. The Ashante

people love Rastas, me tell you. And I've been to Shashamane in Ethiopia three times. In Ethiopia, they love Rastas, too. Ghana is particular. The land there was offered to me! I couldn't refuse that. I know of other Rastas from the Caribbean who went to Africa and were offered land, too. I've invested some money in Africa. I hope, with the blessings of the Almighty Ras Tafari, one day I can relax and have my kids come home. And have my friends come over. I built this home not for me, but for guys like you, with positive energy, for friends who want to come to Africa and relax. Africa is home, mon, it's home. Life might be rough here, but that's because of its leaders. The food is good, it's fresh. I don't have stomach aches here. I really encourage Rasta people and all people who want to live their lives in harmony with nature to come here.

Tell us about your best and worst experiences on tour.

Mon, I've been touring so much in my life. The best tours are always in Africa, because Africa is all about space. I love space. I was born on an island, you can drive around the whole island in no time. Here in Africa, I love driving. I love to watch the never ending horizon. And touring the Pacific islands with Pierpoljak and Fariband was very encouraging. We went to the dreamlands! Tahiti, Bora Bora... We had a wonderful time. But Africa is the best, because islands look alike anyway but in Africa I discovered something different. The friendliness, the respect, the respect of the elders, the way they receive you... There's a lot of love in Africa. That's the real Africa. The hardships are minor compared to that. My worst tour maybe was in America. After it we lost our drummer. May his soul rest in peace. Ras José Shillingford is his name. I lost my drummer. Many people talk about Sly & Robbie, but there was José & Jumbo. We were the riddim section of Alpha Blondy's Solar System. José was Dominican. He was one of the best drummers in the world. In 1988, when we were in Israel, we were invited to jam in Jamaica with the Melody Makers by Earl "Chinna" Smith. He loved the way we were performing, he loved the way we were playing drum and bass. We never had the chance to go. I lost my half. I couldn't sleep, I heard him drumming in my head. It was very difficult for me to find my next drummer. I got Charly Laubé. He's my younger brother. I passed much of my savoir faire on to him.



Tell us about your projects and those with Fariband.

I have lots of projects. I'd love to produce Sister Shann. I'm working on my own album. I have so many ideas. I wanna do a Dub album, I wanna do an instrumental album. But at the same time I have given away so many riddims, my own riddims, I would love to recuperate them. Just yesterday I talked with Vivi about a guy from Burkina Faso we produced, his name is Jah Verity. Vivi and I did all the music, all the compositions. I work with a South African guy too, called Ras Dumisani. His very first album was recorded with me. I've given lots of basslines to many, many singers in Reggae music. I wanna produce a huge album with all these basslines in Dub style. And I'd love to produce some Rap youngsters. I'm into Rap and Hip Hop, too. But I lack time and I don't rush into anything. I'm always on the road. I hope I can take time for myself and follow my personal projects when I stop touring one day. I'm like a doctor, always taking care of others! I'm also building riddims with Charly Laubé for Sowan Records. He's very business-minded, which is very good. I'd love to be at home, either in Dominica or Africa, and work in a relaxed atmosphere and do it right, you know. With Charly, we've done Reggae X-clusive, an album. We produced many singers like Tiken Jah Fakoly, Tonton David, Sister Shann, Baobab, the crème de la crème of French Reggae. Next time we'll do an all-wom-

en album, Reggae X-clusive Chapter II. I got a lot of projects with Charly. For example in December, we go to New Caledonia for two weeks for a huge festival called Musicali. There'll be Julian Marley, Israel Vibration, there'll be some French artists. Charly and I will back six singers there. Although we work separately right now, cause Charly is with Alpha Blondy - I was the one who linked them up, Alpha is my friend -, we're still working together on projects. I worked with Alpha Blondy twenty years ago, from 1988 till 1995, when he was still young. He was really popular at that time, really hot. Now he's an older brother. I toured the world with him. I'm happy for Charly, I'm happy that he can discover what I discovered twenty years ago. I stayed with Tiken Jah because I love him a lot and really appreciate what he's doing. He loves Africa, he has a very sincere love for his continent, and I love people who are sincere. There's much to come, you'll surely have me on your MP3 player, on your MP4 player, on your live DVDs [laughs]. I'll be there, I promise!

There are few bands out there playing together in such routine and harmony as Fariband does.

Yeah, we're a dream team. We know each other's every move. I know every lick of Vivi. Vivi is my right hand when Charly's not around. We are the ones who are the front. Vivi's my lickshot. Ludovic is my younger brother. I've always had younger drummers. They're my little brothers. You form a drummer the way you want him. Ludovic is great. And Dave is great, you know. We're a good team, playing together for almost seven years now. We always want to do better and better and better. Every show is different. And Tiken is someone who is real. No one is perfect. He's a man like every other man, with ups and downs. I'm not looking for the faults. I got my faults, too. But we're a dream team. We listen to each other. We're a band, and that's what makes a group famous. There's the singer, but there's also the musicians. You can't have one without the other. That would be like having

a nice Rolls Royce but no tires! Even if the tires are in contact with the dirt, the shit, you have to have tires to drive. We're together, and if there are problems we talk them out. That's it.

As one of the most important musicians in the Reggae business, where do you see Reggae music heading to in the next years?

Well, in the Caribbean I don't hear much Roots. In Africa, people are very much into Roots. The Caribbean is much into Dancehall. We miss Bob Marley. We miss Peter Tosh. We have Burning Spear, but I think that the promoters are promoting the wrong things. On the television, too. There's too much violence in the Caribbean. They want to stop Dancehall music. Reggae is not violence. It's a means to educate the people. It's not about making money, it's about conscious living. That's what got me into Reggae. When I listened to Bob Marley, to Peter Tosh, they opened up my mind, they made me wonder and ask questions and made me want to discover things. Now there's too much slackness. The music is good, but there's no more message. So we need more conscious promoters in the Caribbean. There are always conscious singers, there's always conscious music in the background. But we need people who promote consciousness, love and goodwill amongst men. No naked girls on stage, no disrespect for your family. So I see Reggae music in a down way, I don't see it going upwards now. That's maybe why guys like Tiken are so powerful. We must sing about educating the youths. They need to learn the values of life. If you sing too much about the government they'll shoot you down. We've had too many dead singers and you can't change the government anyway. We want singers who are alive and educate the people. Reggae music is not to divide, but to unite the people. Reggae music is to unite left and right.

What about Reggae in Europe, especially in France?

Especially in Germany there's still a lot of Roots Reggae. In France, we have groups that do mainstream Reggae, but no singers who take decisions, who say things to awaken the people. In England we don't have as much as before. You could say there's a recession. You don't hear anything any-

more from those guys who were big there in the 80s! Aswad and Steel Pulse are at least doing something. I don't see the future of Reggae in France very brightly. Sad to say, because I've been working there for the last 26 years. I'm one of the pioneers there. You only have those groups who play Reggae music for the love of Reggae, but no one who is into Rastafari, into prophesying and into educating the youths. It's all good if you play Reggae because you love it, but today they lost what we already knew, the generation of Bob Marley, Peter Tosh... None of the new guys is making me shivers. You know, like when Bob Marley said "Wake up and live". Simple words, but they mean a lot... They mean get up, stand up for your rights, be conscious, you know. Africa unite. Bob Marley's universally accepted. We need some more Bob Marleys. We need more Peter Toshs. They were avantgarde. They were way ahead of their time. That's my only problem with Reggae music right now - we don't have those lyricists. I don't know what's wrong with this generation. Is it a lack of inspiration, a lack of information? I don't know. At least the Bobo Shanti are doing something, I respect them. Fyah dis an fyah dat, yuh know. But we need water, too. To wash away. To purify, you have the fire, but the water will wash away. So we need both elements. I don't have a good image of Reggae in Europe in the future. We need promoters, guys who are really into Reggae music and want to see Reggae music prosper!

Thank you very much for the interview, Ras Jumbo.

Thank you! I want to wish all the readers of United Reggae a happy new year, as we just entered the new year of the Ethiopian calendar on September 11. I wish you health and love and life and prosperity! Let's all keep our fingers crossed and wish for better Reggae, better singers, conscious promoters, conscious people!

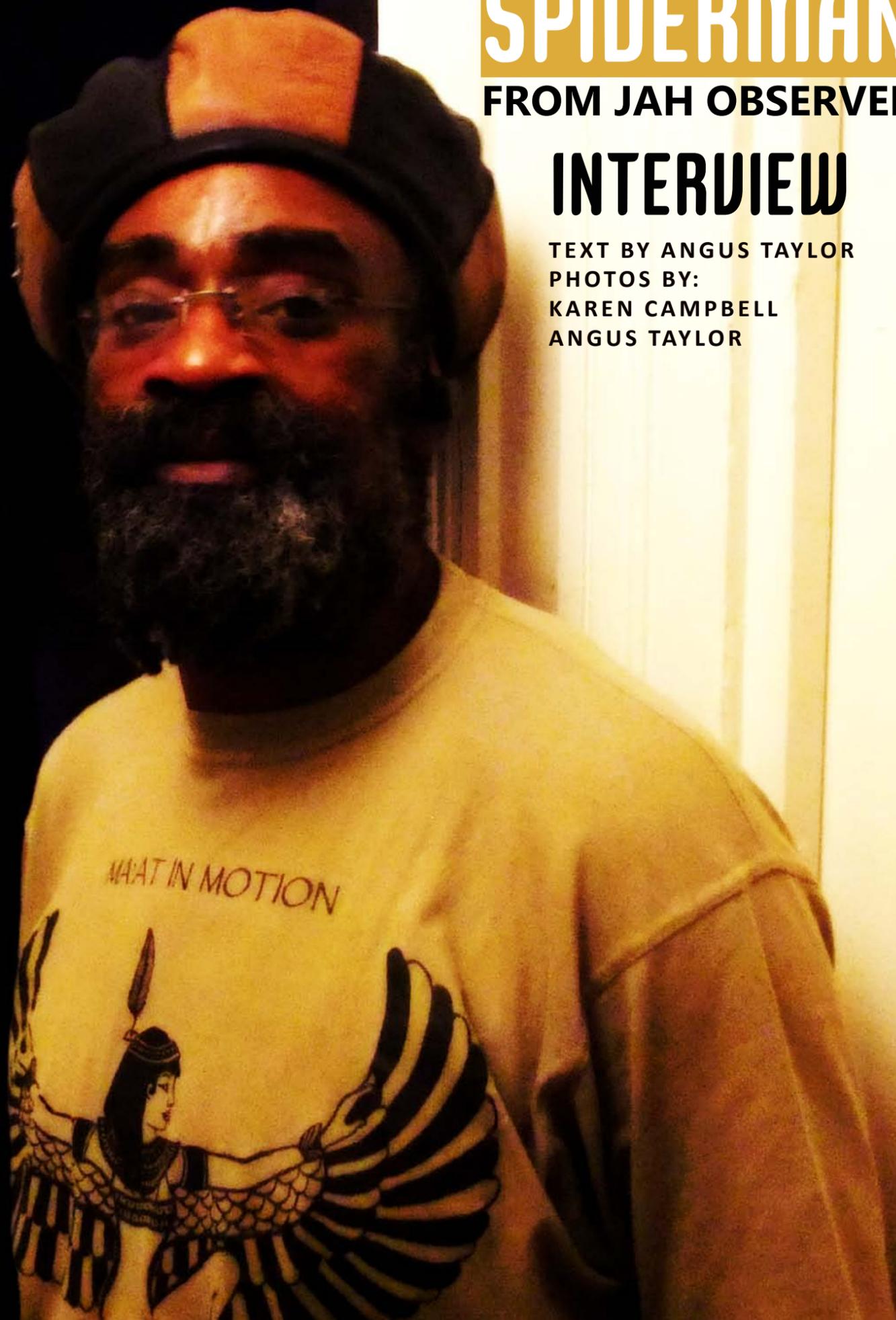


SPIDERMAN

FROM JAH OBSERVER

INTERVIEW

TEXT BY ANGUS TAYLOR
PHOTOS BY:
KAREN CAMPBELL
ANGUS TAYLOR



Austin "Spiderman" Palmer is the founder and selector for the Mighty Jah Observer sound system. He started his sound as a youth in the late 1960s and has continued through the various trends in reggae, preserving his unique approach to music all the while. Two characteristics mark out his system from all the others who play in Europe and the UK: firstly, his rig is still valve-driven; and secondly, he eschews the "boof boof" dub played by his contemporaries in favour of the more soulful cultural vibes of yesteryear. For three decades his spot at Notting Hill Carnival has offered a refreshing relief from the ear-bashing found on corners all around, but now things are about to change. Spider is playing his final Carnival in 2011 and then quitting the business to move back to Jamaica. Angus Taylor returned to the subject of his first ever interview, who gave a no holds barred appraisal of the scene and why he's getting out...

Why is the time right to retire now?

