

UNITED REGGAE

MAGAZINE
#16 - February 2012

COURTNEY JOHN
BY THE RIVERS
NKULEE DUBE
CURTIS LYNCH
RANKING JOE
TONY CURTIS
RAS TAKURA

A close-up portrait of Ernest Ranglin, an elderly man with grey hair, looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a light-colored collared shirt. The background is a textured green.

Ernest Ranglin

INTERVIEW

Rebel Salute - Back To Africa Festival - Trench Town Rock Concert
Shinehead meets Rocker T - Shaggy and Friends
Julian Marley and James Malcolm - Winston Jarrett



Veterans coming forward

United Reggae has always aimed at covering a fresh mix of artists – old or new, veterans or newcomers, famous or up and coming. And in this – our 16th issue – we have included several interviews with veteran Jamaican artists, artists that have played a vital part in the development of Jamaican music.

Angus Taylor has met up with Ernest Ranglin, a highly influential Jamaican guitarist and arranger credited for playing a key part in ska and reggae. Angus Taylor also gives important insights in the 70’s and 80’s deejay phenomenon thanks to his interviews with U Brown and Ranking Joe.

Another veteran covered in this issue is Ian Lewis, bassist and one of the founders of Grammy winners and multi-million selling reggae band Inner Circle. In the piece Ian gives a lecture in reggae history.

Without musicians like these reggae might not have been what it is today and covering the past is important in order to understand where the music is heading.

United Reggae Magazine #16 - February 2012
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The Congos meet Sun Araw and M. Geddes Genras

by Angus Taylor

Since they reunited in 2006 the Congos have been in a collaborative mood.

Their 2009 album ‘Back In The Black Ark’ saw them work with their old producer Lee Perry. In 2011 they worked on a double disc with Belgian group Pura Vida. Now they’ve teamed up with two Los Angeles experimental psychedelic musicians, Cameron Stallones AKA Sun Araw and M. Geddes Genras, for a new album that promises to sound different from anything they’ve done before.

‘Icon Give Thank’ will be released by New York label RVNG Intl (“Revenge without the E’s”) as the ninth in their FRKWYS series, which seeks to pair vintage and contemporary artists for musical and film projects.

According to press material “Icon Give Thank is not a dub reggae album, though it shares

Undisputed Records Present An Eight Artist Combination

by Erik Magni



some of the genre’s production characteristics. Rather it’s an album of Stallones and Genras’s melodically experimental meditations ornamented with The Congos’ soulful vocal leads and four part harmonies”.

‘Icon Give Thank’ was recorded at the Congos’ Lion’s Den studio St Catherine Jamaica. The

Undisputed Records from France has recently dropped the one drop tune My People Rise.

It boasts no less than eight artists in the song ranging from sweet-voiced Luciano to the gruff Spectacular. Somewhere

creative process was filmed by documentary makers Tony Lowe and Sam Fleischner - who reggae film fans may know for his 2009 feature ‘Wah Do Dem’.

‘Icon Give Thank’ and its accompanying documentary ‘Icon Eye’ is out on CD, DVD+LP, DVD and as a digital bundle on April 10th. You can watch the trailer below.

in between you’ll find Zareb, Fantan Mojah, Turbulence, Mikey General, Lutan Fyah and Mikey Melody.

My People Rise is backed by Austria’s House of Riddim, and is currently available on digital platforms around the world.

Freedom Shines Riddim

by Erik Magni

Freedom Shines – a relick of the Freedom Blues riddim – is the brand new riddim from Truckback Records and marks the 50th anniversary of Jamaican independence in 2012. Truckback producers Adrian and Steve Locke have injected the dancehall classic with up-to-the-time vibes for Tarrus Riley, Gyptian, Busy Signal, Warrior King and Turbulence, artists that contributes with contemporary narratives. “The Freedom Shines riddim is one way for Jamaica’s older and younger generations to come together through music. Going into the project, we wanted to use the power of music to unite Jamaica. Freedom Shines brings together the old and the new – everything old is new again,” says Steve Locke in a press release. Adrian Locke adds: “Tarrus, Gyptian, Busy, Warrior and Turbulence loved the idea of reintroducing a classic with a special spin on it.” The cuts from Tarrus Riley, Warrior King and Turbulence will be available on iTunes from 7 February.



Kiddus I Back Catalogue To Be Released

by Karl Pearson



For the first time the complete recordings of Frank Dowling or Kiddus I as he is more formatively known are to be released by Dub Store / ReggaeRecords.Com. Kiddus I is the mysterious figure singing at the start of Ted Bafaloukos influential 1978 film “Rockers” and was a graduate of Ras Michael’s Sons Of Negus. He was also a key member of The Wailers milieu, and a Black Ark artist. His disdain for careerism has held him back from the spotlight - as so many people in Jamaican music will tell you, and so a lot of his work was unreleased in its own right. Now though a plethora of 12 and 7” singles are to be released plus the rerelease of “Kiddus

I - ROCKERS: Graduation In Zion 1978-1982”.

The 12” singles will include an unreleased extended version of the renowned song Graduation in Zion from the movie “Rockers” plus fellow unreleased track Jah Power, Jah Glory which was recorded at Tuff Gong in 1979 and was to be the title track from his unreleased debut album along with alternate versions of Give I Strength and Fire Burn that were also to appear on this album. The final 12” is Security In The Streets and then there are to 7” singles Crying Wolf with a version on the flip and Graduation In Zion backed by Salvation.



**Battle The Dragon
by Jah Sun**

by Erik Magni

On 30 January American singjay Jah Sun follow-up his 2010-released EP ‘Gravity’ with his second full-length album ‘Battle the Dragon’, an album that features producers such as Special Delivery, Heavy Roots, Dynasty Records, Lockdown Productions and Bizzarri. Just like Jah Sun’s debut album ‘Height of Light’ a number of prominent guests show up – Gentleman, Alborosie, J Boog, Peetah Morgan, Stevie Culture and Perfect. ‘Battle the Dragon’ fuses hip-hop, reggae and world music, and will be available on digital platforms worldwide.

**And The Sun
Come Dung
Riddim**

by Erik Magni

**Reggae Poster
Contest 2012**

by Erik Magni

Jamaican-born creative activist Michael Thompson, aka FREE-STYLEE, is the founder of the first International Reggae Poster Contest 2012, where the winner will be awarded an iPad and several DVD’s and CD’s.

This challenge aims to build awareness around reggae music and to celebrate the global achievements of reggae and its impact on the world.



**Mental Maintenance
by Konshens**

by Erik Magni

SherKhan – a French producer presently living in Jamaica – has a new riddim with cuts from Terry Ganzie, Zamunda, Zeno and his resident songstress Diana Rutherford. And the Sun Come Dung is a tight

The ten man strong jury is looking for talent and vision and wants to see what designers can come up with in their original poster designs that will capture the energy and vibe of reggae music.

The poster competition is also part of a bigger vision that seeks to establish a reggae hall of fame in Kingston, and an opportunity to raise funds to support the Alpha Boys School.

The entry period has already begun and ends on 30 March. The three finalists will be awarded.

In 2009 brothers Konshens and Delus dropped the excellent album ‘Modern Revolution’ under their duo name Sojah.

Now Konshens is set to release his first solo album after years of successful one drop and dancehall singles for both European and Jamaican producers – This Means Money, Real-est Song, Do Sumn and Winner just to name a few.

‘Mental Maintenance’ drops on his own label SubKonshens Music with distribution from reggae giant VP Records on February 28th.

one drop – currently available on digital platforms – with SherKhan himself playing just about every instrument. The saxophone is though handled by Sheldon “Saxy” Palmer.

King Stitt Has Died

by Erik Magni

King Stitt aka The Ugly One – in reference to his facial malformation and Sergio Leone’s western movie the Good, the Bad and the Ugly – came to prominence in the late 50’s and early 60’s and pioneered the Jamaican style of deejaying together with artists such as Count Machuki and U Roy.

He started working with Cox-sone Dodd, but moved on and later in the 60’s he dropped a number of scorchers for producer Clancy Eccles, including Fire Corner and Herberman Shuffle.

King Stitt died at the age of 71 and no cause of death has been given.



**Too Big To Fail
by Dub Spencer and
Trance Hill**

by Erik Magni

Swiss dub band Dub Spencer & Trance Hill – a name that echoes from 70’s western action duo Bud Spencer and Terence Hill – has just put out their fifth album



**High Plains
Drifter
by Lee Perry**

by Erik Magni

British reissue label Pressure Sounds is back with yet another album dedicated to the works of Lee “Scratch” Perry. The previous releases have mostly been fo-

cused on his 70’s period at his Black Ark studio, but the new compilation rather covers his early days. ‘High Plains Drifter’ contains 20 tracks and pulls together undocumented Jamaican singles along with one dub plate spanning 1968 to 1973. It showcases his spaghetti western influences that could be heard in

a tune such his UK top 5 hit Return of Django. The album comes in a single CD format and double vinyl LP – both includes all the tunes – with the usual high quality packaging and liner notes by Lee Perry aficionado Jeremy Collingwood. ‘High Plains Drifter’ hits the streets on 14 February.

‘Too Big To Fail’, an album where this five piece dub outfit have collaborated with Umberto Echo, one of Germany’s prime mixing engineers. The press release compares the meeting of Dub Spencer & Trance

Hill and Umberto Echo with historical meetings such as Scientist and Roots Radics meets Massive Attack vs. Mad Professor. The band’s debut album ‘Nitro’ was put out on the Echo Beach label in 2007, and was in-

fluenced by spaghetti western movies. Since then they have put out three more albums along with catchy cover versions of Metallica’s ‘Enter Sandman’ and The Clash’s ‘London Calling’.

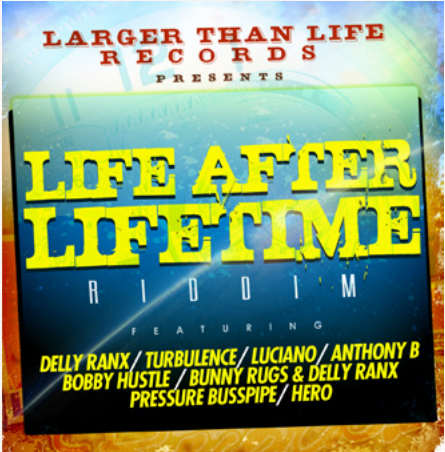
Tomahawk Technique

by Sean Paul

by Erik Magni

Dancehall mega-star and Grammy-winner Sean Paul has just put out his fifth studio album ‘Tomahawk Technique’. Well, not really. Because the album is only currently only available in certain countries, for example France, Belgium, Switzerland and Sweden. On 10 Febru-

ary it hits the shelves in Germany and Austria and in Ireland and the UK a month later. No U.S. date has been announced yet. On ‘Tomahawk Technique’ Sean Paul takes a step away from his Jamaican roots – both musically and geographically. His previous albums have been pop-influenced dancehall produced mainly in Jamaica, while ‘Tomahawk Technique’ is contemporary R&B-fused pop with touches of dancehall produced by hit makers such as Stargate, Benny Blanco and Rico Love.



Life After Lifetime Riddim

by Erik Magni

J-Trees and DJ Tosheba from U.S. soundsystem and label Itation Records have formed a new label – Larger Than Life Records. They have previously been producing tunes with the likes of Courtney John,

Voting to Begin in The British Reggae Industry Awards

by Angus Taylor

Delly Ranx, Perfect and Anthony B.

Their first production on their new label is the riddim Life After Lifetime, which is produced in collaboration with their longtime friend Delly Ranx.

“Delly is our family and we’ve had an extensive history of working with Mr. Toppa Toppa, so he knew exactly what we were looking for in our first production,” the duo states in a press release.

Life After Lifetime is out for digital release on 14 February, and features eight vocal cuts and one version from artists such as Turbulence, Luciano and Delly Ranx himself – both solo and in a combination with Bunny Rugs of Third World.

Throughout the history of reggae music acclaimed Jamaican producers and musicians Sly & Robbie have been involved in numerous notable dub albums, both under their own names as well as being



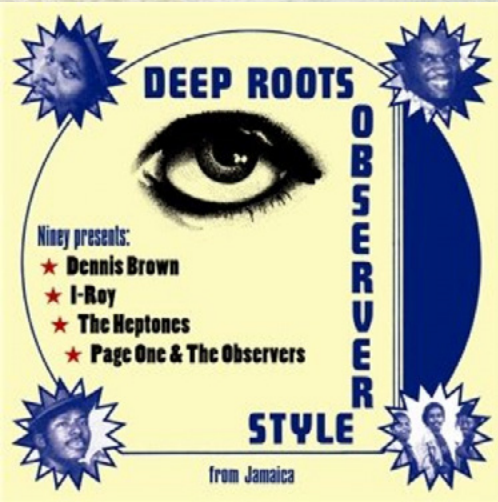
Blackwood Dub

by Sly and Robbie

by Erik Magni

Throughout the history of reggae music acclaimed Jamaican producers and musicians Sly & Robbie have been involved in numerous notable dub albums, both under their own names as well as being part of bands such as The Revolutionaries and The Agrovators. And on February 24th they’re back with their first dub album in years. ‘Blackwood Dub’ was recorded in 2011 and produced in collaboration with Alberto Blackwood and Gilroy Stewart and is marketed with the slogan “Strictly dub – no vocals”. The ten tracks come as a 6-fold CD digipack, LP with poster insert and a limited edition picture disc.

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Niney Presents Deep Roots Observer Style

by Erik Magni

Winston “Niney” Holness is one of the most successful reggae producers from the 70’s usually recognized for his deep and sparse take on roots reggae. During his prime he worked with all of the greatest artists from Jamaica.

Some of his work is now collected in the four CD box set ‘Deep Roots Observer Style’, a box set that includes three rare albums alongside a fourth that brings together his hit singles recorded with I-Roy during 1976 and 1977.

Featured in the box set are also Dennis Brown’s ‘Deep Down’, The Heptones’ ‘Better Days’ and Page One & The Observers’ ‘Observation of Life Dub’.

The fully illustrated booklet comes with liner notes provided by reggae historian Noel Hawkes.

‘Deep Roots Observer Style’ hits the shelves on February 13th on 17th North Parade.

UK Riots!...The Riddim

by Karl Pearson

Back in August last year the UK witnessed some of the worst riots there since 1981. The riots began following a peaceful march in response to the fatal shooting of Mark Duggan by Police on 4th August 2011, in Tottenham, North London. In the following days, rioting spread to several London boroughs and districts and eventually to several other cities and towns across England. Now one of the UK’s reggae leaders Reality Shock Records have released a new 12” EP produced by Kris Kemist and William Wolff, producer of Capleton’s hit song Prophet Rides Again.

Reggae music has always been the sufferer’s music, giving a voice to the poor and disenfranchised, enabling them speaking out against injustice and inequality within society. This record continues that tradition on a classic one-drop that serves as the backdrop to 3 of the

UK’s top reggae vocalists. Each vocalist brings his own style to the table with the first up being the gruff and ragged veteran of the dancehall scene Sweetie Irie. Sweetie’s uses his cut to speak on behalf of these youths, declaring that “dem nah go keep quiet” in his song UK Riots.

This is then followed by the harmonious Aqua Livi on the potent Riot In The Streets, a song about the lead up to the riots and how the blame for the chaos that ensued lies with the police and their constant brutality and injustice.

Then comes rising star Valorous with Never That encouraging youths not to drop their guard against Babylon in these turbulent times. Finally to finish things off is a version featuring the guitar, kete drum and percussion of Kris Kemist, rocksteady by Yannis Rock Radio Hermes, bass from Ross of the Upper Cut Band and keys by Prof Liv-high with the whole thing being mixed by Dilly at the world renowned Stingray Studio.

cords, Wundah, Push A Yute, Xillent G, Mustang and Special Delivery.

Cookies

by Gappy Ranks

by Erik Magni

Gappy Ranks – one of the most successful artists from the UK at the moment – is scheduled to drop a new EP for digital release on February 24th.

‘Cookies’ is the title of the EP. It’s named after a popular brand of Californian weed and holds six previously unreleased tunes from six different producers – Dynasty Re-



Lambeth Coun-
try Show Under
Threat?

by Angus Taylor

The Lambeth Country Show, the annual local free festival featuring live reggae in South London’s Brockwell Park, which takes place on the third weekend of July, is not going ahead this year. According to local website

Kingston 13
Riddim

by Erik Magni

Featured on reggae superstar Shaggy’s latest album – which was released on February 7th in Europe – is the Tarrus Riley combination Just Another Girl. This tough one drop is produced by Shaggy associates Ranch Entertainment, and is now graced with another set of versions from Alaine, Yung Juggz, Gyptian, J Boog, Rayvon and Red Fox & Alju. Kingston 13 is the title of the riddim and it is currently available on digital platforms worldwide.



Brixton Blog, “The decision by Lambeth council to cancel this year’s Lambeth Country Show, the borough’s annual free party in Brockwell Park, has left people in Brixton and across south London shocked, angry and wanting answers.” The council-funded festival has seen many memorable artists perform over its 36 year history. Last year the Country Show saw live sets by Luciano, Horace Andy and Johnny Clarke. “In a press release, Lam-

Stephen Marley Wins
His Eighth Grammy

by Erik Magni

On Sunday evening Stephen Marley was honored his eighth Grammy. This time for his ‘Revelation Pt 1: The Root of Life’, an album that also made it into the United Reggae best albums of 2011 list. Stephen Marley previously won three Grammy’s as part of Ziggy Marley and The Melody Makers, two with Damian Marley and one each for his albums ‘Mind Control’ and ‘Mind Control Acoustic’.

The smash winner of the 54th Annual Grammy Awards was however Adele, who took the podium no less than six times and walked away to the after party awarded Record of the Year, Album of the Year, Song of the Year, Best Pop Solo Performance, Best Pop Vocal Album and Best Short Form Music Video.

Takin The Strain
by Talisman

by Erik Magni

Bristol Archive Records is set to reissue Talisman’s first album ‘Takin’ the Strain’ on March 5th. It was originally issued in 1984 on the small independent label Embryo, and was the culmination of a long musical journey as this British band had existed in various guises since 1976. The reissue

contains the original nine tracks enhanced by the addition of five live cuts recorded at London’s Lyceum in 1985. The live performance boasts four tunes from the original album and a live version of Slow Poison, a track that didn’t make it onto the original issue. ‘Takin’ the Strain’ hits the streets as CD and digital download. The physical version comes with a booklet with archive images and extensive sleeve notes based on the recollections of lead vocalist and guitarist Dehvan Othieno Sengor.

You can find it at:
<http://www.ipetitions.com>.

beth’s cabinet minister for leisure, Florence Nosegbe, blamed the 2012 London Olympics. She and council leader Steve Reed tell us police and portaloos [toilets] have all [been] snapped up by the Games, which is 10 miles away in Stratford.” A petition has been started to save the 2012 Show by rearranging the date.



The London
International Ska
Festival 2012
Update

by Karl Pearson

The London International Ska Festival, taking place this year between Thursday 3rd May and Sunday 6th May, is fast approaching and line up is really taking shape to be the biggest and best yet.

There will be a great mixture of old and new ska, rocksteady and reggae performers from around the world at the two venues being used to hold the event, the O2 Academy Islington and the O2 Sheperds Bush Empire plus a third venue the Islington Metalworks, 7 Torrens St, London, EC1V 1NQ which is just 3 minutes from Islington O2 Academy and Angel tube station and will be the place to be on the Friday night as it hosts a special after show DJ All-nighter from 10pm to 6am.

The festival starts at 6pm at the O2 Islington Academy, running through to 11pm, with Jamaican legends the aptly named Pioneers, Dawn Penn, Belgium’s The Moon Invaders, Kinky Coo Coo’s from Spain and The UK’s Delegators with DJ Andy Smith keeping crowds entertained between sets.

Friday its Islington again as singer and writer Dandy Livingstone (aka Robert Thompson) takes to the stage with support form Mr ‘Shocks Of Mighty’ Dave Barker, renowned trombonist Rico Rodriguez, who appeared on Dandy’s original ‘Rudy A Message to You’ and The Specials remake a decade later. Then there are Phoenix City All-stars, another Spanish act Los Granadians and Gladdy Wax filling in on DJ duties.

When this show finishes its then off round the corner for the all-nighter with DJ sets from Soul Jazz Records 100% Dynamite, Tighten Up v Downbeat Melody, Chris Lane and Tim Wells.

Saturday evening the venue changes to the O2 Sheperds Bush Empire for The Dualers ‘Tribute To Prince Buster’ album launch party. Here they will be ably supported by Ska Cubano who take an exquisite mix of multi-award winning mambo, calypso, cumbia and reggae and turn it into one almighty Ska explosion. Plus there is the return of one of last years highlights the original line up of Hotknives along with Buster Shuffe and reformed Scottish outfit

Capone & The Bullets. Your DJ for the night will be DJ Cello of Coast To Coast.

The event then comes to a close back in Islington on Sunday at the Academy with Californian misfits Fishbone and their hi-powered blend of funk-frenzied Ska, punk, soul, UK ‘Do The Dog’ acts The Skints and Rebellion plus founder of 2-Tone co-innovators The Selecter, Mr Neol Davies, with a sharp and powerful ten piece band playing classic hits and new songs.