I'm getting older. I'm 55 next year and I don't want to be doing this when I'm 75. I've been here my whole life and I want to have a new experience. I want to go back and take care of my mum, my dad's not well, and I'm the oldest and the only one out of my brothers and sisters willing to go back there to live. Then there's the way things are with the music at the moment – with sound systems. Once upon a time there was a lot of love between the sound systems – believe it or not! – but now everyone wants to be top dog. That one doesn't want you to play with him, dog eat dog. Some of these people call themselves Rasta but when European sounds come over here they turn around and say to me, "these guys, they're "Rasta" but they're not Rasta" – they can see they don't live it. They have the locks, they play the music, they shout it, but it doesn't come over. So it's a lot of things. If I could stay young forever then yeah, but I can't just stay here for the sound system – even though a lot of people would like us to! – when I'm in Jamaica I don't miss

the sound system or England.

What are you going to do with your rig?

Well my sons – none of them would want it. One's a fireman, one does something in law, one's a Seven Day [Adventist] and the youngest one's into rap and jungle and whatever you call it. So some of the boxes I'll probably sell, the amps I'll keep a couple for myself because I'm going to have a little rig. I'll take about six cabinets to Jamaica with me if customs don't charge me too much! And I'll leave a little rig here for my brother Steven who, when we do dances, is there with me. But he's more into computers and flying model planes and go-karts whereas I'm into the music first.

Will you play any music over in Jamaica?

I'll have to see how that goes because here I've grown with people, I know people and I know what the runnings are. But the rig I'm carrying to Jamaica is just to play on my veranda in my front yard for my own gratification. I'll be rocking in my rocking chair saying, "Yes! Remember this tune I played in Hackney on such and such a day!" (laughs).

What do you think is wrong with the UK scene? Is it that there isn't enough money in it?

This is just my opinion but in my eyes, where once upon a time it was all about the music, it's now about who's got the most power. Who's got this box, who's got that box, it's all technical this, technical that – glorified PAs. And to make it worse, the guys are producing tunes themselves – nothing wrong with that in itself – but because they're all digital they haven't got melodies and they're flat. And if you're not playing that kind of music it's like you're not dealing with Jah and not dealing with roots. I call it European reggae. In the old says people used to come to the sounds because they wanted to hear the real thing. The proper thing.

But now the sound systems say, "There's loads of students. Let's shake off their heads" by playing the techno-reggae. And if you're not playing the techno reggae you're not part of the scene. Mine is a valve sound system and some guys are playing with more power on their tops than on my whole rig. But it's what I have and what I wanted to do. I don't want to spend thousands of pounds on new Mosfet amps and equipment. For one, I didn't have it, and two, I discovered people wanted to hear mine.

A lot of UK music is called "UK dub" instead of "reggae" or "roots". To me dub is half of a 45. It's 50% of the equation. It's on the B side of a 45. Now a lot of people seem to put dub on the A and the B side. Is this a part of it?

Some people don't know the meaning of dub in the first place. There's techno people called dub-this. There's music called dub-that. Now when a man makes a tune in his bedroom it's a dub. I remember when you used to hear a Johnny Clarke vocal which you knew, and the B side would be called a dub. But the sound system man would get that and have it remixed and it was just a rhythm. Now and again you might hear a "ching ching" or the singer's voice come through. Imagine a whole night of hearing different tunes where you knew the vocals but you never heard the vocals because that's what it was.

Either you were into soul or into reggae, and if you were into reggae there were two genres: lovers rock or everything else was dub or roots. People take things, and change them, try to make it their own and call it something different. It's like I remember hearing a conversation once with people saying, "Who invented ska?" "It was the Specials!" "Nah it was the Two Tones". No one said it came from Jamaica or anything like that! (laughs) And one day you're going to hear a similar conversation about who invented dub!

How do you see your sound in relation to others?

We don't play with a lot of other sound systems because we don't play the techno. Our tunes are mostly old fuddy-duddy's tunes but there are people that like that. But it's got to the stage now where if you don't play techno, you're not playing roots. People who are just coming into the music, Europeans or young kids, they don't know any better, so they must be thinking "that's the roots scene". I remember when that wasn't the scene. That was reggae for Europe. That wasn't our reggae.



But at the same time you play a lot of dances in Europe. Why are things better in Europe for reggae than in the UK?

They appreciate it. They love it and they can't get enough of it. It's like the seventies and eighties out there. Germany, Poland, Israel - all places have big dances going on. Right now all the big artists are all in Europe doing festivals because that's where it is. We've been spoilt. We've had it but we haven't passed it on to our kids. We've thrown it away and other people have picked it up and run with it.

In Europe in the seventies and eighties very few people would have grown up with reggae in the house so there's an excitement about it without it being labelled "parents music".

That's exactly right. At first they'll hear all the bashment and the new singers but then afterwards they realize there's something else before that and they start to collect certain tunes and rhythms. Nowadays you've got people like Sizzla and they discovered them and they liked them and realized there's something else they try to hunt down and can't find. I suppose a lot if it's to do with Carnival with us because when they come to carnival and see the boxes and the valve sound, some of them don't know what a valve is. I hear them and they say, "What's that? What does that do?" and I say, "It's a valve". They're fascinated when I tell that's how sounds used to be with valves, just one turntable, and foam and sponge and wires all over the place, and our boxes are not PA boxes. They're handmade and we'd get little chisels and saws to cut them up.

What are the advantages of a valve sound?

The only advantage is the way it sounds. It's a warmer sound. It's something that puts a warm blanket around you rather than hitting you with a plank of wood! (laughs)

Isn't it quite difficult and expensive to replace the valves?

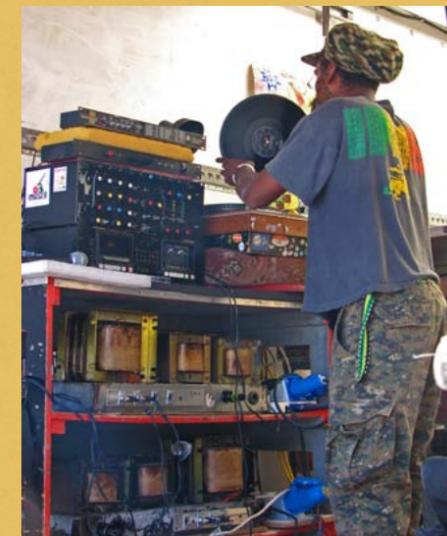
It's not difficult because you can go on the internet - there's a place in Chelmsford where you can go and get them - but they are expensive. The cheapest ones are about £12 each and they go up to about £50 each. I get mine at about £25 because I get a discount!

Valves or not, it's difficult to play out with a sound these days.

If I was a club dj I could carry a little bag with all my cds, go in there, play my cds and then I'm off to the next club down the road to play for an hour. But I'm not a dj, I'm a sound system. Most of the djs have had sound systems so they know what it's like. You've got equipment to take care of, repair, fix or buy. Then you've got to ship it around and put it up. You're a roadie, a sound engineer, all these things all rolled into one.

A lot of people complain about the behaviour of the new generation of roots and dub fans coming to dances. At your sound at carnival last year people were taking laughing gas. Do you think the new generation need to moderate themselves?

Some of them just don't know any better. Let me put it simple. Once upon a time when you



went to a dance it was 99.9% black people in that dance. So if you were a white guy who liked the music coming into that dance, you'd come in and see what's there, accept what's there and take it all in. You used to learn from the guys around you. Now, when you have dances, a lot of the sound systems that play roots dances attract the student element, and when you go to the dance it's 99.9% white guys. So there are no black guys to look at to say, "How are they dancing? How are they moving? That's what you do, ok, ok..."

So what do they do instead?

One thing I notice is when students come in a roots dance they'll all sit on the floor. Now in days gone by the only time you'd see anybody on the floor would be if someone had passed out - and even then they wouldn't be on the floor because someone would have picked them up! There's no one to say "This is what you do" because it's all about get

people through the gate and getting their money. The students come in and all they know is "Yeah! The music's loud!" and they might pop two pills or whatever they're popping and freak out. But to me a roots dance is not about freaking out.

I would play a roots dance and there's a section of the roots dance where I'd play tunes that are slow so you could dance with a girl to them but if you listen to the lyrics that the man's saying, he's singing something conscious. But because it's not a hundred miles an hour certain people and certain sound men won't class that as roots. Dur dur da da da dur dur diggy da. It all gets the same after a while.

I call it dub wallpaper.

(laughs) Exactly! But don't get me wrong - there are some good tunes. There are some very good productions and I've got some of them myself. But if I go to a record shop nowadays I've got to wait and listen and wait and listen and then go, "Yeah I'll have that one" where before I'd have a great big pile.

There's definitely still good roots music being made in a modern style.

And I listen to all of it. Last week I was in Brixton in a club called The Beach. It was all youths in there and I just wanted to know what was going on now - what tunes they were playing and how they reacted to certain tunes. But it made me laugh because what they called "Back In The Day Tunes" were only about three or four years old!

A lot of sound systems play their own productions now in Europe. What do you think of this?

On the one hand I understand it, because if I was pressing up my own music I'd want it to be heard by as many people as possible. But the dance becomes sterile because you're only

hearing one person's productions. So the man who does it thinks he's doing the right thing because he wants people to hear his tunes but he's also forgetting to entertain the people. They've paid to come through the door. I'm not saying they shouldn't play their own productions at all. It's just a modern version of when people used to play their specials in the old days. "No one can play this. Only I can play this". But now a man can play the whole dance with just his music. Aba Shanti's changing a bit because he used to do that. Purely his productions. Earthquake does it in Birmingham as well and you get tired of it because it sounds the same after a while.

Where can people check you before you go back to Jamaica next year?

Next year I'm going to do some farewell dances in the UK. Then we're going to play one last Carnival and then someone else is going to be playing there.

In your spot.

It's terrible that spot! It's like there are people who own sections of pavement! There are certain crews that stand at certain places. One year I moved the four faces across the road from the wall to near the jerk van and it was pandemonium! "Nah man! Yuh cyaan move my box dread! Yuh haffi put it back!" (laughs) So the next day we moved it back!

Certain people stand in certain places and kids have grown up there. I remember the people who used to bring their kids when they were little and now the kids are big, they still pass through and say hello, listen to the music for a while and move on. I'm like, "Bwoy, yuh turn big. I remember when your mum would sit you on the van and ask me to watch you while she went somewhere." But they still pass through. So if adults treat kids in a certain way rather than as if they're the enemy then we'd get more out of them.

What do you mean?

Society treats them like the enemy.

I remember when I was coming up it was like we spoke a different language to our parents. They didn't understand a thing we were going through and I confess I don't understand what the youths are dealing with. But society backs them in a corner where the only way they can express themselves is how they do. That's why their music's very angry. I don't blame them. I blame us. The way parents handled us, we didn't know it was good for us, so when we had our kids we always said, "I'm not going to treat my kids how my parents treated me". Then society's come in and said, "You can't slap your kids. You can't do this, you can't do that", and now kids can call the police and they'll come and lock the parents away. So it's gone

too much the other way. The kids have got too much power. And that's because we said we're not going to do the things our parents did for us. If you think of all the things parents did to you, nowadays we'd say that's parental cruelty, but at the time it made a lot of us rounded people. I'm not saying that kids weren't going astray back then - they were - but I realized I couldn't get things that other kids had. I had to get a paper round or I had to make it myself. I couldn't afford an amp so I went on an electronics course so I could know how to build amps and preamps. If you said to a kid now, "Come one, get a sound system" they'd say "Where is it?" He wants it ready built. He doesn't even want to plug it in. And these kids, what are they going to do with their kids? I haven't got the answer, but, that's how I see it.



Ray Hurford

INTERVIEW

BY ERIK MAGNI

Ray Hurford is a bona fide reggae enthusiast

Music is naturally associated with artists, labels and producers. But there are others that operate more in the background, and are very vital to the scene. British writer and musician Ray Hurford is one such. He started the Small Axe fanzine in the late 70's and has interviewed a range of artists that many just dream of.

Ray Hurford has been into reggae since its inception was around eleven years old when he bought his first reggae record.

– I talked about reggae at home and my sister, who worked at Tate and Lyle's [a sugar maker], lent a box of records from a young Jamaican girl, says Ray with a broad cockney accent on the phone from his home in the UK.

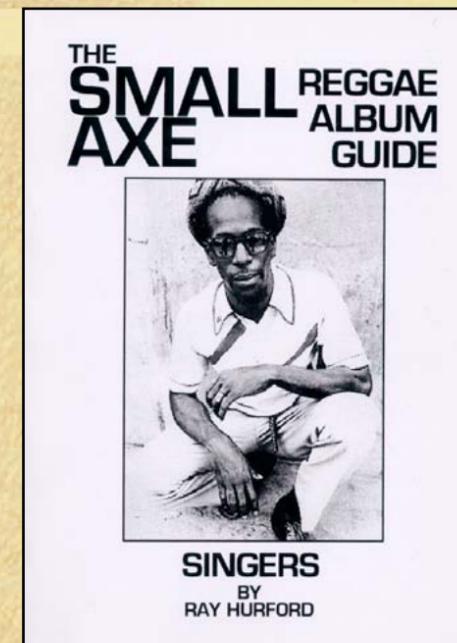
Filled a gap

His interest in reggae, the people behind the music and the fact that no one wrote about reggae made him start the legendary fanzine Small Axe in the late 70's. People had been writing about reggae before, but magazines were not interested in covering the topic anymore.