The DJ and host for this final evening will be the Grammy winning filmmaker/musician/DJ that single handedly turned a whole generation of punks onto reggae Don Letts.

Tickets are still available now from: www.londinternational-skafestival.co.uk and with more events and bands still to be announced it looks like London will be rockin’ to the sounds of Ska in May.





Our Anniversary by Chalice

by Erik Magni

Jamaican veteran band Chalice drops their new Flava McGregor-produced single Our Anniversary today. Our Anniversary is the lead single from their forthcoming anniversary album ‘A Song’, due in April.

Already released as part of the Club Dance riddim compilation, Our Anniversary has benefited from heavy rotation at reggae stations worldwide, and has entered the BBC World Reggae Beat Top 10 Chart in the UK.

Our Anniversary is available via iTunes, Amazon and other online retailers.

Phoenix City Records To Release Ska Tributes

by Karl Pearson

Phoenix City Records the Ska and Rocksteady imprint of Cherry Red Records have announced that they are to release two tribute albums to the ska and rocksteady periods.

First up is an album from one of UK’s most loved ska bands the Dualers who will present their tribute to king of Ska Prince Buster in their own highly stylised mix of ska and reggae. The album will include versions of Chinaman Ska, King of Kings, Orange Street and Enjoy Yourself amongst others.

The Dualers have previously entered the UK charts on three occasions with Truly Madly Deeply, Don’t Go and Kiss On My Lips, shifted over 35,000 albums and sold out London’s O2 Indigo four times.

The second album will be from the Phoenix City All-Stars and will be titled ‘2 Tone: Ska & Rocksteady Special’. This band of as yet unnamed musicians will feature the vocals of stars old and new including Dave ‘Double Barrel’ Barker and Michie One who has performed with the likes of Pama International, will be presenting unique twist as they repatriate some of 2 Tone’s greatest hits to the ‘Sounds of Young Jamaica’ in a what is reported as being “a blazing 60’s



Ska - Skatalites style and the sweetest sounding rocksteady & reggae”. Songs included for a re-working include The Specials Too Much Too Young, which was originally based around Lloydie & The Lowbites Birth Control, Stereotype and the iconic Ghost Town, then there is The Selecter’s self-titled theme song, originally the B-side to The Specials Gangsters and a version of Elvis Costello’s I Can’t Stand Up For Falling Down, a 2-Tone rarity as it was given away free a gigs after publishing issues, featuring the afore mentioned Mr Barker.

Both albums will be launched at The London International Ska Festival in May and CD versions can be pre-ordered now (Phoenix All Stars Friday, Dualers Saturday) with tickets from www.londoninternationalskafestival.co.uk/tickets and picked up at the festival, or alternatively if you can’t make this both will be available on CD and download formats from itunes, Amazon and other usual outlets after the event.

Duplicity Riddim

by Erik Magni

Late last year Jamaican label Warriors Musick dropped the Think Twice riddim, a riddim which included Fantan Mojah’s reggae anthem Rasta Got Soul.

The new riddim from the label is titled Duplicity and is – just as its predecessor – produced by Dameon Gayle. Fantan Mojah is represented once again, along with artists such as Konshens, Busy Signal and Swiss native Cali P, who nowadays resides in Jamaica. The Duplicity riddim is available on iTunes in late February.



Early Worm's Natty Droid Available For Free Download

by Karl Pearson

Late last year Jamaican label Warriors Musick dropped the Think Twice riddim, a riddim which included Fantan Mojah’s reggae anthem Rasta Got Soul.

The Bristol Reggae Explosion 3

by Erik Magni

‘The Bristol Reggae Explosion’ is back with a third volume, a volume that takes another look at what was happening in the city during the 1980’s. ‘The Bristol Reggae Explosion 3 - The 80’s Part 2’ includes 15 tracks of which eleven are previously unreleased. Several of the artists from the two first volumes show up again, for example Bunny Marrett, Alfred McIntosh and The Radicals. This third volume also travels the same path musically as the



first two sets – a mix of lovers, roots and dub played both live and in the studio. ‘The Bristol Reggae Explosion 3 - The 80’s Part 2’ drops on 19 March as 15 track CD, eight track LP and digital download.



Heart and Soul by Clinton Fearon

by Erik Magni

Clinton Fearon – former bass player and singer in Jamaican trio The Gladiators – drops his second acoustic set in late March.

It includes new versions of songs composed during his time in The Gladiators. ‘Heart and Soul’ – as the album is titled – differs slightly from Clinton Fearon’s previous acoustic album ‘Mi An Mi Guitar’.

Rather than only a voice and a guitar, he also played lead and rhythm guitar, acoustic bass and percussion on this album.

The album drops on Chapter Two Records as CD and digital download and will be launched with acoustic performances in France and the U.S.

A Little Bit of Love by Junior Toots

by Erik Magni

California resident and Jamaican born singer Junior Toots, son of renowned reggae artist Toots Hibbert of the Toots & The Maytals, is readying his fourth album ‘A Little Bit of Love’, a conscious set that incorporates roots reggae, ska and dancehall. Production is shared by veteran producers Fabian Cooke, Aston Barrett and Junior Toots’ brother Hopeton Hibbert.

“When I say conscious music, I mean my lyrics are aware of the

needs of everyone; the need to be connected to nature and to other cultures besides your own. I hope my music encourages people to put away their egos and make intentions to heal, to love, and to care. Conscious means to come together,” states Junior Toots in a press release.

‘A Little Bit of Love’ was carried out partly as a Kickstarter project, where Junior Toots aimed for raising \$2,800 to master and physically produce the album. The project obviously went fine and he managed to exceed his goal with almost \$1,000. And ‘A Little Bit of Love’ will officially be released in March but is already available in some stores.

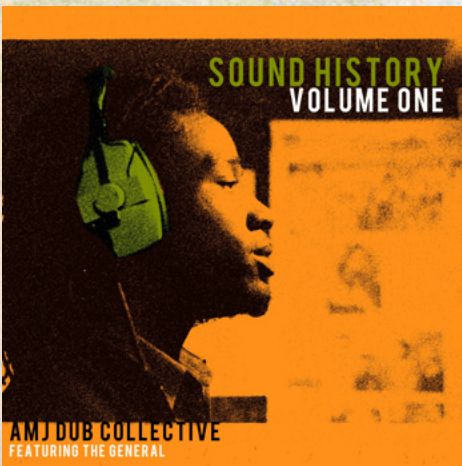
Sugar Shack Records Ventures Into British Reggae

by Erik Magni

UK label Sugar Shack Records – a sister imprint of Bristol Archive Records and Reggae Archive Records – was established in 1985 and have since then released critically acclaimed rock albums and singles.

After more than 25 years in the business the label is now being rebranded to focus on releasing new British reggae music.

The initial release is ‘Sound History Volume One’ – a four track limited edition 12” EP by AMJ



Dub Collective, a band whose members have deep roots in Bristol’s musical heritage, and some have previously been members in Zion Band, Restriction and the Bristol-based sound system Enterprise.

‘Sound History Volume One’ comes with a picture sleeve and hits the streets on digital download and vinyl on April 23rd.

A Tribute To Victims of the Japanese Tsunami

by Erik Magni

It has now been almost a year since one of the biggest earthquakes ever in Japan happened. It caused a huge tsunami which took many lives and destroyed historical ports and villages in just a few moments.

Japanese producers Mitchum “Khan” Chin and Machaco aim to help the victims and has therefore recorded a charity song titled ‘Tomorrow Will Glow’ available on iTunes. All proceeds are donated to the victims via Japanese RedCross Society.

The Skatalites Celebrate 48th Year Anniversary

by Erik Magni

This year marks The Skatalites’ 48th year. The anniversary will be celebrated with a new single, a new album and a U.S./Canada tour.

As several of the band’s founding members have passed on, the current line-up only includes one original member – Lester Sterling. He will be accompanied by veteran songstress Doreen Schaffer, who sang with the band already in the 60’s.

Ray Of Light by Ras Daniel Ray and Tu Shung Peng

by Erik Magni

French roots reggae outfit Tu Sheng Peng dropped their debut album ‘Around Tu Shung Peng’ five years ago. The album included guest vocalist Ras Daniel Ray, a Jamaican expat who since 1998 resides in Paris, France.

Ras Daniel Ray was also featured on Tu Shung Peng’s sophomore album ‘Trouble Time’, and now they have a 13 track roots reggae album together titled ‘Ray of Light’, released yesterday.

Cool Down by Tommy Tornado

by Erik Magni

Dutch saxophone virtuoso Tommy Tornado follow-up his debut album ‘Sunrise’ with ‘Cool Down’, a ten track set with backing from Rude Rich & The High Notes and guest artists Mr. T-Bone, Ebou Gaya Mada, Tobias Loudmouth and Awwa.

The majority of the songs are instrumentals in the same vein as Jazz Jamaica or Skatroniks Jamaica. If authentic Jamaican up-tempo ska and reggae is your thing you might want to check out this set. Out today on CD and digital download.

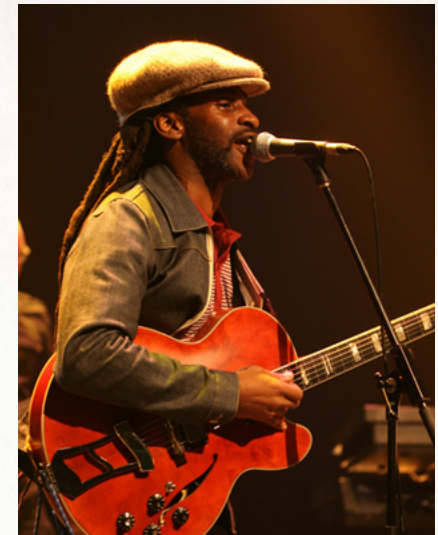


As the tour kicks off in mid February, The Skatalites will release a two song single from their upcoming album ‘All Roads’. The single will be available digitally and as a limited edition 7” vinyl, exclusively available on the tour.

The album features the newest line-up the band along with foundation drummer Lloyd Knibb, who passed away before the sessions were completed.

**Leaders Of Tomorrow
by Rod Anton**
by Erik Magni

Rod Anton is a French singer of Portuguese descent. Back in 2009 he met up with backing band The Ligerians. This resulted in the rootsy EP ‘Angel’, on which Rod Anton is accompanied by fellow high pitched singer Cedric Myton of The Congos. Now they’re back with a new EP as well as a new album. And The Congos are involved in both. ‘Leaders of Tomorrow’ was recorded in Jamaica and France and contains four tunes of which one is a dub version of the title track, and hit the streets on February 20th. ‘Reasonin’ arrives in late May and features guest artists Max Romeo, Cedric Myton, Congo Ashanti Roy and Vaughn Benjamin of VI-roots trailblazers Midnite. The album is stated to revolve around the notion of “reasonin” that can be seen as a reflection, or an exchange, between people seeking to reach certain wisdom.



**Hidden Treasure
Found In The Czech Republic**
by Karl Pearson

Hiding away in the Czech Republic is a collective called United Forces Of Dub who also run a small independent label. Apparently for several years now they have been organizing popular club evenings and genuine sound system dances hosted by selectors and producers Yukimura aka Mustakillah Sound, Wild-I aka Dubble-U and Natynational Rockers aka Red-I along with Kool Dread plus participation from Prague’s multi-genre sound system Roots’n’Future. They have now just released the joint project Amiga Riddim, with Syncro, a 6 track vinyl

**Love Forever by
New Age Steppers**
by Erik Magni

British creative dub outfit New Age Steppers has recently dropped their fifth and final album. ‘Love Forever’ is their first album in almost three decades. The band’s self-titled debut album was the first release on ac-

**Resonance by
Desmond Foster**
by Erik Magni

Swedish reggae veteran Desmond Foster is back with his sophomore album titled ‘Resonance’ on March 1st. It follows his debut album ‘Under Oath’ released ten years ago. ‘Resonance’ was recorded at the legendary Stockholm studio Rub-A-Dub and hosts some of the hottest Swedish

12” EP, that features the multinational vocal talents of Solo Banton from the UK, young African lioness Dada Afrik & Kalcia, fellow African Fireson from Kenya, the Jamaican Rueben Mystic and Trinidadian Juakali all riding on their own shiny little gem of riddim blended from organic and techno sounds featuring touches of echoic, haunting melodica.

Not only are the vocalists multinational but the whole project is well travelled having started life at the home base of Gunjah and Mustakillah studios in Czech Republic, before moving on to Conscious Sounds in London and then finally to Nairobi and Syncro’s mobile studio where he and Mustakillah Sound produced the final mix with different arrangements for each tune.

claimed producer Adrian Sherwood’s On-U Sound label back in 1980. One of the band members was punk rock band The Slits’ lead vocalist Ari Up, who passed away in October 2010. And ‘Love Forever’ was the last record she worked on. ‘Love Forever’ is produced by Adrian Sherwood and is currently available on CD and digital download.

reggae artists at the moment – Joey Fever, Danjah and Robert Athill show up along with veteran rapper ADL. The production is handled by Freddie Kruger, Jonahgold, Saska and Desmond Foster himself. Desmond Foster was raised in the UK, but moved to Sweden many years ago. He has worked with a number of both domestic and international artists, among them Gregory Isaacs, Dennis Brown, Aswad, Million Stylez and Blacknuss Allstars.

Cultura Riddim
by Erik Magni

The latest release from Catalan label Reggaeland is the Cultura riddim, a riddim with a structure and beat reminiscent of the late 70’s to early 80’s rub a dub scene. The release is a tribute to those who set the musical trend around this time, and includes cuts from legendary mic men Jah Thomas and Linval Thompson.

The 18 tracks also feature versions from Jahmali, Spectacular, Anthony Que and the under recorded U.S. deejay Ranking Forrest. Also included are four remixes as well as two dub versions from Spanish producer Roberto Sanchez, who handled the mixing of all cuts.

Cultura riddim is available on digital platforms worldwide.



**There’s A Cool
Temperament In
Grimsby**
by Karl Pearson

The Temperaments a traditional Ska, Rocksteady and Early Reggae band from Grimsby, UK are releasing their debut single ‘Cool It’ on Thursday 1st March.

The band started playing and recording together last year and are currently working on a series of singles and EPs with plans to take these songs out on the road soon.

‘Cool It’ will be available for download from all the usual download stores like iTunes, Spotify, Amazon and many others.

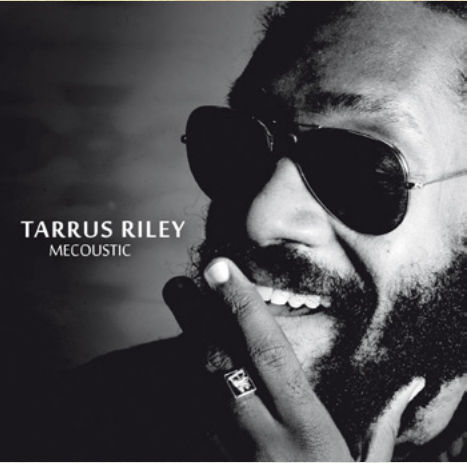
**Mecoustic by
Tarrus Riley**
by Erik Magni

Jamaican singer Tarrus Riley follow-up his acclaimed third album ‘Contagious’ with a new side project titled ‘Mecoustic’ on April 17th on French label Soulbeats.

‘Mecoustic’ is produced in collaboration with Dean Fraser and pre-

sents a new side of Tarrus Riley, a side rather different to his usual reggae and dancehall vibe. It contains 15 tunes of which the majority is partly acoustic re-workings of previously released material, such as System Set, One Two Order and She’s Royal.

‘Mecoustic’ was recorded at Grafton Studios in Kingston and will be available on CD and digital download.





BURNING SPEAR GOING TO EXILE ?

Article by Gerard McMahon

Burning Spear's conflict with reggae distributor Ernie B. recently took a turn for the worst, with the legal eagles entering the fray amidst allegations of piracy, bootlegging and threats of arrest.

Those in attendance at the Rototom 2009 reggae university Sunsplash festival debate were taken aback at the virulence of Bunny Wailer's attack on Chris Blackwell, with allegations of outstanding debts running into millions of dollars. This was an expression of a longstanding artist-producer\distributor grievance similar to that harboured by many musicians.

With the emergence of the internet, the source of such grievances has extended beyond artist and producer\distributor conflicts to widescale allegations of 'piracy' and illegal file sharing. The bottom line here is that piracy on the internet puts people out of work and flouts the principle that the 'labourer is worthy of his wages'. The failure to get these wages is of course a very sore point with many musicians.

As a warning against illegal file sharing, over 2003-2008 the US music industry brought lawsuits against 30,000 people. It recently won its case against the popular file sharing service Limewire and now claims that it is entitled to \$US75 trillion in damages. Related to this malpractice, the overall picture reveals that during 2004-2010 recorded music sales have declined in value globally by 31 per cent. According to the British Recorded Music Industry (BPI) combined digital and physical album sales dropped by 7 percent in 2010. Not surprisingly this decline is attributed to illegal downloads.

Digital music sales might be booming, but it doesn't compensate for the decline in the sale of physical albums or CDs.

Against this backdrop, fans of Burning Spear (aka Winston Rodney) were shocked last week when he announced via his Facebook page that he was going into exile. By the end of the week there was widescale relief when the decision was reversed, confirming that his German Summerjam and Florida appearances would go ahead later this year. The issues in dispute have been passed to the legal eagles.

The dispute centres on allegations that Ernie B. – the Californian-based distributor of reggae music – has been engaging in 'piracy' at the expense of impoverished reggae artists. For some time now Burning Spear has been calling on all artists and consumers to boycott this outlet.

Availing of his Facebook page last week Burning Spear informed that "they bootlegging all of our music and trying to use the police to get us arrested. Time to unite it's our music that feed them". The background to this posting is his contention that Ernie B. and associates have secured a warrant for his arrest – a warrant he intends to fight in court.

He now plans to sue for royalties as part of a wider campaign that includes boycotting Air Jamaica, Ernie B. Reggae

distribution and RAS Records, whom he describes as "the worse scam and bootleggers in the music industry".

Bringing a tense week to a close Burning Spear's Facebook page subsequently announced "Great news - Jah is Real. We now have the best Attorneys in the world to handle the matter. We will do the show in Miami, Florida, and Germany. Attorneys will handle all matters, we no longer have to talk with them, what they are doing is intimidation. Now they will have to turn over full audit ...".

Robustly defending his position in this dispute Ernie B. responded (via www.bobmarleymagazine.com) that "In 19 years of doing business I have never seen an illegal copy of Burning Spear's music pass through our warehouse, nor have I been offered any, nor have we stocked or sold any. When determining the validity of the claims that Burning Spear Music is making against us, it should be duly noted that those same claims are being made against virtually every company that they have ever dealt with. We continue to hold a deep respect for Spear's legendary works and hope that they will decide to start selling the music again. We understand their frustrations of dealing in this business. We also understand the ease at which some wrong ideas may be adopted (about us, for example), perhaps due to misunderstandings or the spread of



Photo by Christian Bordey

malicious rumours”.

This carefully crafted riposte proceeded in an effort to claim the high moral ground in the dispute, pointing out that “... our lost sales due to piracy is substantial. Let’s keep this a positive discussion and do what we can to make life hard for those engaged in piracy. An important part of this effort is naming and shaming those pirates, but first we must be sure when we make these claims. It’s a serious accusation to make, with far reaching consequences ... I don’t like being called a pirate, but I can appreciate that people can make an innocent, simple mistake in judgment. In the future let’s make sure before we throw those powerful words around please. Just because an artist thinks that they have been pirated does not make it so”.

Burning Spear’s antipathy toward music distributors is longstanding. Though it came to a head last week with moves toward the courtroom in the Ernie B. case, his management continue to name specific producers and distributors that allegedly owe him ‘millions of dollars’. Of course it is this same antipathy that has fuelled his laudable pursuit of independence in the music business and the request that fans “not buy any Burning Spear record from any website”.

The music industry/piracy conflict is now a war zone. In every war zone truth is the first

casualty. This makes it difficult to obtain facts and break free from the narratives presented by both sides in order to reach an independent or fair assessment of the matters in contention. It is clear that many digital consumers are thieves, stealing everything from music to films and books. If tables and televisions were downloadable they’d be gone too.

However this is nothing new in music, as many now respectable citizens still store their boxes of old music audio cassettes. At the level of the consumer the most convincing ethical argument is that one shouldn’t exploit the work of others for financial gain without their permission. However in practice this is often little more than wishful thinking.

In the course of this dispute Sonia Rodney explains “I’ve seen lawyers act like big time jerks”. Most of us have. But we’ve also seen scenarios where they are the only victors in the courtroom. As the fallout from the Marley legacy has shown, the law and reggae music are not comfortable bedfellows. And as the fallout from the current economic recession tells us, accounting audits can be as much an art as a science.

Like the battle between the pirates or slave traders and the abolitionists, this struggle - between artists, producers, distributors and pirates - is sure to run, albeit with far too many casualties.