– In 1973 the public started to get interested in reggae and people like Carl Gayle and Penny Reel were some of the

first to write about reggae seriously. There were a number of articles in the period 1973-1978. But then it stopped, says Ray, and continues:

– There were a lot of amazing artists coming out in the mid 70's, but no one wrote about them and I wanted to change that.



Tax agency steps i

In 1978 everything seemed to be in place. The only part that was missing was money. But that little matter was suddenly resolved by a much beloved agency.

– I had paid too much tax and got some money back, which was rather unexpected. With that chunk of money I started Small Axe, Ray explains.

The first edition was put out as a pre release to see how the market would receive the

magazine. It was an instant success.

– It became sought after since the writer at the Echoes gave it a good word, he says, and continues:

– I printed the first issue in a Xerox shop and it was published in September 1978. It was amazing. I got 30-40 orders and it was very encouraging.

Great demand

According to Ray the first issue was sold out immediately and was in incredible demand. The next issue was published in early 1979 and was distributed through Dub Vendor and Rough Trade.

– From there it just snowballed. I put out four editions in 1979 and three in 1980. It was such a success. Better than I had expected, says Ray in a joyful tone.

He managed to interview many, many reggae artists, including Norman Grant of the Twinkle Brothers, Dennis Alcapone (they're still friends) and the late Prince Far I, who threw away Ray's questions when they sat down for the interview. But things changed. Reggae had now shifted to dancehall and technology altered the conditions for graphic design and printing.

– It became a question about

money and I stopped working on the magazine for financial reasons.

it was successful, he says, and continues:

– More Axe was produced in 1-6. More Axe 8 was a total flop. A total disaster and I put an end to it. That was in 1997.

It was an abrupt ending and Ray explains that there is a big problem with publishing books – it's expensive. So he found no reason to continue.

Started again

In the beginning of the 21st century Ray turned to recording and producing instead. But

a rub-a-dub interested Swede made him interested in publishing again.

– Joakim Kalcidis contacted me and was interested in the deejay book, which was never finished. So I and Joakim started working on it again around 2007, explains Ray, and continues:

– The deejay book was released in 2009 and since then there has been books on rock steady and dub. I have also put out the More Axe 2 again.

His latest book is about reggae and its early years.

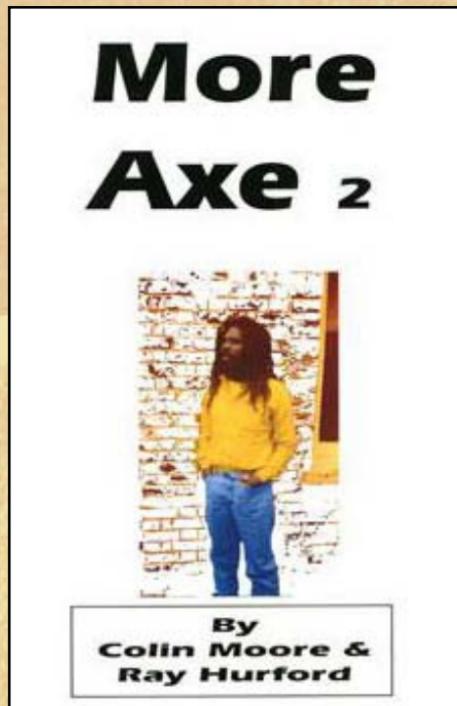
– 1968 to 1970 was an amazing period. The new book focuses on the artists of the period. Artist profiles and the people who produced the music, like Leslie Kong.

Technology is the key

During our conversation Ray comes back to a topic – technology change. Everything he has done has been in relation to a change in technology. Whether it's printing, publishing or payment methods.

- Paypal has changed a lot and it makes a big difference, says Ray, and states:

- The game has changed. It's all technology.



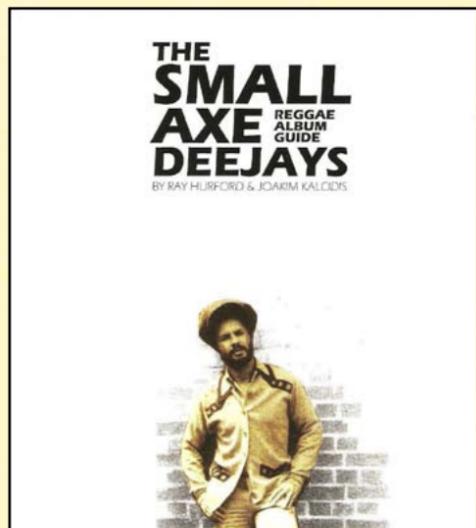
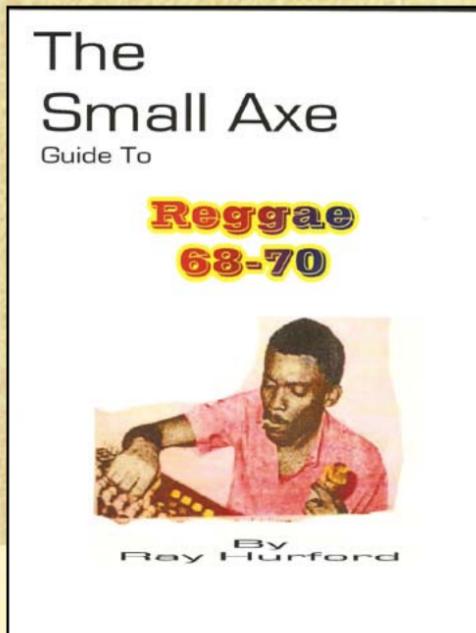
Book publishing

Small Axe carried on until 1989, during that time Ray also turned his interest towards books.

The first edition in the More Axe series was put out in 1987. He also published a book on King Jammy and a book on singers as well as a series of Rhythmwise books.

A book on deejays, together with the late Finnish publisher and writer Tero Kaski, was also initiated.

– The Singers book was put out in 1996 by me and Tero Kaski. I sold a lot of my 7" to finance the book project. And



CECIL REUBEN

INTERVIEW

BY ANGUS TAYLOR

Cecil Reuben is the promoter of reggae events at London's Brixton Hootananny, a venue that has almost single-handedly revitalised live Jamaican music in the capital. Since his arrival there the Hootananny has seen visits from artists such as Yellowman, Bushman and Don Carlos, as well as running regular nights for home-grown singing and sound system talent. Angus Taylor took a behind the scenes look at the life of the promoter as he was preparing for a busy 2011 of big name shows...

Where and when were you born?

I was born in Clarendon, Jamaica. I'm an original Clarendonian. I was born in April! (laughs)

(laughing) OK, which era of music did you grow up in?

My era was the 60s, after the ska period. When it started to turn to rocksteady was when I really got into music. Around '67-'68 time my brother used to buy a lot of records by Heptones, Alton Ellis, Phyllis Dillon, Gaylads - that was my growing up music. I just listened to what my brother used to play. What got me was the harmonies, so Heptones was my favourite group at the time. Then you had Roy Shirley - he had a big hit in '67 with Hold Them that went "Feel Good" - and a lot of Ethiopians tunes. I never really grew up on the ska - I was a

bit young for that - but from the rocksteady time I started to understand the music a bit more.

How did you get involved in the music?

I had two loves in life - football and music. So it was always going to be between football and music where my life would go. I used to play football with Bob Marley and Skill Cole who used to play for Jamaica but at the same time music started to creep in slowly. Sneaking out to dances and parties started to influence me a bit more so I started to buy records. I used to buy them down at Randy's - now VP Records - record mart on North Parade. Miss Chin the proprietor there used to always give me a good deal so I started to build my collection. We're talking early 70s - '71-'73 - and that enticed me to rival my bigger brother's collection.

He had a big collection from the rocksteady era but he stopped buying when I started and reggae - as we know it - started. You used to have labels like Impact!, Joe Gibbs, GG, Observer but in 1972 one of my biggest influences - who changed my perspective - was Big Youth coming on the scene. His LP Reggae Phenomenon influenced me to look further into Rastafari. His tune I Pray Thee was Psalm 2 - my favourite psalm in the bible.

How did you join the 12 Tribes organisation?

After I became Rasta within myself there were some brethren I knew who were 12 Tribes. We used to sit down and reason about Rasta and they told me about a little man called Gadman and how he started the 12 Tribes Of Israel in 1968 down Davis Lane in Trenchtown. They convinced me it was the right doctrine for me and from there I became a member in about 1974-74. I've been a member ever since.



You've done promotion, production and distribution but what would you say you've spent the most time doing over the years?

I'm a soundman originally. My sound used to play in all the 12 Tribes dances and stage shows. From 1981 I gave up playing anywhere else for 14 years and kept my sound within the organisation. I used to help with the stage shows for 12 Tribes bringing artists same way - but again it was within

the organisation. Then as you get older you leave it to the younger ones coming and get involved in your own thing. After '94 I went back on the road for myself.



How did you come to promote at the Hootananny?

I'm a Brixtonian ever since I moved to London. Even when I've lived outside I've always been in Brixton. The Hootananny has always been here - it used to be the George Canning, then it changed to the Hobgoblin, before becoming the Hootananny. The stage used to be on the floor and it was a little hangout place where local bands used to play. When it was the Hobgoblin it had a bad reputation as a drugs den so some Scottish people came and bought it and changed the name. Then after about a year I came along and got involved and decided I wanted to run it and put on some reggae shows. I did it because this is Brixton - and Brixton was the central place for reggae music at one time but it lost its title to Harlesden where you had Jet Star and many record shops and artists. So I decided to bring back the title to Brixton and the only

way was to put on some big shows at the Hootananny. The first show we put on was the Congos - which was a wicked show. Then we brought Aswad which is where it really kicked off. People thought a big band like that wouldn't come here but I knew Aswad from when they were growing up in the '70s. From there it was all systems go. A lot of people didn't think we could do it because they saw it as a pub. We used to have artists saying they weren't coming over to play in a pub. Even you in one of your articles called it a pub and I was like. "You can't call it a pub no more - it's a music venue!"



What's the secret to your success there?

Many clubs in Brixton don't last but the Hootananny will last because I'm doing it in the right way. I have good relations with the community and the police - and we're trying to get good relations with the licensing people. I don't put on too many bashment acts or young acts. I'm not fighting that music or young people but I don't want to bring the baggage that comes with them. I bring the foundation acts.

They might be old men but they're legends. Newer acts like Everton Blender and Bushman I wouldn't call legends - they only came out the other day! - but they bring a more conscious crowd and that's what I want. Too much hype, too much excitement and anything can kick off at any time. I'm not working with a budget like the Brixton Academy but now people have seen what we're doing acts who have turned me down are phoning me asking to play!

A lot of these acts play regularly in Europe but before you, it was hard to get them over here.

Roots rock reggae is more popular in Europe. In Jamaica, to my knowledge, it's pretty much dead. The reason it does better there is because they have more festivals. Here they seem to fight festivals for some reason. I know it pees off a lot of the bands here that most of these acts want to bring a band from Europe but you can't blame them because that's where they're touring.

FREDDIE MCGREGOR
Backed by
MAFIA & FLUXY BAND
+ SUPPORT
Sounds by JAHREVELATIONMUZIK
Sunday 3 October 2010
020444 771000 / Hootananny

How can things improve so the UK can compete with the rest of Europe?

The roots and dub scene here is rising up good. Because of the bad elements that followed the bashment scene it's dying out now. You get a lot of English white people and Europeans coming over and endorsing the roots scene here so it's slowly coming back. I have a regular night on a Thursday with my sound Jah Revelation Muzik where we don't play bashment and we get a good following. At one time in the late 80s and early 90s it was dying and all the sound systems never had work. There were no venues for them to play because venues brought in their own systems and didn't want your big bloody speakers! Also noise reduction and licensing restrictions are stricter now. So the only place to play was outdoors – but there are no festivals! But now it's coming back because the few little venues where you can bring a big sound – like the Scala and Tudor Rose – are being utilized a lot. I can't bring a big sound in here – even with what we have the neighbours are going crazy! The noise metres are a disaster. People just wait for Carnival to test out their sound!

Your sons are involved in music too. Do you ever give them advice?

(laughs) Well they always fol-

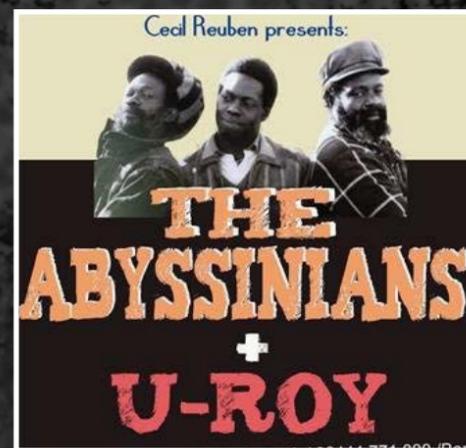
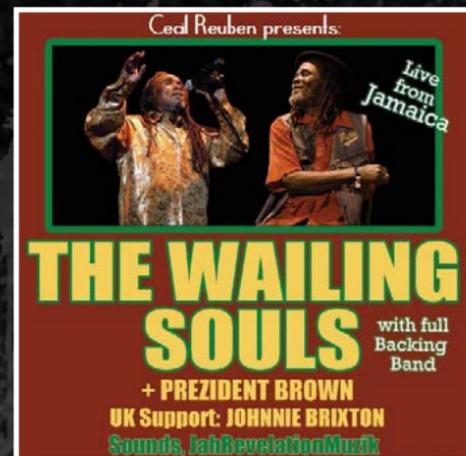


lowed me around and saw artists through what I do so I suppose they got influenced by that. When they were young I built a little sound called Silver-eye for them to play on. Two of my sons are now engineers working in studios on computers making beats and one is a rapper. They've embraced the music but they've got their own thing happening. One is really into the roots, another loves rap and the last one plays everything. I give thanks they are in the music and not in gang activities! I always wanted to be an engineer but never got the opportunity and they know how to build and sell their music on computers so they can advise me now!