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RAS TAKURA

Interview and photos by Gail Zucker

**"It's a food war mi a
fight and mi must win"**

Ras Takura is a conscious and humble Rasta man. He is a member of a trio called the Royal African Soldiers, a group of Dub Poets, formed with Neto Meeks, and Ginsu.

Ras Takura is a Reggae Dub Poet, recording and performing artist that addresses his African heritage and Jamaican culture through lyrical expression. He is also a farmer and a painter and talks about his farming and food through his poetry.



Hi, Ras Takura. What exactly is Royal African Soldiers?

Yes, sistren, give thanks for inviting I and I. Rasta live! RAS is a group of Jamaican dub poets of which I and I is one of the founding members, we work together occasionally, but for the most part I perform solo. RAS is also the revolutionary side of Rasta as the term RAS is the African conscious mind awakening of the African people across the world, letting them know that they must see themselves as Royal African Soldiers in this time, like Marcus Garvey's time with the UNIA. It's the new uprising in this time, like Peter Tosh or Bob Marley's time, so we now use dub poetry to awaken that African awareness amongst I and I people.

That's a great media expression! Your tune "Food War" is getting a lot of airplay all over the world, what was your inspiration?

"Food War" is a poem that came about one day I was on my little farm in my home town community of Concard District neighboring Nine Mile, the home of Bob. I was there on the farm and I just plant some pumpkin seeds, a thing I do on a regular basis, just plant some seeds, but this time I plant and I just leave and went to Kingston and when I returned in a couple of weeks, I see a lot of pumpkins all over the ground. I get my machete and start to

clear the weeds and as I weed the thought start to come that it is a food war Mi a fight and Mi must win..is a food war Mi a fight..thats why Mi plant di pumpkin and mi just leave and get a notebook and start to write the poem and I just sit and write most of it on that day and then a next few days I complete it.

That's a great story!

Yes, it is! So, the recording was done at Super Matic Studio in Kingston..when I went in the studio and the engineer Daniel Brown say..Takura, listen this riddim..and I went in the box and just voice it and that was it.

I've heard you say Muta-ruka is your mentor..how did this come about..and has your lyrics and content of your material been influenced by him?

My first introduction to poetry was hearing Muta's "Sit down pon di wall a watch him a watch mi"...then as the time progresses, I start to listen to his cutting edge radio show of which I become a student of, up to this time. When I used to listen to Muta from back in the days there was a space in my life that was void..and Muta just filled it..like that of a father figure, because I never knew my real father until I was 20 and Muta adopt that space in my mind. One of my poems which is coming on the "Food War" album.."Dear Dad"..will reflect that..and yes, the con-

tent of my lyrics in influenced by him on most parts.

Very touching!

You also address other relevant topics..please give your readers an insight as your passion and concerns are and what issues you are militant about.

Well, what I am about..the present single that I am promoting from my upcoming "Food War" album..I and I generation will make the change..meaning that most of I and I people across the world wherever in the diaspora..that we tend to be at the bottom of the social and economic ladder and I am saying that we..in this time, have to make that change as the King Selassie I seh... if you can't do it in your lifetime you won't do it..so I and I people have to start educate and re-educate themselves about the African consciousness that Marcus Garvey talk about and what Malcolm X stands for.. liberation of the African mind set to help our people across the world..look at Haiti..no one seems to care for the life and progress of the Haitian people and we have to organize ways and means to strengthen our brothers and sisters wherever they are in this generation..and this lifetime.

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You talk about food security.. tell your readers what your training is in that field.

My training in that field..hear what, Takura was born on a farm and grew up in a farming community..York district in St. Ann, Jamaica with my grandmother and father..who taught me from an early age the practices of natural, organic agriculture, then in my quest for knowledge I was reading Haile Selassie I, King of Kings, the Conquering Lion teachings on agriculture. quote “a people ad a country that became self sufficient through the advancement of Agriculture..can look forward to the future with confidence”..so growing up in a community that most people do farming and it’s been looked down at..and hearing the King saying this..I start to think he was talking directly to me, so at this time I was going to Marcus Garvey Technical High School in the parish of St Ann, and after reading the King’s speech, I leave and went to Hanover Knockalva agricultural school from 1996-99, three years training in agriculture and then went on to the

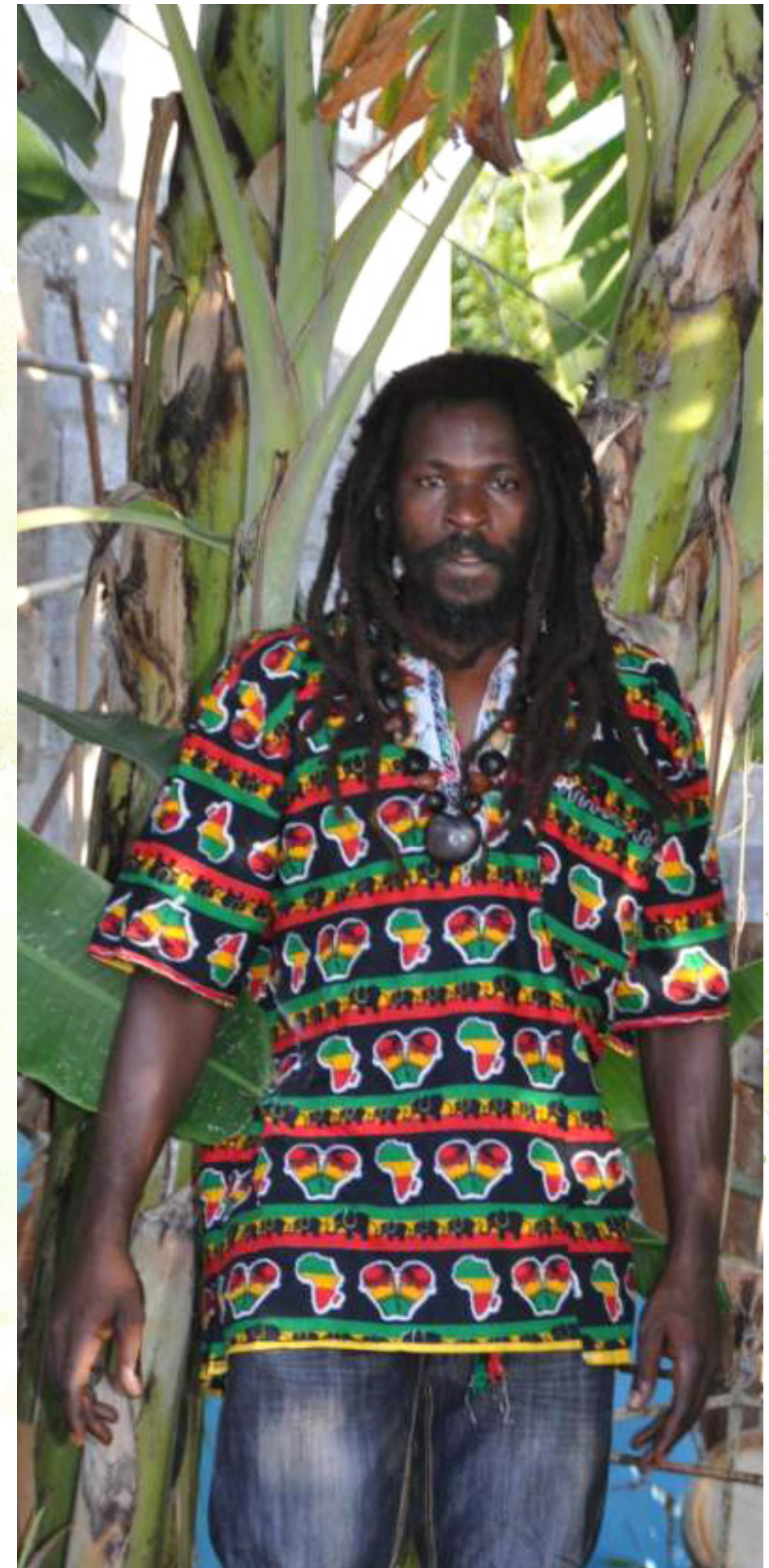
college of agriculture to do more training in general agriculture ..the readings can be aware and reflect my new product line..Rasta Vibes Sweet Watah, 100% cane juice with ginger.

I’ve tasted your cane juice and it is really delicious! Is there anything else you would like the readers to know about you?

Well, I give thanks for the interview..love the vibes to reason with you so the people can look out for Takura’s first album coming out soon and also my book of Poetry..we are now promoting my singles and doing shows. I will appear on the biggest Panafican festival in the Carribbean, Fiwi Singting, in Febuary 2012.

I am organizing Dis Poem Word Festival at the College of Agriculture Science and Education, Case, Portland, Jamaica It is my creationand is an event to mark world Poetry day in on the island. This years staging is on Sunday April 29, 2012.

Ras Takura...it was a great pleasure speaking with you will be watching out for you new album and upcoming events!





RANKING JOE

Interview by Angus Taylor

Photos by Charles Le Brigand

"Certain producers they'd be wanting to try to change your style from what the street people want"

Ranking Joe (born Joe Jackson, 1959, Jamaica) grew up around his father's dances in 1960s Kingston. Bitten by the bug, at the age of just 15 he became resident deejay on Dennis Alcapone's El Paso Hi Fi, when the elder talker migrated to London. His began his recording career at Studio 1 in 1974 under the handle Little Joe, which led to him voicing for Bunny Lee, Joe Gibbs, Sly & Robbie and many others. A name change to Ranking Joe (suggested by the producer Prince Tony) and the development of his various vocal trademarks (like his legendary superfast

"tongue-twisting" introductions) consolidated his status as one of the great mic-men of the late seventies and early eighties - adapting to the new decade's musical developments (including more risqué lyrics) with continued success. At the same time he undertook a parallel career as a producer, issuing his own music as well as other artists like Barry Brown and his schoolfriend Earl Sixteen.

In 1980 he and his production partner Jah Screw took the Ray Symbolic sound system to London, giving the city a taste of what they'd previously only heard on tapes. Joe then settled in New York, where he remains to this day, although he still tours, impressing audiences worldwide with his wonderful way with words and sounds. "Privilege" is one word Joe uses a lot when discussing his life and music and it is the most apposite term to describe the opportunity Angus Taylor had for a brief chat at Reggae Jam festival. There they discussed his music: from Studio 1 to his recent work on vintage rhythms with Clive Chin, which could see an album release very soon...



Sound system is quite literally in your blood isn't it?

I grew up literally on a sound system in dancehall music. Because my father is a man who used to go around and play domino games, like tournaments with friends, people from friends' clubs, and the big sound systems would play and entertain them during the daytime. You'd have kids and everyone during the day and cook and eat food until it reached a certain time in the evening when the kids would have to go home or people would come out of the dance and then have to start paying to come back in! If they wanted to stay they would have to pay the gate man when he comes around then that was a different thing but the deejay would hold the mic and say "All for free... go to the gate and pay him a lickle rate, yunno... that would be great... it's all for free" - so that was when the dance began to officially start. So I got a privilege to see a bit of that and then a bit of the dance starting - then I would have to leave!

How did you get on to the mic?

Growing up my dad would buy a little speaker box and amplifier inside the house with foundation rhythms and records and things - and I would catch my practice that way. We didn't have a mic but I would use a telephone receiver to put into the input of the amplifier and I would deejay through that. People would gather round and say "Yeah, yeah, yeah you sound nice!" and I when I'd see father

coming in I'd have to plug it out and run! (laughs)

You were at school with Earl Sixteen, Winston McAnuff... Did you ever consider being a singer?

No, I was just concentrating on following U Roy's footsteps. And I Roy, Big Youth, Dennis Alcapone, Scotty and Dillinger.

So how did you get first opportunity to record?

The first opportunity came through studying the Better Dub LP, the Mean Girl rhythm, and practice in school shows and school concerts and things like that. I had the privilege to win a talent show at Bohemia Club on Hagley Park Road at the time - where you'd have different contestants. But then I took my talent over to Studio 1 and then stay for days after days from leaving school and try to beg Mr Dodd to listen to me audition.

Did you get auditioned by Mr Dodd himself rather than one of his musical aides?

Yes. But when those producers were coming through the gate people were running behind them! They'd say "What you want?" and you'd say "I just need a little chance to have a song. They'd tell you "Let me hear it" and then you'd have to just be sharp and ready! But from just practising on that rhythm, although I didn't have that rhythm with me I did

have the lyrics. So when he said come back and check him I didn't know what he meant but when I did check him I got the privilege to go back behind to where the studio is. Because before we were just out in the front yard under the mango tree with a lot of different artists waiting for a break and then around foundation artists who already had their break but you had to sit with. So when you went through that gate you'd go "Well... something ago happen!"

What happened inside?

I told him the rhythm and they searched for the rhythm and I got a chance to record it. When I was there voicing the rhythm and thinking I'd finished, he'd just say "Ready Jackson, ready to take it!" I had never even been in a studio before! When he said "Ready now" I was like whoa... But it was a chance I got and when that record was released, named Gun Court on the Bongo Man label, one of Studio 1's labels, it went big. Because Mr Dodd had his programme on the radio where he played the latest songs for month or this week or couple of weeks. Then from that it was just history because different producers started saying "That's you Little Joe?" and I said "Yes" and started going down Randy's to Idlers Rest, Chancery Lane, where all the artists would be hanging out and people would come and buy records - you'd have Randy's, you'd have Chancery Lane and you'd have Joe Gibbs, you'd have Winston Riley Techniques Records in the lane. So all different art-



-ists would be coming through and when you can hang with the big boys - it's a privilege!

So we've heard how you got into deejaying. How did you get into production?

I got into production by seeing sound systems and seeing the trouble you'd have to go through to record a song for producers! Because I used to check Duke Reid before I checked Coxsone but I got through with Coxsone. Once I got through with Coxsone producers started it to check me and it made it a little more easy because you can say "I did that. I did that song". But then I started to see that from playing on sound systems, some of the lyrics that the people would start to react to or dance to, when you'd go and check certain producers they'd be wanting to try to change your style or change your ways from what the street people want. So that's why you'd just go in the studio, build a rhythm or make-over or revamp back that rhythm into a different style into what the people want. So that's how I got into the business and starting producing artists like myself, Barry Brown, Tristan Palma, Sugar Minott to name a few.

Winston McAnuff is in France,

Earl Sixteen is in London. Why did you go to New York?

From being on one of the first sound systems to go to London in 1980. We toured England and the UK and it made a great impact - that was the birth of some of the fast talking deejays like Smiley Culture, Papa Levi and all those guys. So from being in London we got a call to go to New York by Mikey Jarrett which is one of the best deejays there, so I got a visa and we go to New York playing on a sound named Papa Moke HiFi. And it was history again, because Ranking Joe and Jah Screw, we left from England after the death of Ray Symbolic, the first sound to travel to England we went to New York which was the next place. And by keeping so much history there by making dances in New York I kept going back and forth until, seeing a lot of work needed to be done there, I started to base there while going back and forth to Jamaica. I had my Ranking Joe label, working alongside General Lee, High Power, who manages things and we live like brothers, doing my production alongside High Power Music.

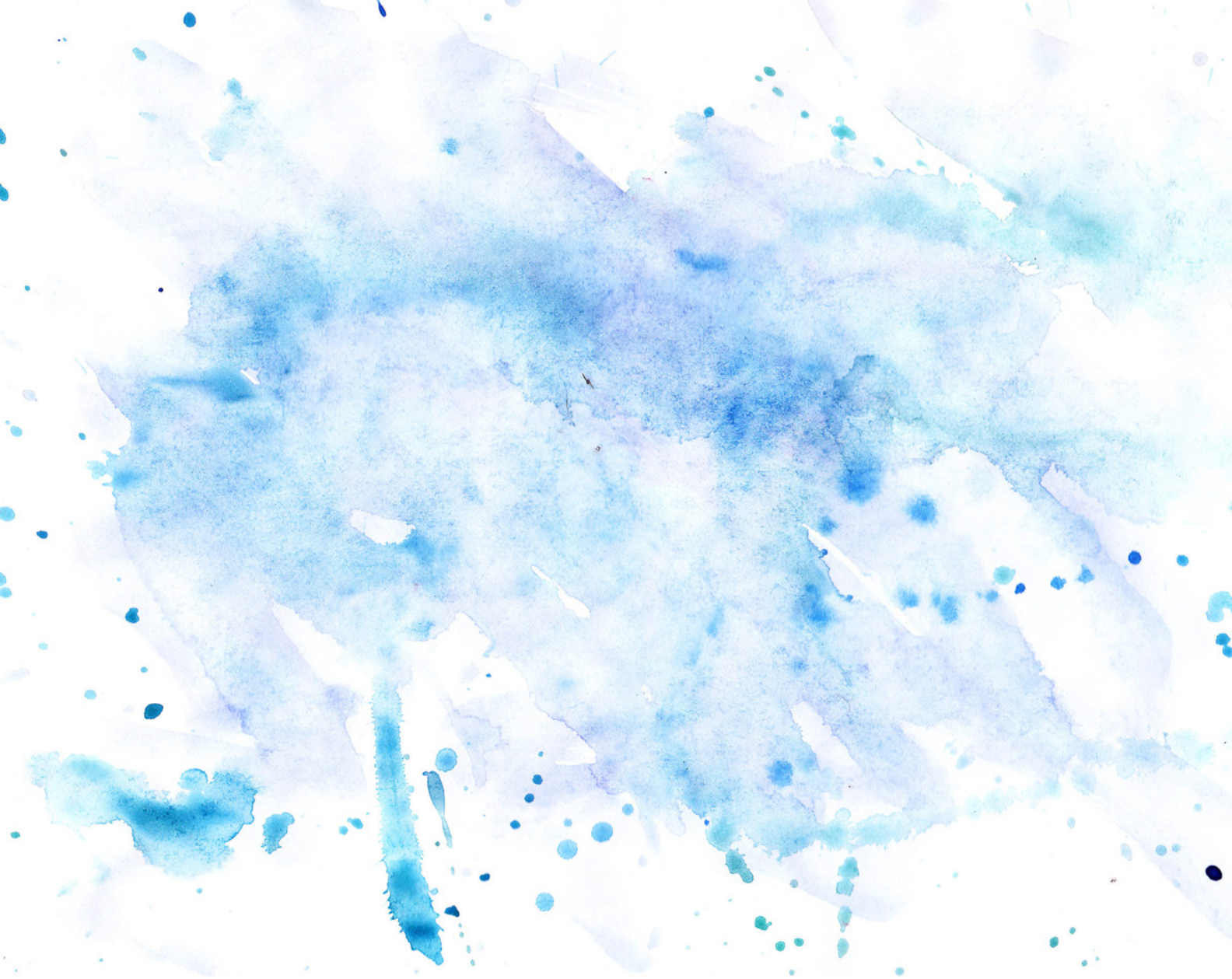
You got your start at Studio 1 but you're also friends with the British singer Alpheus who was one of the last people to be signed by Coxsone himself and has put out one of the great albums this year, using revamps of Studio 1 rhythms.

Yes! He was one of the last. Alpheus and Glen Washington,

they were some of the last people there. I met Alpheus by him coming to New York. When he'd come to the studio we'd all just say "Yes, you sound good" and we'd exchange a lot of experience tactics about the business and approaching the business so that's the way you have to go about it and keep up the good works. I'm proud of him today that he really hung in there and he has a great album right now, a very, very brilliant album with Roberto Sanchez. You cannot tell the difference between that album and Studio 1 because they are such great productions.

Finally, you've been doing a bit of work with Clive Chin in 2011 that's caught international attention - is there an album in the works?

Yes, with Clive Chin, a great producer, and some of the foundation rhythms from Randy's. To get the privilege to do that was a dream come true. So we worked on a couple of tracks and we have some releases already on the Cheater rhythm and the Java rhythm. Great producer and great productions so we are looking forward to finishing an album. We've done half already so we need to buckle down already but I think what Clive's going to do is release some singles and get more out there first.



CURTIS LYNCH

Interview by Erik Magni

Photos by Andrew Thompson

"Riddims help the label to grow, and have helped me a lot. Now, I have kind of grown up. All big producers have been album producers"

UK producer Curtis Lynch has established himself as one of Britain's most successful reggae producers collaborating with top names such as Etana, Busy Signal, Macka B and Maxi Priest. This year he's stepping things up, and for United Reggae he reveals details about his upcoming projects. Presented together with the interview are exclusive photos and a mix made especially for United Reggae.





Necessary Mayhem was launched in London by Curtis Lynch six years ago. The label has since then expanded and today encompasses subsidiaries Necessary Mayhem Classic, Necessary Bass and Maroon.

When Curtis Lynch started

the label he was far from a novice in the industry, and had previously enjoyed success working with artists such as Gorillaz and Alicia Keys.

I reach Curtis Lynch on the phone from London where he works and lives. It's busy

times and he says that he will be tucked away in the studio making music for the coming weeks.

"There are so many things to do, so much fun," says Curtis Lynch, and reveals that more albums are in the pipeline.

Doing the artist justice

Up to now Necessary Mayhem has put out two albums – Digital Acoustics in 2010 and Love Directories in 2011. Several EP's from the likes of Chantelle Hernandez, Franz Job and Mr. Williamz have also been released.