Who is your dream artist to promote?

I'd love to bring Toots here. I'm not saying he's my favourite artist but the Hootananny feeling is Toots and the May-

tals. We do Ska on a Friday and I know Toots would go down well. Maybe I'd do more than one night!



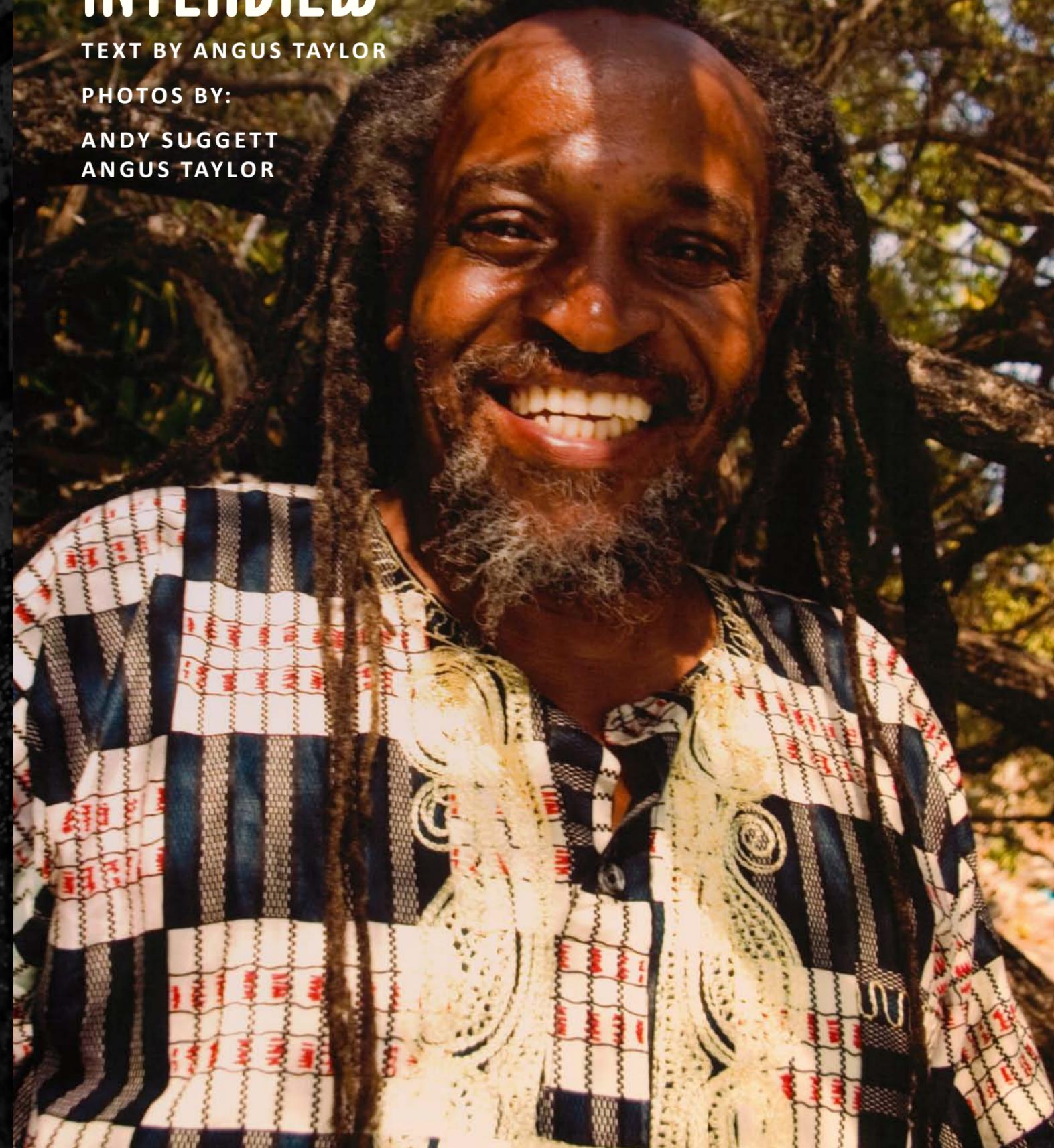
LITTLE ROY

INTERVIEW

TEXT BY ANGUS TAYLOR

PHOTOS BY:

ANDY SUGGETT
ANGUS TAYLOR



Little Roy was born Earl Lowe in Whitfield Town, Kingston in 1953, the youngest of nine children. At age 12 his singing impressed Coxsone Dodd at Studio 1 enough to release his debut 45 Cool It in 1965. Later he would record for Prince Buster and then Lloyd Matador Daley – for whom the sixteen year old talent sang Bongo Nyah, the first openly Rasta song to top the Jamaican chart in 1969. In the early 70s Lowe then started his Tafari label with friends Munchie and Maurice Jackson – where he released the much covered hits Prophecy and Tribal War, as well as lesser known collectors items such as Jah Can Count On I with his harmony group (with Ewan Gardner and Anthony “Rocky” Ellis) Little Ian Rock. A Rasta since his teens, he joined and, at the end of the decade, departed from the 12 Tribes Of Israel organization, leaving Jamaica for the USA and ultimately settling in London. In 2010 Tribal War was revived once again by Nas and Damian Marley for their ‘Distant Relatives’ opus, demonstrating that Roy’s songwriting truly stands the test of time. Angus Taylor spoke with the diminutive yet defiantly proud elder statesman of roots reggae at his home about his, at times troubled, career, his impressive new album Heat, and an unusual next project he has in the works...

You entered the business young. Were you too young?

I wouldn’t say I entered it too young because there were youths my age who wanted to enter it at the same time. It could have been any of us but it seems it was just me that got the break. It wasn’t something I was thinking about. I never said I wanted to be an artist. It happened gradually. It was just me following two friends from school to the studio. I was 12. Jackie Mittoo asked me to sing a song and he selected me to record.

Some people have said Jackie Mittoo was the real producer at Studio 1.

Yes, he was really the producer because when a lot of the songs were made Coxsone wasn’t in the studio and to call yourself a producer you have to be there telling the musicians what you want to hear and actually producing. I would say Coxsone was the executive producer and not the producer. I did later works with Jackie from 1987-89 when I was in America for an album called Live On with Ernest Ranglin, Tyrone Downie and Family Man. Great musicians. All I can say about Jackie Mittoo was he was just a genius. A musical genius and so is Ernest Ranglin. They are all geniuses. The way Jackie would formulate melodies on the keyboards. The notes Familyman would play. The things Ernest Ranglin would play seemed impossible.

Tell me about how you became Rasta in your teens.

I was a youth from a Christian home and most nights my mother would let me read the bible to her and all those kinds of things. I had to go to church twice on Sundays and at least once on week days. The family used to go to a church called The Church Of The Open Bible on Washington Boulevard close to Pembroke Hall. My mother and all the kids were members. My father I don’t remember going to church even one day in his life but he was just a hard worker. Religion was embedded in us and being the youngest I got the most of it. So at the age 13 going on 14 I started hanging out with some Rastas after school and playing football in Washington Gardens. These were Rastas who moved from Trenchtown to live in Washington Gardens, especially one called Orville Dwyer, and as youths we used to sit down, read the bible and smoke some herbs.

What was your thought process?

My Rasta came to me through reasoning about things to come. If you’re a conscious youth within yourself and you start checking history you start seeing that the Christianity I was a part of wasn’t really for us because there was no reality in it. I learned that when black people starting holding on to Christianity the mission-



-aries came with the bible in one hand and destruction in the other. So we had to look somewhere else. We were some youths who, if we hadn’t gathered the consciousness within our selves, maybe we’d still be holding on to it.

How did you join the 12 Tribes organization?

This happened at the age of 16 after I sang a song called Bongo Nyah. Some schoolmates of mine were members – not of the 12 Tribes of Israel but of the Ethiopian Federation, Charter 15. It was said that this organization got a charter received from Emperor Haile Selassie I for black people who wanted to return to Ethiopia whose family had fought in the war against Mussolini. It wasn’t really just a Rasta thing. It was a black thing so they could return home and start a new life. But after a time, I couldn’t say what really happened, but

I heard you had to pay dues to the society and they were saying someone from the Ethiopian World Federation in America had run away with the money. So Carrington, or Gad, decided to form something of their own and formed the 12 Tribes Of Israel. But even now in this time I still can’t see the reality of the 12 Tribes Of Israel because it was from the time of Jacob and we, those people that came from Africa, had nothing to do with those people who were on that side of the world. Abraham and those people were from the desert and our fore-parents were from the West coast of Africa – that’s where they were taken from. We weren’t from the Middle East so I would say it didn’t fit me.

Do you regret joining the 12 Tribes?

Yes, I regret because even now they still have a thing against me. They even went on the pulpit and said no must support anything for Little Roy. I was a member of the music body of 12 Tribes Of Israel – the 12 Tribes band. The first rehearsal was at my home where me and Euan Gardner from Little Ian Rock – we went to St Andrew Technical High School and played cup football together. We did a lot of shows all over Jamaica for the 12 Tribes Of Israel and we were not even given a cup of tea or a day dinner. When I really came to see and hear the folly

that was brewing I said, “Well then, bwoy, it’s best I just leave it then”. I had four children to take care of and I had a label before the 12 Tribes Of Israel from when I left school called Tafari. We produced songs like Prophecy and Tribal War. Those two great songs were for my label. I sacrificed everything because I had to stop pressing my songs and recording for my label to do the work which they would then say is 12 Tribe work. “You mustn’t be doing nothing else”.



Your 12 Tribes brethren Freddie McGregor has covered some of your songs like Prophecy and Jah Can Count On I.

When I left the 12 Tribes Of Israel they said “Well, Little Roy is gone but his songs are still here” so he started singing my songs to the world like they are his. He has never sung one of my songs on stage and said

"This is Little Roy's song." He sang Jah Can Count On I, Long Time Rocksteady and Prophecy was the song that made him big. Even today a lot of people still think that is Freddie McGregor's song.

You already mentioned Bongo Nyah which was the first overtly Rasta tune to top the Jamaican charts in 1969. On your new album Heat you sing about how much more acceptable it is for people to be – or at least look like – Rasta.

But it's not accepted because Rasta is never accepted by society. A lot of Rastas might feel like they are accepted but they are not. They might ease up the pressure on us a little but that's all. If we were accepted our music would be more out there getting played on the BBC just like other white groups. We are still being downpressed.

You sang with the Hippie Boys who became the Wailers and Little Ian Rock performed with Bob Marley. Tell about your experiences with Bob Marley and the group.

Yes, when I singing for Lloyd Matador Daley, those were the musicians who used to back up my songs – Familyman and Carlie were his regular musicians. And yes, we performed on a show called No Woman No Cry at the National Arena next to the stadium in the early 70s. There's not much to say – Bob Marley loved us as a group and we were put on that show because he talked a lot about us. Bob Marley called me "Music" so when he sang, "Hey Mr Music" I'm sure it was me he was talking to. It's written in a book that he said Dennis Brown is a good singer but the two artists he rates were Little Roy and Toots. It's written history.

Tell me about your experiences with Lee Perry and how you created Tribal War - one of most versioned songs of all time.

We recorded that song at Lee Perry's studio and the musicians were Dennis Brown on bass, Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace on drums, Paul

"Pablove Black" Dixon on keyboards, and Roy Hamilton on guitar. That song was made with just four musicians and it was a hit song from the day it was written. It wasn't a song that took a day or a week or a month. It took a long time to complete. The punchline was there - "Tribal War, we no want no more of that" but to complete it I was thinking a lot. The completion in writing of that song finally came on that day when I read in the newspaper that there was peace between rival gangs. They smoked some herbs in the chalice to mark the peace. Lee Perry was the engineer and the one who took my voice on Prophecy also. He was another genius in the music business, as an engineer. I was kind of close to Lee Perry growing up because we didn't live far from each other - his house was across the street. He was a good man. I was close to him and his wife at the time, Pauline. Some evenings I would leave school and go to his record shop on Charles Street, wait until he closed the shop and go home with them.



Tribal War was used by Nas and Junior Gong for their album Distant Relatives. Surely that's an example of Rasta music being successful in the mainstream? Have you received correct royalties for that song this time around?

But who did it? Damian is a Marley. A Marley will get accepted in the mainstream but a lot of artists don't. The father was accepted and it just followed the children. Once you're in you're in and once you're out you're out. I hope to [receive royalties] because it was only last year that they did it and all these things take time to come together.

Why did you leave Jamaica, move to the USA and finally settle in London?

I'm glad I left Jamaica because the people there they "badmind your things". That is what I was receiving from Jamaica. It was so plain to see that artists like John Holt, George Nooks, producers like Joe Gibbs, JoJo, Byron Lee and all these people re-recording my songs and not giving me any credit for them. To me that means, if they are taking my songs maybe next they'll want to take my life so I had to go away while I had the strength to. I don't regret leaving Jamaica. My time in America was great because I survived it through the storm and the calm. Sometimes it was good, sometimes it was bad. But I survived it as a survivor. Europe is more of a pathway for roots music. Roots music doesn't work in America but roots music can work in England over into Europe. I have family living here since 1956. When I was three years old my first sister came to England. Another sister came in '57, my brother came in '59, and then another sister in 1960. It was nine of us my mother and father had and I'm the youngest so when I came here it wasn't just me alone.

Why have you recorded so many of your songs again for your new album, Heat?

That decision was made because I looked into some of the songs and said, either it wasn't

grooving right, the musicians weren't right, or the studio sound. Some were good, even though I re-recorded them, but they still could be better. That is why I chose some of those songs - because I knew I could make them better. I recorded the song My Religion for 12 Tribes and because I left the organization I didn't even get a copy of the release. So I recorded it again for me so I could listen to the recording and get a copy for myself because I know it is a good song.

Finally, tell me about your next project - a Nirvana covers album? What's your favourite Nirvana song?

That's coming on great. I think that is something that maybe can move me into the mainstream! (laughs) I have to keep my fingers crossed, but it's a lovely album, and seeing as the message is different from the things I write it might happen. I love the song called Polly.



KAYLA G

INTERVIEW

We caught up with teenager Kayla Gordon, AKA DJ Kayla G, resident of Brooklyn New York who is also winner of Tiger Records first "Best mix contest", to get to know a little about her.

How did you start mixing? Because you have been quite active on youtube with your remixes.

I started mixing about 3 years ago. I really started collecting music which I picked up from my older brother. I decided it to take it a step further and begin DJing. I purchased some equipment at a low cost good enough for beginners. I didn't know anyone that was a DJ at the moment so I had to learn on my own. It wasn't easy and took some time but I'm glad that I took the time out to try it out. I make youtube videos to showcase how I've grown through out the years with my mixing. I began remixing a year after I began DJing. I'm may not be the best. But I like the response I'm getting.

Do you plan to continue music as a career?

Yes, I will soon start holding small parties with friends and playing school parties. I have joined a online radio where I am getting a good rep. I am also going to college in over a year so I can DJ making side money to support myself and see where it takes me.



Are you apart of a sound system?

No. I am on a solo movement.

How do you work (cd decks, vinyl, serato)?

I recently became a serato user and I am pleased to far.

How do you feel about being a girl in the middle, and do you think being a girl brings something different to the mix?

I feel as though I have to come a bit harder because this is a male dominated field. But truthfully I feel as though I am in the same lane as some of males in the DJ game. Sometimes does bring something different to the mix because people usually expect a male to be a DJ rather than a female so all I can do is blow their mind with this mixing. I feel as though you can be male or female once you are given a talent use it to the best of your abilities.



CEDELLA MARLEY

INTERVIEW

BY COLIN MCGUIRE

Picture this: It's a warm evening sometime in 1975 and you find yourself in the birthplace of reggae music -- Kingston, Jamaica. You've spent an entire day lounging on sandy beaches, feeling the burning embrace of the sun as it pours over your body. You recognize no stress. No worries. Never mind the fact that you forgot your sunblock and all of the soothing rays that the sun is providing will soon turn into painful burns. Never mind the troubles that sit within the confines of your mind, the thoughts of responsibility, the possible feelings of anguish that can loom in anybody's head on any given day. In fact, never mind the worries that any "normal" day can bring altogether.

Why? Because this isn't just a normal day. In fact, it isn't even a special day. It's a legendary day, because tonight, you have plans to see the most important figure in reggae music history perform songs from his latest, breakthrough release, *Natty Dread* at the quintessential musical venue in the country, the National Stadium. That's right. Bob Marley is mere hours away from hitting the stage to spread the message of all of the great things his music stands for:

love, rebellion, and, well, impossibly good vibes. What could possibly be wrong with this picture?

Well, if you ask Marley's daughter, Cedella, the answer is simple: Her father.

"Oh, I wasn't there to see daddy perform," the 43-year-old singer and fashion designer now says while laughing. "I was there to see the Jackson 5."

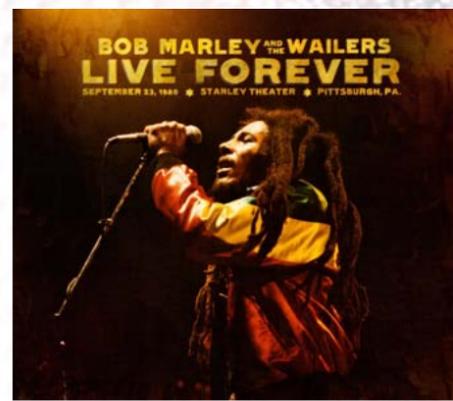
And rightfully so. At the time, she was barely old enough to stay up past 10. To her, she says, the reggae legend was merely known as her father, not a revolutionary. Just the notion of being in the presence of such international pop stars as the Jackson brothers -- most notably brother Michael -- was enough to get her interested in checking out her dad's opening set performance that night.

None of that means she completely discounted everything she saw that evening, though. Come on, now. This is still Bob Marley we are talking about.

"Dad was amazing, though," she adds, breathing a sigh of reflection. "He tore the place down."

Cedella has been in a reflective mood lately with the release of her father's final concert on CD. 'Live Forever', a two disc set that chronicles Marley's final concert on September 23, 1980 -- two days after collapsing while jogging in New York -- at The Stanley Theatre in Pittsburgh, Pa., has recently been officially released after existing within only the world of bootlegging for years beforehand. The set captures an older, more tender-sounding Marley in a light that feels perfectly imperfect at times, considering the couple sloppy endings to songs and a crowd that seems somewhat inexplicably underwhelmed.

But none of that gets in the way of what truly shines through the release much like the aforementioned cloudless afternoon on a Kingston beach, and that's the passion felt within the man's voice. It's a passion that pierces through songs like the inspired Them Belly Full or the haunting, show-stopping take on *No Woman, No Cry*. Sure, there's no way he could have possibly known this was going to be his final concert before eventually succumbing to cancer the following year, but if you listen closely to



the 19 performances that make up 'Live Forever', you might just get the feeling that he knew something was up. The performances draw the line between being aged and being wise. And if nothing else, this portrayal of that final night on stage proves the latter, rather than even questioning the former.

It's that maturity, that wisdom, that made Bob Marley the statesman of an entire movement -- an entire art -- that Cedella argues is missing from reggae music today.

"Now, everything today is rhythm-based," she says when asked about the current state of reggae music. "Nobody gives a shit about what is on top of the music. Nobody is saying anything anymore."

"I wish we could go back. Lately, I've been going way back to listen to the music with artists like Gregory Isaacs, Burning Spear and Culture. I mean, look at how

it still is today. Thirty years later, generations keep looking back to my dad for reggae music. Everyone still holds one man responsible for reggae. No one should have to step up to the plate (for reggae music), and you can't blame those who have tried for failing. But people always say stupid things like 'Me bigger than Bob Marley.' Don't say that." "Stephen has all of the elements," she adds, citing her brother's debut release 'Mind Control' as one of the great reggae albums of the last five years. "He has that old folk voice that sounds amazing. It goes back. There needs to be more of that in today's music."



Another thing Cedella would admittedly like to see in today's musical world is the inclusion of women in reg-

gae within the walls of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Though she cites her father's contemporary, Jimmy Cliff, recently being elected to the HoF as "very nice," she contends that all of the influential women within the genre have been largely ignored.

"I think Ziggy Marley & The Melody Makers should be in the Hall of Fame," she quips half-jokingly when pressed about the matter. "But how about the I-Threes? Women in reggae have always been over-looked. All of them. I think they deserve the honor just as much as any men."

Hall of Fame induction thoughts aside, Cedella

knows the importance of her father when it comes to both popular music and politick.

She knows it so much, in fact, that she has been designated as the child who takes on most of the legal issues her family is forced to deal with on a daily basis. Feeling as though she "knows the law better than some of her own lawyers," she notes that 'Live Forever' is only the beginning in a slew of official releases she and her family hope to release looking ahead.

"We want to start a bootleg series," she says. "But we want it to be completely fan-based. We would like to collect the stuff people have recorded and release it officially. Another thing we have been thinking about is bringing together some of the world's best DJs to release an album of remixes of their favorite Bob Marley songs. These are a lot of maybes, though. No promises."

As for that exciting night in 1975 – a night which she remembers more for the headlining act than she does the semblance of her father performing to a sold out crowd on the heels of one of the biggest, most influential reggae albums ever recorded – Cedella looks to it as a reference point for where she was when 'Live Forever' was recorded. "I was so young, and to me, he was



always just daddy," she says now with a hint of warmth that suggests something far deeper than she would ever reveal. "I miss him all the time. I am way older than my father was (when he passed away). And listening (to 'Live Forever'), I try to understand where he was emotionally at that time, and what he was feeling." Then, with her voice trailing delicately, her light Jamaican

accent continues into a tone of thought and question. "I feel like he was immature when he died," she says. "And he wasn't mature then, when I listen to this. He had matured musically, but not as a man. We all think we are invincible, but we aren't. Everybody has regrets, you know? But I'd love to be able to turn back time just to see him again."



ERIC MONTY MORRIS

INTERVIEW

BY ANGUS TAYLOR

Elder statesman of ska, Eric "Monty" Morris, was born in St Andrew Jamaica on July 20th 1944. The young Monty loved music and could often be found at the sound system dances of the 1950s when US style R&B was the order of the day. Like many fellow legends of the period, such as Alton Ellis and Eric's friend and neighbour Derrick Morgan, he was a contestant on Vere Johns' Opportunity Hour talent show, and began a recording career in 1959. He voiced for Duke Reid, Prince Buster, Byron Lee and Clancy Eccles, repeatedly topping the Jamaican charts. In 1964, riding on the success of singles Sammy Dead Oh and Oil In My Lamp, he joined an excursion to the New York World's Fair, organized by Edward Seaga, to sing with Byron Lee and the Dragonaires. Sadly, ska failed to capture the imagination of the American public until after the movement had ended, while the "Wild West" mentality of the Jamaican music business, coupled with the singer's soft temperament, left him short of the financial rewards gained by some of his peers, so in 1970 he retired to the United States. Yet his memory burned strong the minds of the US Caribbean community and he was eventually tempted back to record for the Washington DC Kibwe label in 1988. 1999 even saw a triumphant return to Jamaica after 3 decades for the concert series Heineken Star Time. Ten years later Mor-

ris' son Reuben introduced Monty to the singer/producer Sadiki who became his manager. Together they have created The Living Legends Collection – Morris' first ever full length album, bearing recuts of his hits - and just a few days before its release Angus Taylor got the chance to speak with the great man himself...

How did you get the name Monty?

That name was originally given to me by my mother. She just decided to call me Monty. It was just a little nickname, a blessing name that I grew up with.

You were friends with Derrick Morgan and lived near each other on Orange Lane, Kingston.

Derrick and I really moved good as individual artists from Jamaica. In the early times before Derrick even came into the music business I called his attention to music. Derrick wasn't really a direct singer but through our being friends from in the lane, I called his attention to it and showed him to auditions. So we move good still, but in terms of recognition for the works that you do, they hardly even mention me. I have to really put myself out there so a man will recognise me for my work.

Tell about how you started on Vere Johns opportunity hour with Derrick.

I saw the Vere Johns Opportunity Hour by looking in the Star newspaper clippings. I was doing a little job at a window sill when I saw this clipping for Vere Johns Opportunity Hour at the Palace Theatre advertising for dancers and singers. So I called Derrick's attention to it – because both of us were practising - and said, "Derrick, let's go to the Palace Theatre and take a look at the show". So from there I tried travelling on to see how far I could go in the music business and eventually I ended up being a recording artist.

Derrick had already recorded for Duke Reid but you voiced your first recordings - Now We Know and Nights Are Lonely - for Simeon Smith's Hi Light label?

Yes Hi Light! Mr Smith! He used to have a little record store at Spanish Town Road and that was where I did my first recording with Derrick – We Want To Know Who Rule This Great Generation [Now We Know]. The entertainment business on the stage wasn't too prosperous for me so I started to do recording. I think it's only because of my versatility within the music business why I got some support from these promoters. I had to make it on my own. I had to go out and show my talent to these promoters instead of them coming looking for me. Those other guys, they would come and look for them.

You started recording when the pre ska R&B was very popular.

Yes, the boogie woogie music was around before the ska developed. I kind of slightly changed the trend of the dancing that was going on in Jamaica. I feel we, more or less, tried to create something of our own instead of keep dancing off those boogie woogie tunes we would get some kind of identity about our own music. That's why Jamaican music is kind of different from all other music.

Tell me how you came to record for Prince Buster? You cut Humpty Dumpty in 1961 which was a big hit. It was kind of half-way between the boogie and ska?