"I want to grow with the artist and do bigger projects. Just making riddims can get boring sometimes," he says, and continues:

"An album is better for the public and you do an artist justice by doing an album. It's also a better body of work and people like a better body work," he reasons.

Curtis says that he has never wanted to be known only as a riddim producer and that it's a matter of growing as a person.

But making an album means more money involved and a bigger risk for the label and the producer. Curtis, however, seems confident.

"It may cost more to make an album, but it's more rewarding. There is also live work, spin-

offs and more," he argues, and continues:

"Riddims help the label to grow, and have helped me a lot. Now, I have kind of grown up. All big producers have been album producers," he explains, and lists producers such as King Jammy, Penthouse [Donovan Germain], Fattis [the late Phillip Burrell] and Gussie Clarke."

More projects means more structure

Curtis is curious and during the interview he asks me several questions about his output and my opinion on artists. One of the artists we're discussing is the severely under recorded Jahmali, with whom Curtis is thinking of making an album.

Jahmali dropped two albums in the late 90's – El Shaddai and Treasure Box – and has by Jamaican standards been rather quiet since.

"I love working with him. He makes my job easier as a producer and working with him is an honor. There's something very special about him," says Curtis. The project that lies closest in time is however Future Cuts – an album that includes new mixes of Necessary Mayhem classics along with a preview of tracks from forthcoming 2012 riddim releases.

"Basically, we've so many projects at the same time, so I thought that it would

be good that you can hear what I'm hearing," explains Curtis, and continues:

"It's one tune from each project. Some tunes are riddim releases and some are part of a bigger plan."

According to Curtis Necessary Mayhem needs to work more structured and more focused because of the many projects in the pipeline. Some of the upcoming projects include work from Mr. Williamz and Million Stylez.

"We've more physical projects. This year we'll have an album with Chantelle Hernandez, a dub album and many interesting tunes," reveals Curtis, and continues:

"There's also the Necessary Mayhem trilogy series with three riddims on one album. Five or four tracks from each riddim, like Pirates, Joker Smoker and Dancehall Style. I also got a few things with Franz Job – Franz Job meets Macka B. A few tracks each and then some dubs."

Approval from his father

Another project is remixing Gregory Isaacs material where Curtis strives to enhance the songs. And this project is very special to him.

"I knew you're going to ask me about that," laughs Curtis, and continues:



"It's going forward, and has a very good vibe. Like Report, when I'm playing that out, I get a massive response," he explains, and continues:

"It's a very special project, and I want to make it as perfect as possible."

Onboard the Gregory Isaacs project is veteran producer Augustus "Gussie" Clarke, who is something of a mentor to Curtis.

"Gussie approves, adds, changes. He's marvelous and 99,999,999 percent of the time he's correct about everything. I need him onboard."

It will probably be out by the end of the year, or the second half. But before it drops, someone very close to Curtis has to approve it.

"It won't get released until my dad approves it," he laughs.



COURTNEY JOHN

Interview by Angus Taylor

"The whole notion of people not buying reggae - I don't buy it!"

In our third chat with Anoto Bay's present day "soul of Jamaica" vocaliser Courtney John we spoke to him about his new single It's Gonna Be Alright: a groundation rhythm throwback to the days when the likes of Jimmy Cliff and Nicky Thomas cut eclectic songs of positivity in the face of struggle with international appeal. "How's the weather up there?" asks

Courtney when he hears we are calling from London. The climate is typically sunny for Jamaica in January and all is sunny for Courtney John and his production company Fiwi Music too. Last summer his 2008 recording for Chris Peckings Lucky Man was licensed for a commercial for Lynx and Axe, to which he attributes an uplift in sales. The success of the song with its rocksteady Paragons rhythm sums up Courtney John's mixture of old school sentiment and modern marketing savvy. Angus Taylor quizzed him on all this, his new album due out in March 'From Letters To Words' featuring his prodigious producer The Wizard and Sly & Robbie, and how he could even be on the verge of landing a big festival date in London for 2012.

Your new track It's Gonna Be Alright deals with everyday hardships.

It's really one of those songs for everybody. Normally I sing a lot of lovers rock and people often say "Courtney, when are you going to sing one of them songs?" I always say "I have no control over what I sing. I'm just an instrument that the songs flow through" But I think I'm here for a purpose. One day I was just in a parking lot waiting to pick up my engineer and I was just watching all the people around me and I thought "Everybody looks sad" and the song just came into my head. We came back to the studio and put the track down. It's just one of those songs I had no control over but looking back, listening and getting people's vibe on the track I realize it's just one of those tracks that people can relate to everyone and most of what's going on in the world. It's just one of those songs that reminds people that, regardless of what's going on, things always have their purpose and it's always going to work out.

It's been hard times for a lot of people in the world - which news items have affected you the most?

For me it's really what's going on in the Middle East. It's weird because we just had an election here a few weeks ago. I got

up early and the people in my office and everybody were so pumped to go and vote. I don't know who people voted for (laughs) but everybody was so happy that they could go and express themselves by voting. It saddens me to see that some people don't even have those basic rights to choose. And then, to think people would kill them to stop them from having those rights is a little bit disheartening.

What were your thoughts on the elections and what are your hopes for Jamaica's new government?

I've been a part of a few of them and I've seen the craziness that went on in the 80s and other times. I think the Jamaican people have evolved and have been more exposed. Back then we only had like one TV station and two radio stations so there were limitations to how we'd see how other people conducted their business. I think now Jamaicans see how other people conduct their business around the world and the politicians know that the people are informed and exposed so now everybody is really on the fence in terms of making things transparent and accountable. I can only look forward to those things happening because if it gets any worse in terms of the perception of our government and politics in the people's minds it could be a very hard thing to fix. But for the government in power now we are all

hopeful and that's all we can be. In all my years of living in Jamaica this is the first time I've seen where I can honestly say people are really going through hard times and hopefully this government, based on that fact that the majority of people voted for them, will be the ones to make the process a little bit easier. It's a world thing. Countries in Europe are going bankrupt. But sometimes it's not about hardship - it's the comfort that goes along with hardship that makes the process work or not.

The first couple of bars of the song sound a bit like Love Of The Common People - is that the vibe you were going for?

I never thought about what the outcome of the song was going to be. Funnily enough, after I played and put down the initial guitar on the song, I have a friend James McCollum who lives in London and works with James Morrison - they have a little acoustic organic vibe going on down in Kensal Town - and I could hear my friend playing on the song. So I sent the song to London for the guitarist to play on and after it came back we did the drums, bass and vocals here. And when I heard what he did on it I just took my part out and let him do it in full! So it wasn't like I was trying to make it sound like that - what I really wanted for the track was just for it to be a song with a message and words and simplicity. Not trying to produce it



in a certain way to fit in a certain area, to get played in the dance or get played on the radio. I just wanted it to be a song where when people listened to it and heard the message. Because once you try to go in a certain direction with a song, if it's not palatable for a certain audience they don't listen to it! Like if you don't remix it for the hip hop generation they won't listen. But what I find is when you take a song like a Sitting Here In Limbo or Many Rivers To Cross you can't put it in any genre. It's just a good song and everybody knows it. It cuts through all genres - and that's what I was trying to do.

Once again you showcase a lower register than your fal-

setto this time.

Yes. Because when I started out I never used to sing falsetto. The falsetto came when I kind of evolved out of my initial stage name of Yogi. Because Yogi got taken up with the more industry part of things, producing and writing for everybody I kind of got pigeon-holed as a producer and songwriter. So as we say in Jamaica: wheel and come again! That's when I took on the whole falsetto, that kind of vibe, and I found out that when I do the falsetto tone I hear things and picture things that are musically different from when I sing in a lower register for some reason!

Junior Murvin, who like you

can sing in a lot of registers but is famous for his falsetto, told me that he has hit notes so high that has disrupted studio equipment and even lost consciousness - have you ever gone through anything like that?

It's crazy but I understand the whole losing consciousness! It takes you to places. Like I tell people, even my own management team, when they ask me to sing more low register stuff. When I explain to them that what I hear when I sing falsetto is different they don't understand! It's weird to hear that Junior said this because when I say it to people they don't understand it! The voice is so high and you're touching notes

that the average singer singing in the regular register wouldn't be able to sing - it's obvious that the brain is moving differently! But in terms of disrupting equipment, no. These days when you're working with this high tech equipment there isn't really much to disrupt! (laughs) Everything is virtual so they just plug me into the Mac!

So is It's Gonna Be Alright going to be on your next album?

The song is out now on iTunes and it's off my next album which is called From Letters To Words which is due out at the end of March. I have more of the guitarry kind of vibe on it. It has some lovers rock, it has some of the classic stuff and some of the newer vibe. I have this new producer now the Wizard and she and I produced this track and lots of the album has her stuff on so it's a different flavour. I used to mentor her for a few years and then I decided me and her should go into business so she is now part of my production company. She produces for a ton load of people. Definitely one of the most talented people I've been around - talent on another level. And she's young, only early twenties yet she's doing a lot of great things.

Who else has worked on the album?

I have two songs from Sly & Robbie. Most of it was done in Jamaica in terms of vocals and

stuff and now because obviously people are in different parts of the world and you can send a track from France and do the vocals and so on the process of recording is a little bit different because of technology. So I have some musicians from Boston who worked with other musicians from France and they have a track on it. I have three classics because I was doing a whole bunch of the Treasure Isle stuff which we've put on the record too and then a chunk of material that I did here in Jamaica with the Wizard. The single Love Is is on it because that track was not on an album. It's a good vibe. I'm proud of it. It's a nice easy listen. It's not too hard over the head!

It's been a great 2011 for you - with Lucky Man getting featured in the commercial in the UK.

That was due to the publishing company that represent me. They had a dialogue with the agency. Funnily enough we were supposed to do it a year before but it never happened and they waited until they could do it last year. But it was very good. I'm always telling people that there's something special and magical about the UK where reggae is concerned. Especially when I'm in the presence of mainstream record companies. I tell them that the UK is special because in the UK they will just want to know something is available and if

it's good they will support it. And it's proven true because when I look at my record sales after the commercial there is no way I could have sold so many records on my own. It shows that if this music gets that kind of presence and exposure that it used to back in the past people are still willing to buy it. The whole notion of people not buying reggae - I don't buy it! I've outsold people who were on major labels off the back of one simple ad.

A lot of artists are trying to get that break now.

And it's very competitive because everybody knows that that's the way to get the exposure. So they're fighting with the record companies and publishing companies and the issue that they have with reggae sometimes is that it's not easy to clear which presents other issues. But what we're trying to do with my team and people we work with is really reintroduce a different style of doing business but with the same music. Hopefully that will resonate and connect with people who make decisions and help the music. At the end of the day reggae has sold the most in the UK. That means it's there somewhere in somebody's house and we just need to remind people that there is a new set of people still doing the thing they really love!