That was quite a historical event now because, as you say, the boogie beat changed over. You used to have a whole heap of boogie tunes when I was a young boy going to sound system dances. I'd been going down to Orange Street where they had all the record shops and sound systems going on and they started to recognize me as an artist. It happened through Derrick Morgan. Derrick was on the Lane where I lived so Prince Buster would come down there and said, "Monty, that guy is a good singer. I'm going to give him a trial". So I eventually found myself ending up at the studio with a couple of songs, Mon-

ey Can't Buy Life and Humpty Dumpty and a few more tunes didn't make it onto 45. So they found out I had a good voice and could sing. It turned out that that tune kind of changed the trend of music in Jamaica because eventually - apart from one or two tunes - the boogie woogie things cut out and it was just ska.

As well as R&B and Nursery Rhymes, the other music from the 50s that gave you inspiration was mento and gospel. Some of your full ska recordings from the 60s like Penny Reel (for Duke Reid) and Sammy Dead (with Byron Lee) are old folk songs, while Oil In My Lamp is an old Christian hymn.

As a ska artist I tried to be an individual versatile artist so I'd record a little soft tune, or a mento or calypso style. So I did those kinds of songs there in a mento style of singing like Penny Reel, Oil In My Lamp - in a Jamaica style. And I've still got a couple of those tunes inside of my brain that I haven't recorded yet!

Oil In My Lamp and Sammy Dead Oh were also big hits. Tell me about your subsequent appearance at the World's Fair in New York in 1964 with Byron Lee and the Dragonaires.

That was a great high-lighted time in New York. But every man did their own thing. I went there with Byron Lee,

thinking they would look out for my rights as a singer coming up. But every man there looked out for their own thing in those times for the recognition of the ska. At that time I did the tune Sammy Plant The Corn [Sammy Dead Oh] and it was getting a lot of interest. They couldn't stop the tune Sammy from being a hit song but they never really put the interest inside my thing to make me known so that I was in the spotlight. But everything is good because the Father bless and I am still going on keeping these things alive.

During the rocksteady era you recorded tunes like Put On our Best Dress for Mrs Pottinger and then, in 1967, another cutting edge tune Say What You're Saying for Clancy Eccles. How did that come about?

Duke Reid had just built his studio at Bond Street so Clancy came straight up to my yard to look for me and told me to come to the studio because he had a session going on. Because in those times we were all still trying to create and trying to change the mood. They had the rocksteady band going on with Tommy McCook and all those guys so I went down to the studio and fortunately Clancy got a very good tune out of me (because I always try to have something reserved in the bank!) so I put that tune down as well as Tears In My Eyes. Tommy McCook and the

band was kicking too in Duke Reid's new studio upstairs.

Some people have said Say What You're Saying was the first reggae tune.

Oh yes! I feel Say What You're Saying is the first reggae tune to ever come out. People say Larry Marshall sang Nanny Goat and Larry Marshall told everybody, "I made the first reggae tune". But Larry Marshall was in that session with me and out of the tunes that were sung that day, Say What You're Saying was the best tune of the session, which turned out to be the first reggae tune. It had a different flavour from rocksteady. You had ska, rocksteady, and then reggae - each had a different little taste in terms of the timing of the rhythm and the things the musicians would play. But as an artist I just let other people look at the music and say what they feel.

Why did you move to the United States in 1970?

It was a hard time in Jamaica for a man of my talents. It was through my mother. She saw the hard time I was getting and said, "Monty, we go try it. It will be a trip. It will be a visit". She found a better life. But I never really came over to the United States with a singing intention. I worked a few jobs over here but eventually in a man at Lion and Fox Studios in Washington DC said,

"Monty, I remember you were one of the legendary singers from Jamaica" and things like that so I found myself doing one or two shows and cut some dubplates. I went back into the studio and tried to do back a couple of my long-time songs and they put them on a big disc and released them so I started off again. [The album In Cry Freedom was a collaboration between Monty and Ras Michael's son Michael Enkrumah released on the Kibwe label in 1988]

How is it that in 50 years, with all these big singles you never recorded a full album?

That is a very important question, sir. This is just the reason

why I made this little move with Sadiki because I think it is a very important thing to have him looking over everything. It was a family member that said, "Well, Monty, give him a try and see what you can get out of it. Because all these people you do music for for all these years and none of them even think of saying what happened to all them tunes you sing on when they sell and this and that. Give him a try and see if things come together. It might start anew and change for the better". I don't want to keep doing these things over and over, put the talent out and don't get any redress for doing it. Because a lot of those guys I did recording for, when I take stock, after the music would

start to sell they wouldn't confront me with what was going on. So now is the time that I should really be putting everything in one place and keep doing the things for one label and one person for all of the things I was doing before.

Why did you decide to record your old hits again instead of new material?

I feel good about it because Sadiki put a different change on it and made it sound more original. It was a good move we made to do back my old tunes in a different new kind of beat and add something to it. I love the way how he does his things. I have some new songs and we will do another album soon, but I'm going do it in the style like we used to do it with some live musicians, some rhythm men - a rhythm section.

Which musicians and singers do you rate today?

The musicians that really have the sound of today are men like Dean Fraser, Ernest Ranglin and Gladstone Anderson. They still have that touch and feel for the music that comes from Jamaica. They haven't lost that feeling. Beres has still kept that feeling as an icon and Marcia Griffiths, and I can't throw out my brethren Derrick because Derrick is always a round and about man. A man who can sing any kind of music. I've talked to Derrick a few times when he

has been to Miami because he is a man who is moving from one place to the other.

What do you think of how popular ska music has been outside Jamaica over the years? Are there any new ska bands you like?

I feel like ska music doesn't really reach the people in the right way but I feel there is something still there in the ska music. I see them dancing in the real way towards the music when they hear it now but it's like they don't really understand it the way the musicians and the singers really know. But I think the ska is still here and still has something to deal with within the music. So in parts of the world where they hear the real ska and hear me or other artists that have the legend, they are going to realize that the people who were individually responsible for the music - the creators, the people who really started this thing - still have it going on. Half of the world still wants to feel the reggae and ska and the other half of the world doesn't know about it so I think the world still wants ska.

The Buckley Recording Company Presents
The Living Legends Collection

ERIC MONTY MORRIS



NEW RECORDINGS OF THE SKA CLASSICS:
PENNY REEL OIL IN MY LAMP INTO THIS BEAUTIFUL GARDEN
LIVE AS A MAN SAMMY DEAD WHAT YOU GONNA DO
STRONGMAN SAMPSON SOLOMON GUNDIE + MANY MORE HITS
PRODUCED BY SADIKI



Boss Reggae Sounds - Reggae Popcorn 1969- 1971

Last year Pressure Drop brought out a host of Laurel Aitken reissues and compilations, now though they are focusing on his work as a producer with this 30 track collection of 'Boss Reggae Sounds' from 1969 to 1971. The quality of his work for the UK's leading Reggae companies, Trojan and Pama, was second to none and unsurprisingly sold strongly throughout both the Caribbean ex-pat community and the UK's burgeoning Skinhead population.

A lot of the songs are semi instrumental in that the lyric is basically a repetitive command to do the funky monkey, chicken etc on very raw riddims, unlike a lot of the Trojan hits that used overlaid strings to soften them up and make them more appealing to the major UK market. Unfortunately for me some of these rather one dimensional lyrics, as is the case with King Horror, who chips in with five songs that are either full of innuendo or just trying to add a bit of fashionable (at the time) Hammer Horror with an assortment of shrill screams and OTT scary voices, can at times detract from what is a great flowing, moonstomping beat and despite their initial amusement the lack of any real imagination makes them grate after a while.

There are some nice love songs from the gruff soulful voice of Winston Groovy, including a take on Sam Cooke's Send Me and a Drifters sounding Leave Me Standing, but it is the pleading, more up-tempo I Cant Go On that shines brightest.

In amongst all this madness and love songs



are also a couple of songs on the struggles of Africa with the The Classics History Of Africa paying tribute to Patrice Emery Lumumba, the African nationalist leader who became the first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1960, but was forced out of office after only 3 months and then assassinated a short time later, while Laurel Aitken sneaks in with the cry for unity and to Africa Arise.

The album is rounded off with The Groovy Beats Birds & Flowers, a steel drum version of Young Gifted and Black plus Tiger's narrative original version of Guilty which was covered by UB40 for their inaugural 'Labour Of Love' album.

Despite some misgivings this is still a fine and entertaining collection of rare and collectable recordings that just add more weight to why Aitken was labelled as the godfather of ska.

Review by Karl Pearson

REVIEWS



Skyfiya by The Uprising Roots Band



The concept of a full functioning, single unit Reggae band is one which has largely become lost within the current landscape of Jamaican Reggae. When normally the concept of a 'band' is thrown around, it is done so meaning a group of players of instruments and a lead singer, but in Jamaican Reggae, 'band' more often means something else - A group of players of instruments who unite under one name to back a variety of lead singers at any given time.

With that being the case, perhaps the mere existence, alone, of a group like the Uprising Roots Band is a big deal, even before you get to the fact that their music is absolutely divine. Fronted by Rashaun 'Black Kush' McAnuff who plays the drums and sings and is the son of reigning Reggae music royalty, Winston McAnuff, the URB is full of very skilled musicians who have come together not only as a backing unit for other vocalists, but as a BAND which

makes and supports their own music which they've now released through Tru Musik Records in the complete and beautiful form of a brand new album, 'Skyfiya'.

The title track and first single attracted quite a bit of attention and served as a powerful example of the band's capabilities in several ways. Be it the superb craftsmanship and pure skill displayed on the tune (which has certainly lead many to not notice the fact that the scintillating tune has virtually no lyrics) or just the 'star quality' of it, the tune made a huge impression on fans across the globe who don't figure, at all, to be disappointed by what lies on the album behind that big song.

What is there? Check the organically powerful opener, King Rastafari, which comes

in with such a heavy sound that tune, even before the message is clocked in, simply sounds important and the listener comes away with a sense that a great bit of attention was paid to detail on this selection and the album which follows it. That same level of fastidious planning is evident on the sublime Blessings, as well as other large efforts on 'Skyfiya', particularly on songs such as Marcus Garvey, Most Royal (a mighty tune in tribute to the great Afrikan women of the world).

Listeners are also sure to react to the most interesting herbalist set, Steamers, which not only presents itself as what it is, but does so in a very clever and 'family-oriented' style, as well as the flaming 'Krush Like Lightning' which puts purveyors of wickedness on alert that their end soon come.

Still, the most interesting twist of the album seems to come within the title itself, both of the album and the group. The Uprising Roots Band, through the songs, Skyfiya, Brightest Light, Shinin' So Bright and Brighter Days pay a great tribute to the fire in the sky - The Sun - and their idea of its power in the world and how mankind should also seek to take hold of this strength. As is said on Brightest Light:

*"The brightest light Shines from within
The brightest light Shines from the East
Rise from the East"*

Prescribing, of course, the power and traits of the sun to the ability of man which is not only a very refreshing take on the whole 'fyah bun' rhetoric which has been so prevalent within Reggae for the past decade and a half or so, but is also a very poignant sentiment on its own merits.

Also worth mentioning is the fact that the URB does a bit of straight forward poetry, in a very Spoken Word style, which definitely adds another interesting dimen-



sion to their vibes and, perhaps it goes without saying, but the music here is top notch and virtually without flaw throughout. This album would also look quite well completely sans vocals.

'Skyfiya' is one of the biggest releases in what is still a very young year, but it's going to be hard to imagine such an excellent

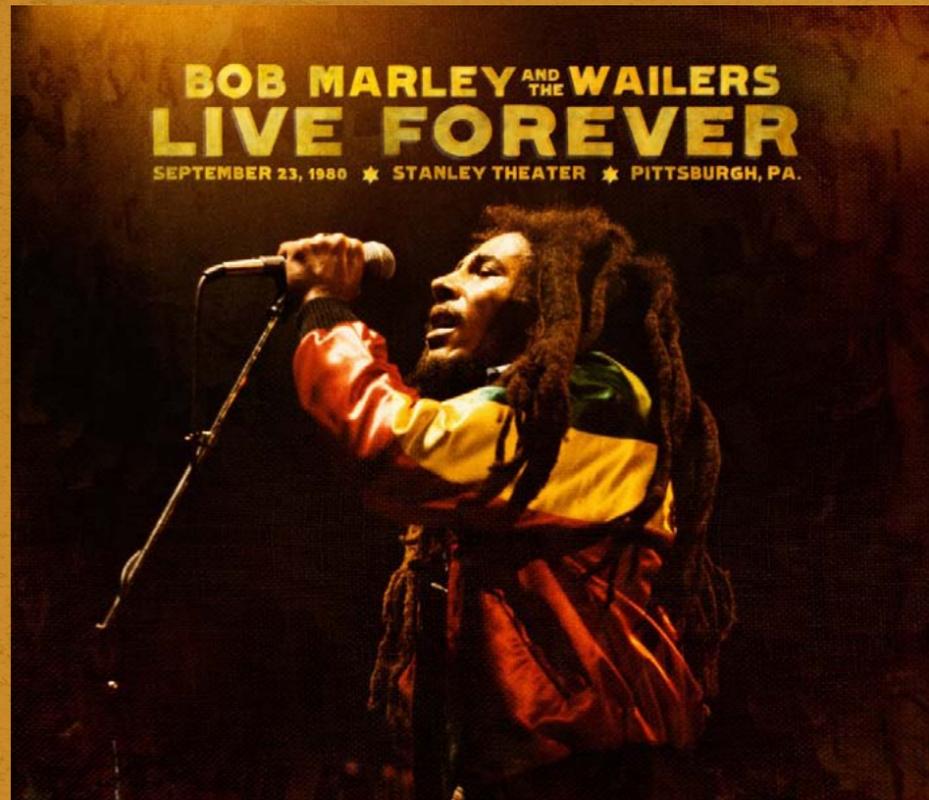
crafted and carried out set 'falling off' in the next nine months. Just as the Uprising Roots Band, themselves, their debut album seems to have the potential to mark a changing of the times as the Reggae band has returned to Jamaica. Well done.

Review by Ras Achis

Live Forever by Bob Marley and the Wailers

Bob Marley played his last concert on September 23, 1980 in Pittsburgh, PA, and after years in circulation in the form of low quality bootlegs, this historic show has finally been granted an official release. The story behind this show has often been told – after collapsing in Central Park while jogging to wind down from the previous night's concert, Marley was rushed to a doctor who told him that he had only a few weeks to live. Years of relentless touring and neglecting a cancerous melanoma in his toe had resulted in the cancer spreading through Marley's body to such an extent that it was a miracle he was able to function at all. Realizing that his career was over and against the best medical advice, Marley chose to travel to Pittsburgh to play one final show. Considered in this context, listening to 'Bob Marley and the Wailers – Live Forever' can be a very emotional experience.

I was fortunate enough to hear Bob Marley in concert just the year before this disc was recorded and the differences between the two performances were profound and



upsetting. I remember Marley as a force of nature, twirling and cavorting around the stage in a trance as he drove his band to celestial heights as his power and commitment transformed the music into something much greater than the sum of its parts. That concert remains one of the most sublime experiences of my life, and listening to 'Bob Marley Live Forever' is a poignant reminder of how much we lost when Marley passed on the next year at the age of thirty-six. In truth, the show presented here does not represent Marley's finest hour. His voice is reed thin and emanates an exhaustion that is palpable, yet time and time again one can hear Marley rally himself to deliver performances that

truly defy belief and understanding.

In truth, if one was to own one Bob Marley live CD, this wouldn't be the one to buy. 'Bob Marley Live at the Lyceum' from a 1975 concert in London presented the singer at the peak of his youthful confidence and showcases very rootsy Trenchtown versions of early classics which became much more polished and developed after years of subsequent touring. It remains one of the finest concert albums ever recorded. His next live set, 1979's 'Babylon By Bus' was issued as a two lp souvenir of Marley's very successful 1978 tour and demonstrates how much he had grown as an artist and

performer in just three years. Two additional official live sets were issued posthumously – 'Talkin' Blues' which featured a combination of early radio and concert performances from 1973 provided an excellent document of the Wailers' music while Peter Tosh was still a member of the band, and 'Live at the Roxy' – while it repeated many of the songs from 'Live at the Lyceum' was an important historical document as it has often been touted as the concert that broke Marley's music in America.

Given the wealth of high quality Marley recordings available, it might be tempting to give 'Bob Marley and the Wailers Live Forever' a miss, but that would be a mistake. From a musical perspective, the Wailers were in top form and it is often exhilarating and heartbreaking at the same time to hear them cover for their boss. Because he insisted on giving a full show and as well as a generous set of encores, the band increased the tempo slightly on each song as if by going a little faster, Marley would be able to push on through and finish the concert. As if to give him a little break and time to rest, the Wailers - who at that time were one of the tightest outfits on the road - opened up their arrangements and jammed heavily through the middle sections of many of the songs. Aston 'Family Man' Barrett's bass is astounding throughout and the percussion section on Jamming is – in itself – reason enough to buy this disc.

But, of course, even in his weakened state, Marley is front and centre and undeniably the star of the show. Whether or not it is the passage of time and knowing how his story ends that colours the listener's perceptions, hearing Marley work his way through the dynamics of Exodus, Positive Vibration and Natural Mystic one last time was almost more than I could take. These songs which I

have heard literally thousands of times over the years long ago lost their bite and immediacy for me. Yet, hearing Bob Marley rise time and time again to deliver new songs like Coming in From the Cold, Zion Train and Could You be Loved – all songs which haven't been featured on a live album before – along with his old classics was truly like hearing them for the first time.

'Bob Marley and the Wailers Live Forever' is like a last will and testament, a line drawn and a declaration of 'this is who I am and this is my work.' And, what a body of work it was! Listen and remember. And, if you can get through Redemption Song and Get Up Stand Up (the last song Marley ever sung with its repeating coda 'never give up the fight' as he left the stage) without tearing up, there's something seriously wrong with you. Music doesn't get any better than this..

Review by Doug Heselgrave

ARTICLES



Garnett Silk Will Always Be Remembered

Yesterday the late Garnett Silk would have turned 45 years old. Instead he died a tragic death only 28 years of age when trying to rescue his mother from a burning house that had been set on fire because of accidental gun fire on a propane gas tank. Garnett Silk was survived by a wife, three children and two brothers.

At the time he had been laying down tracks for his second album with producer Errol Brown and ten tunes were completed and released several years later.

Garnett Silk was a prominent person in the early 90's rasta renaissance, a time when a new breed of cultural singers entered the stage. Tony Rebel and Everton Blender were part of this movement.

He started his career deejaying as Little Bimbo with tunes such as See Bimbo Yah, but later adopted a style that was highly conscious showcasing his gospel influenced tenor voice. He marked a turning point in reggae and paved the way for singers such as Luciano, Jahmali, Bushman, Sizzla, Anthony B and rasta converts like Buju Banton and Capleton.

Bobby "Digital" Dixon was the mastermind behind his only full-length album – the astonishing 'It's Growing' released in 1992. The album was an instant bestseller in Jamaica and Garnett Silk managed to secure an international record deal with Atlantic.

Even though he had a short career he recorded with some of Jamaica's top talents, including King Jammy, Steely & Clevie, Richard

"Bello" Bell and Sly & Robbie, dropping hit tunes like Fill Us Up With Your Mercy, Hello Mama Africa and Zion in a Vision.

After his untimely death there has been several compilations dedicated to his work. The most complete is 'Music is the Rod'. Those who want to dig deeper can check out the two dubplate compilations 'Killamanjaro Remembers Garnett Silk' and 'Garnett Silk Meets the Conquering Lion'.

Garnett Silk has been compared to Bob Marley and hailed as his successor, even though Bob Marley died more than ten years before Garnett Silk dropped his debut album.

It is of course hard to predict whether Garnett Silk would have had a big international breakthrough to the general public, or remained a favourite to the reggae audience.

One thing is however crystal clear – Garnett Silk was a powerful force and is one of the most talented reggae artists of all time. He was a bright shining light and his presence will forever be remembered both through his own great work and through some of his followers – Ras Shiloh, Ras Sherby and Terry Linen. These three artists are great singers, but there is only one Garnett Silk.

Article by Erik Magni

Taj Weekes and Adowa at SXSW 2011

In true Texas style, Austin does everything LARGE. The self-acclaimed Music Capital of the World becomes an uncompromising reality every March during the South by Southwest (SXSW) Music and Media Conference. Officially, over 2000 bands showcase in 100 venues plus. In addition multitudes of free stages appear in retail stores, backyards, parks, street corners and just about any available open spot of land. Shows begin late morning and carry through most of the night. A tidal wave of music, all night parties, record label executives, and the fans and fury from the rich and famous to the completely unknown cover the streets in a five day alternate reality.

Amidst this sea of perfected musical chaos, Flamingo Cantina remains Austin's home for reggae music. The Saturday night showcase was well worth hauling a heavy load of camera equipment and trekking a solid mile to experience a night of wicked reggae music. Every hour, reggae fans were blessed with driving homegrown riddims from various parts of the world including Texas, Spain, South Africa, St. Lucia and Jamaica. Reggae has truly reached a pinnacle of universal expertise. Top ranking reggae artists including writers, singers and players now spill over the boundaries of countries across the globe.

One of the night's most remarkable performances came from Taj Weekes and Adowa. Hailing from the lush Caribbean island of St. Lucia, Taj and Adowa delivered an outstanding performance evidenced by the sea of fans held in a lyrical and musical trance. Taj Weekes is much more than a singer. Taj, in his humble unassuming manner, implored a universal consciousness while delivering a unique blend of bluesy reggae. He is a poet with rare vision, lacing songs with poignant moments partnered to catastrophic events. His writing eloquence reduces complex issues to simplistic evidence. Featuring many songs from his most recent cd, 'A Waterlogged Soul Kitchen', on Jatta Records, Taj stokes the intellectual furnace while providing a soothing medium to safely process thoughts into inspiration.

Taj and his band Adowa, in precious synchronicity reveal the painful need for humane action that comes with knowledge of child abuse, ravages of war, devastation of environment, and natural disasters. Taj reworks uncomfortable, difficult subjects into a palatable mix, resulting in a spiritually fueled sense of social responsibility. Recently, in a radio interview on Sista Irie's Conscious Party, Taj responds to questions with thought provoking depth. It is no wonder Taj describes reggae as 'listening music.' His musical presentations are a compelling form of activism calling to those who have lost faith in the power of the music. His lyrics call to those who recognize the power is still within the people.

Janjaweed recalls the genocidal aggression in Darfur "imploing the skies for an answer, cause no one on earth would help, the soldiers stole their laughter, what a murderous hand..."

Before the War - "Before the war, I had a life, before the war, I had a wife..."

Rain Rain - so much pledged for a natural disaster- months later, where is help? "Love's gone dry after the rain is gone. So much concern, so little action"

Shadow of a Bird describes the feelings of a child born from rape. "my mother couldn't escape. I am like a shadow of a bird, seldom seen, seldom heard."

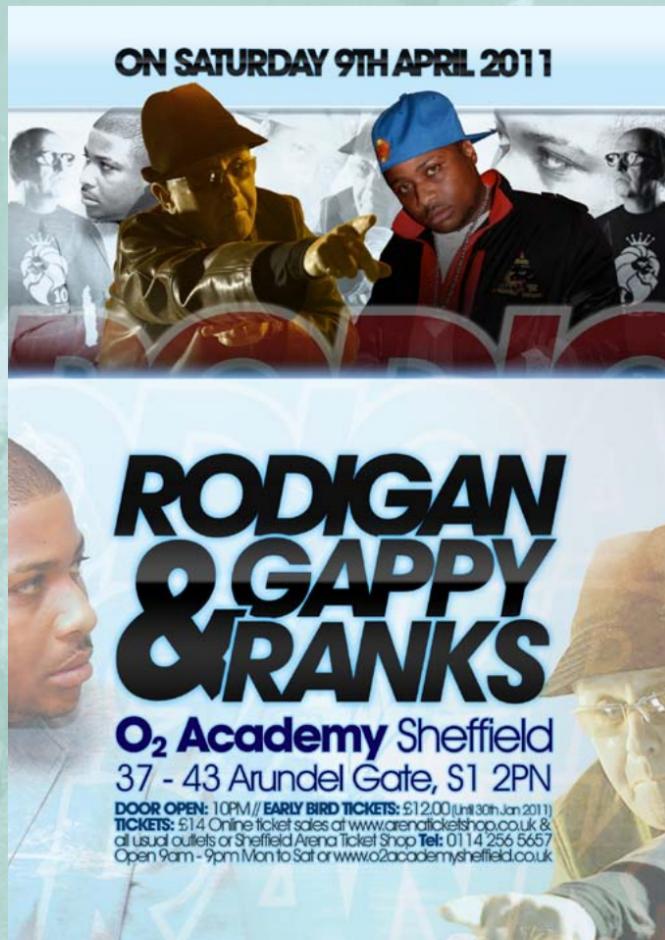
In addition to Taj's musical aspirations, he founded the charity "They Often Cry Outreach" (TOCO) dedicated to improving the lives of underserved, orphaned children. He continually fights a crucial war for those reeling in life crisis including poverty, HIV/AIDS, diabetes and global warming. Some people talk the talk, others walk the walk. Not only is Taj Weekes an extremely talented performer, he lives and breathes a humble life while setting professional and personal standards that can easily inspire others to join in the war against greed, oppression and injustice. For more information on TOCO go to <http://theyoftencyoutreach.org>. Adowa is comprised of Valerie Kelley (vocals-Virginia), Adoni Xavier (guitar-Trinidad), John Hewitt (keyboards-Brooklyn/Barbados), Radss Desiree (Bass-Dominica), and Cornell Marshall (drums-Jamaica).

Report and photos by Sista Irie



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Sheffield Puts The Stereo On

Two performers with personal connections to the city of Sheffield, UK - veteran selector David Rodigan and rising singer-deejay Gappy Ranks - played a triumphant double headline show at the O2 Academy on Saturday night. Organized by local sound Unitone (who promote the roots and lovers dance Big People Business) and Culture Music Events, the PA only affair filled two rooms with the area's proud reggae community - including Unitone's rivals,

the Riddimtion and Dub Central crews.

Rodigan (who lived in the city's Nether Edge district from 1974-75) was on at 2am giving a typically theatrical exhibition of some of his "most treasured dubs". These ranged from classics like Satta Amassagana right through to recent favourite Protoje's Wrong Side Of The Law. Yet "Sir David", who is 60 this year, told young selectors not to worry about lacking his arsenal of vintage specials - before making them jealous anyway with a rare cut of Gregory Isaacs' Night Nurse.

At 2.45 Gappy, who helped launch BBC 1Xtra from Sheffield in 2002, took the stage. He sang a fastcut selection from debut album Put The Stereo on as well as new tunes from repeatedly postponed followup Thanks and Praise - such as the title track and current single Tun Up. Gappy also paid tribute to the Japanese people with I Was There, his charity recording - voiced in Yokohama while on tour when the earthquake struck in March. Rodigan then returned for a second set leaving a well pleased and satisfied audience behind.

Support came courtesy of Unitone, Birmingham's Gemini, Sheffield's Desert Eagle, and Manchester's Clastique Sounds. David Rodigan's cd with Fabric, Fabric Live 54, is out now.

Report by Angus Taylor

PHOTOS



Ragga Muffins Festival 2011 in Oakland

Text by Laura Gardner

Photos by Lee Abel



The Ragga Muffins Festival happens annually every February since 1981, in commemoration of Bob Marley's birthday, February 6. The trilogy of California shows starts in Long Beach, moves south to San Diego, then up north to the Bay Area with a leaner line-up. The third leg was held at the awe-inspiring Fox Theater on February 26, 2011, recently remodeled in downtown Oakland and managed by Another Planet Entertainment.

A few years back when the controversy of homophobia in reggae and dancehall lyrics was at its peak, the Ragga Muffins Festival organizers (Barbara Barabino and Moss Jacobs) decided they wouldn't book any of the many singled-out artists, including Buju Banton, T.O.K., and Beenie Man. This has resulted in a somewhat diluted representation of the music, however, this year, the line-up sparked some energy among reggae fans. The nearly sold-out audience was very mixed by age, ethnicity, gender, and race, and apart from reggae music, seemingly had marijuana as the common interest. For many fans, this is their only reggae show they attend per year.

RICHIE SPICE

In full disclosure, I have to say that I arrived at the Fox Theater at 7:30 pm, and had just missed Richie Spice's set (Since when do reggae shows start so early?!). This was my biggest disappointment of the evening, as he is one of my favorite reggae artists out there. I did, however, get to talk with Toho Saunders, Richie's bassist for all three Ragga Muffin shows, and he shed some insight on the performance.

This is where my reporting gets fuzzy. Traveling with Richie Spice was Alfonso (last name unknown), the musical director and the drummer. He is the only musician who came with Richie from Jamaica. Toho says, "I just call him Rolando Alphonso, but that can't be right because that's the Skatalites

guy." Everyone in Jamaica has a nickname, so it's not uncommon not to know the person's given name.

With Alfonso on drums, Toho on bass, Everton Price on keyboards, and Byron (given name also unknown) on guitar, they performed many of Richie's biggest hits in medley form. Because a festival set is shorter than a headlining set, they had to get it all in. With Richie Spice's latest album just released, 'Book of Job', the band also performed some newer tunes including "Find Jah." Of course the staples like "Earth A Run Red," "Brown Skin," "Youths Dem Cold," did not go unheard. When I think about all of the amazing music Richie has put out, it makes me angry all over again for missing it!

GENTLEMAN

German artist Gentleman has been a favorite of Northern Californians in recent years, pairing his energetic dancehall with positive messages. His 12-piece The Evolution is one of the tightest bands musically I've seen and his earned credibility among Jamaican audiences is itself a minor miracle, as Jamaicans often have a level of contempt for successful foreign artists.

The fedora-wearing Gentleman gave the audience a smattering of his most popular tunes, including "Dem Gone," "Leave Us Alone," and "Superior." He also paid tribute to the late Sugar Minott by performing the song they recorded together, "Good Old Days." The audience's excitement amplified on the call and response bits, and Gentleman kept his energy up throughout his set jumping all around the stage.

Those that saw his set in Long Beach and San Diego said his Oakland performance was the best of the three in that Gentleman seemed more relaxed than during the previous two shows. His wife, Tameka, who sings background vocals had a solo on one of the

tunes, and their chemistry is undeniable.

ISRAEL VIBRATION

For those that don't know the Israel Vibration story, the band was formed in 1977 as a trio: Apple Gabriel, Wiss Bulgin, and Skelly Spence (Yes, nicknames – all of them!). The three had met briefly at the Mona Rehabilitation Clinic in Kingston, Jamaica, as they all suffered from polio. As Rastafari brothers, the trio's break came when members of the Twelve Tribes of Israel funded their first single. As a band, Israel Vibration broke up and came back together a few times, and Apple Gabriel took his career solo in 1997. Fast forward to today – they now perform as a duo – both still noticeably affected by their history of polio by wearing braces. On this particular day, they looked upbeat and bright, although it's always a noticeable loss without the third voice of the trio.

I-Vibes music is for, what I call, the foundational audience. These are the fans that span in age but are drawn to the simplicity of 1960s reggae lines. While Israel Vibration doesn't move me quite like the Abyssinians, or some of the older trios, I appreciate their musicianship and their story. "Rudeboy Shufflin'" is one of their biggest tunes that has a stellar and accessible riddim that nearly every artist can write to. The duo also had a female background duo accompany them, and the crowd could definitely get behind hits like "Roots Rock Reggae," and "Cool and Calm."

BUNNY WAILER

Bunny Wailer was the closer for this 6+ hour long show. What to say about Bunny? He's the last surviving of the three Wailers and was with his Solomonik Reggae Orchestra (orchestra is the apt title due to the sheer numbers of musicians on stage). In pure Bunny fashion, he dressed in a white sparkly suit and used his typically gruff voice to deliver

his powerful lyrics, extolling justice and righteousness. Bunny is a character just like Lee Scratch Perry is a character – he has created a colorful persona for himself and has been faithfully loyal to it. While some may call him "weird," he has every reason to be, given his life story of fame, hardship, and loss. He gave the audience an old school ska intro, and played many of the Wailers tunes, including "Simmer Down," and "I Am the Toughest," a song that Peter Tosh made popular.

Overall, Ragga Muffins did it again pulling together top notch popular reggae artists with their exuberant and excited fans. Contact high aside, my only wish is that they challenge the status quo and take some risks next year by showcasing incredible lesser-known artists and generating a culture that is more descriptive than just "mainstream reggae."



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Brigadier Jerry and Friends, A Real Treat for South Florida

How good and how pleasant it is for I & I to dwell together in inity!

Fans that came out to enjoy Downbeat the Ruler with Tony Screw outta New York featuring Brigadier Jerry & Friends witnessed a real treat! Pure niceness inna the dancehall, reminicent of the way dancehall used to be, and is supposed to be... upliftment of rootz & kulcha!

Those who attended really enjoyed themselves! Brigadier Jerry felt the vibez and entertained the audience in fine stylee! "The Pen," Hopeton Lindo crooned and Anthony Malvo captured his fans with lyrics. Earl Cunningham & UU Madoo joined in, and King Banton sang a short tune.

Glen Washington passed through and performed a few quick tunes, and Kenyatta Hill graced the dancehall with some positive energy.

Text and photos by Gail Zucker



Miami's 18 Annual 9 Mile Music Festival

A Huge Success!

Bob Marley was certainly smiling with the 2011 9 Mile Festival, March 12, 2011. It was a perfect Miami day at the Bayfront Amphitheater and the 7,000 plus attendees enjoyed themselves immensely! There were many craft and food vendors so when the munchies hit, patrons could pick and choose from the wide variety of foods available. I tried a stir fry soba noodle dish with lots of spinach and peanut sauce which was yummy!

The festival began with Miami's own Fourth Dimension and Benjah and Dillavou out of Orlando. The long time Marley Festival, Zen Fest and Ultra Fest performer Kevens then took the stage. He looked quite dapper in a long blue military coat and delivered an entertaining set.

Inner Circle entered and

gave a lively performance. Junior Jazz, the lead singer really adds some spice to the group. He sang a Jacob Miller medley as well as Gregory Issac's tune, "Night Nurse."

Ky-mani Marley heated up the stage. He performed an awesome version of his dad's tune "Redemption Song." Protoje entered and they did their duet, boom hit "Rasta Love." Protoje is a talented young artist with a promising future amongst producer extraordinaire Don Corleon. Ky-mani's fans really appreciate the way he takes the time to chat and pose for pictures with everyone of them!

Major Lazer was on next. Perhaps he has a larger audience appreciation at Ultra Fest.

Thievery Corporation was an interesting blend of musical styles from around the world. Various artists showcased their expertise but the highlight of the performance was the sitar player. Don Carlos came out for a cameo appearance.

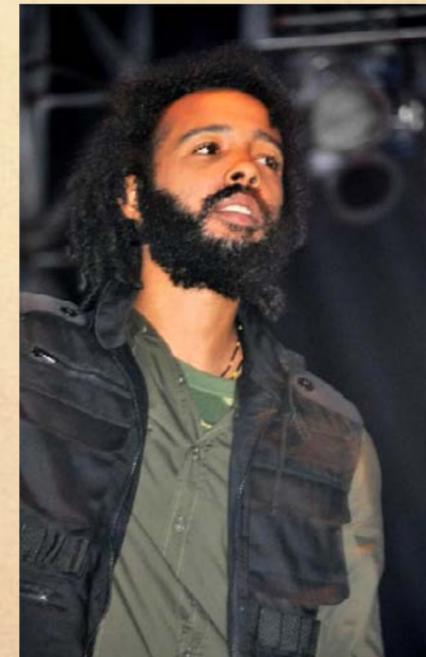
The younger audience seemed to really enjoy California based band Slightly Stoopid.

Ah at last, the Marley's took the stage...a loud roar rang out through the Park. The moment has finally arrived! Damian, Stephen, and Julian all came onstage together, their energy was electrifying! They performed Bob's hits including "Three Little Birds", "Jamming", "War" & "Get Up Stand Up". Gramps Morgan joined them onstage as well as reggae legend Alton Ellis son Christopher. He sang Alton's tune, "Willow Tree."

Bunny Rugs and Cat Coore, members of Third World joined the Marley's onstage and sang "96 Degrees in the Shade." The talented and versatile Cat Coore played both guitar and cello riffs. Pressure was also a guest artist and participated singing songs "For Love & Affection" and "Traffic Jam" along with some of the Marley children making their stage debut for the first time.

Stephen and Damian sang "Jah Army" and "The Mission", and the audience was thrilled. For the grand finale, everyone onstage and the audience joined in to sing "Could You be Loved".

Text and photos by Gail Zucker.





Raggasonic at Paris Olympia-
French deejay duo played in Paris on April 8th.

Photos Jennyfer Papin



**Clinton Fearon
in Paris**

An evening full of good vibrations and love of music on April 10.

Photos Franck Blanquin

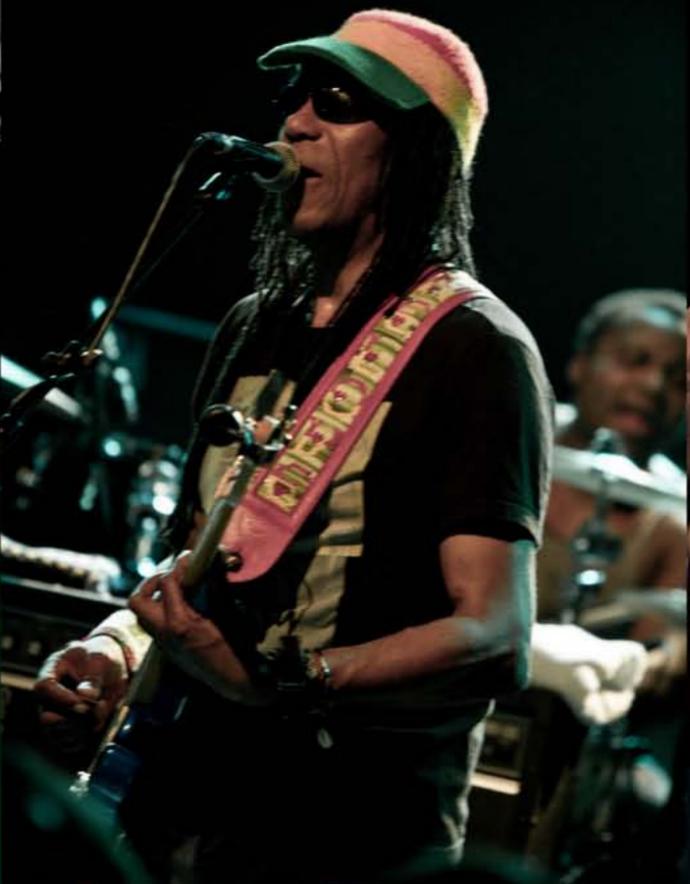




The Original Wailers in Ris Orangis

The Original Wailers (including Junior Marvin and Al Anderson) played at Le Plan in Ris Orangis, France.

Photos Jennyfer Papin



Gentleman, Alborosie and Alpha Blondy in Paris

Gentleman, Alborosie and Alpha Blondy were live on stage at The Zenith from Paris on April 14th.

Photos Franck Blanquin



UNITED REGGAE

MAGAZINE

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

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

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

Conception, design and creation

Xavier Simacourbe & Camille Monchicourt

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