Do you use the product in question? Did they send you



any?

No, they didn't send me any! I should have asked! (laughs) But my little son is a big Axe junkie. He loves it!

I've heard rumours that you might be playing a big festival in the UK - is that true?

We have been approached. It's one of my better markets, if not the best, in terms of response to the music. I really want to come there with style and presence so we have to sift through and make sure when I come there that it's really good and the fans can appreciate the music. Not one of those things where I'm cutting songs in the middle of my set! We want to

do a full set vibe. We're talking with people and we're close to being part of a big festival that's going on up there in the summer around the Olympics time and I'm really looking forward to that. We have been approached by the government to do stuff because last year I put out a pro-Jamaica song called Hey Jamaica. Now this year Jamaica celebrates its 50th anniversary since Independence so we've been approached to be part of the different activities that are going on in Jamaica. We're trying to wrap it up with the whole Olympics. This year is going to be a great year for reggae and Jamaican culture. I know definitely I will be in London this summer. Whether for the Olympics or a festival I will be in London for sure.

What else do you have planned for 2012?

In 2012 a lot of my fans are going to be seeing me more. One thing I always tell the people that work with me is we have to take on the philosophy of "Build it and people will come". Right now I'm experiencing a lot of that. Sometimes it seems a little bit bleak and you wonder of your music is actually creating anything out there because I can't comb all the different corners of the earth. But the year has started and it looks really good in terms of people reaching out from all over the world - people from Africa, Japan, China, South America. So I think this year is going to be one of those years where I'll be doing a lot of travelling and actually making that physical connection will the people who have been supporting me over the years.



ERNEST RANGLIN

Interview by Angus Taylor

"Ska was done by two of us. Me and Coxsone"

There is no one, single most important person in Jamaican music. But if such a contest were to be tallied, guitarist, arranger, A&R man and all round eminence Ernest Ranglin would be very high on the list. Spanning jazz, mento, ska, rocksteady and reggae the Manchester parish born maestro seems to have been present at nearly every crucial moment in the music's history. From playing on the first mento discs to cutting the maiden album on Island Records, from birthing the ska with Coxsone to working behind the scenes at Rocksteady HQ with Duke Reid,

from overseeing arguably the first reggae session in 1967 to working on Police and Thieves in 1976, Ernest has done it all. Not least the steady stream of highly acclaimed solo albums including 1972's Cedric Brooks collaboration 'Ranglin Roots' and the jazzified reggae standards of 1996's crossover 'Below The Bassline' - alongside his spar Monty Alexander who he met in the late 1950s playing with Clue JU and The Blues Blasters.

Angus Taylor spoke to the great man during a brief return to Jamaica after some exultant shows in London and Tokyo - the latter featuring him, Monty and Sly & Robbie all on one stage. Mr Ranglin warned his memory for names was not perfect, given his countless musical activities over the years. But he still gave an interesting interview, part one of which is below.



Tell me about how you first picked up the guitar...

I saw my two uncles playing and I would wait until they went to work and then would try to go behind their backs and do whatever they were doing! But that wasn't really anything that could lead on into writing music or reading music. So I didn't really start to play and start practising properly until I was about fourteen years old. I asked someone to teach me and the price they told me was so expensive that I said "Ok, I have been to school and I think I had an idea. I can understand what I read" so I bought a guitar tutor. Two books that I studied were Ivor Mairants from England and Mick Manilow from Australia. Those were the two books that I started with. After that I started with some other books that teach you general rudiments and so forth. I started to try to learn to read and there was one person who taught me a few ideas about the reading.

Who was that?

It was Tommy Tomlins - a gentleman who played the violin who died many years ago now. I got one or two lessons from him. He taught me the value of the notes and so forth. So some day I would try to do some of the reading practice and then one of the great things that happened was I started to play in a band pro-

fessionally at around fifteen. Val Bennet's band. It was good enough that they had horns in the band - saxophone, trumpet and trombone - and when I was there rehearsing I would go behind their [music] stands and try to follow the notes they were reading! I also asked questions about what key the person was in - because various instruments have their own key signature even if they have their own concert signature so you have to transport from the main concert signature to other instruments' different signatures. So that's how I learned to do arranging eventually.

You played on some of the earliest mento records. Tell me about this and some of the other local traditions that fed into your music at the time.

I started out playing with those big bands and I was generally playing music like Count Bassie and Duke Ellington, bands like those. And from there, when I used to hear the calypso sound that was like inborn! It's in you so that's no big thing, like! So you'd hear calypsos and mentos and so forth and I just got into that because it wasn't really as hard as what I was trying to do, trying to play the American music as it was. Then luckily, I heard a lot of Broadway music that a lot of artists would come down from various countries all over the world. I remember even playing for a lady who I think was an Egyptian! It was really weird for me. I had a bass

player so the two of us could really figure what she was doing! (laughs) So I had access to many, many types of music and these things gave me a lot of the experience that's how I go along.

You were present at the birth of ska. You played on the tune Shuffling Jug which is credited to the Clue J Band which many believe to be the first proper ska tune.

Yes, in a sense. But it was not Clue J Band. A lot of people think that it's Clue J Band but that was my bass player. Now this ska was done by two of us. Me and Coxson from Studio 1. Clement Dodd. The whole birth of that thing rests on the both of us. He wasn't really a musician but he had ideas and we could collaborate together and decide, then I was the person who could put these things on paper. So that's how that came in. The first guy that did the first ska tune was a guy called Theophilus Beckford and his tune was Easy Snappin'. That was in about 1958 and from there it started. I was the arranger.

You've covered the tune Honky Tonk by Bill Doggett in the past. How important was that American recording in the birth of the ska music?

I did that so many times because, as a young guy, that was part of the boogie and I



think that was from where we had decided to do the ska. People like Bill Doggett I used to love. I heard the tune and I really liked it because it was a guitar player who did it also so it just started the whole thing. And people loved it so I just continued to play it.

You taught Jah Jerry from the Skatalites how to play guitar, didn't you?

Yes. I taught his father first. His father was a blind man. I went to his home and I saw this blind man trying to play but he could only play about one or two chords so I realized this would be very good company for him and I would try to make him more comfortable. So I decided that this would be something good for him and I taught him to play. During the time I was teaching him Jerry decided that he wanted to play also, so I taught him also.

How much time have you spent teaching?

I taught many, many people you know. I've been doing that my whole life. Even when I don't really have the time I see some guys come along and I let them know I don't really have the time to teach them. Because I don't like to teach people and then when they reach half way nobody is there to help them. But I try to give them and show them what I know and give them things to keep them occupied for maybe a month or so and then let them see me again. I still do it now - and I don't charge them. Generally I never charge and one of the main reasons why I never did that is because when I was a young boy and wanted to learn to play the guitar the people I would go to would charge me so much and I couldn't afford it. So I learned for myself by reading books. And I try to help people who are interested and I help them.

A lot of musicians at that time went up into the hills to Count Ossie's camp. Did you ever go up there?

Not much. Maybe one or two times. I never really played much with them up there. I think it was more horn players who were the people who went to play there. It was a big place where you had enough space that all of their drummers would make a concert, sing certain tunes and play those

rhythms to it. Some interesting rhythms too, very interesting. Because on one of my LPs from about 1972 named Rangelin Roots I think, there is one tuned that I entitled Hail Count Ossie because of the rhythms he used to do. And eventually, some but not all of the bands would come to recording studios. There was that group [The Melodians] that had a big hit with Rivers Of Babylon - I was the guy that was in charge of that recording.

As well as playing and arranging you worked in Artists and Repertoire too...

Through all those years I was the A&R man for most of these record companies. I didn't start out from the very beginning with Duke Reid but I eventually became one of his A&R men also for years, Federal Recording Company, Gay Feet - all those tunes with Baba Brooks it was done by me as A&R man, and I was the bass player for that group because I was contracted to Federal at that time exclusively so I couldn't play the guitar. But I could arrange and because I played the bass also, I used to play the bass for that band. Some of the records done by Gay Feet, this was the same Baba Brooks band. Patsy O'Brien played the bass on the lovely hits that they had, and guys like Ernie Smith who'd come as the side guys and play bass and as the arranger. But that is my work that I was doing for a lot of these companies. I was the A&R man.

In 1964 when ska was being taken to the New York World's Fair you had gone to London where you played at Ronnie Scott's. Some jazz critics today can sometimes find it hard to accept reggae as a serious art-form. Have you ever found that?

Well in jazz, I think it was in Metronome magazine, I was rated by Dizzy Gillespie as the number three player, I think in about 1953. I've been playing jazz for years and years but I never had any good managerial situations. So I guess I was not exposed in the right and proper way, so I was known only among musicians who knew of me and my ability but not known so much to the public in America and places like that. The only time I was really exposed was when I came to London in '64 and played at Ronnie Scott's.

While you were in England you kick-started the ska in the UK by arranging Millie Small's My Boy Lollipop. That was released by Chris Blackwell - who you had been recording with since his very first album release in 1959.

Yes. Generally the reason why this happened was that Chris Blackwell was in charge and I was the first A&R man for his company too. The ska was going around there but they didn't



have many horn players at that time. If there was a horn player maybe they'd have just one soloist or something. He said to me "If you come over maybe you can do arranging. Why don't you come and pull out a few of the tunes and put horns together? Maybe it will be more interesting..." So he invited me to England because I was at Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation where I was staff at that time as arranger and guitar player. You had to be able to do three things so I was bass

player, horn arranger and guitar player. There were five of us and whoever was on the staff as musicians had to be able to do three things. Chris was next door. Because from Montego Bay I had been doing his works and then came to Kingston in front of the Broadcasting Station where he had an office and I was doing his works aside from what I was doing for the radio station. Then about nine months after he came to England he went to me and made the suggestion that I go

out a road. When I came eventually, out of all these English musicians there was only one Jamaican out of the lot! It was a trumpeter who we would call AKA Bushy Hall. He was the only the Jamaican and it was all English musicians from bass to drums to everything. They were the first people who did that song and they didn't really know anything about the thing so it was an adventure for me also! So I'm glad it came out how it came out!

How did you find England on your arrival?

Just another place, I guess! A little colder than mine! (laughs) I enjoyed being there. It's good to know different places because I think widens your knowledge to know them. Know what's happening around the world and one day you can figure out things for yourself.

You were also involved in the early Wailers work - giving them their first hit with It Hurts To Be Alone. Did you help Bob out with his guitar at all?

Not much actually. Because at that time when he really came to me to teach him guitar I was Jimmy Cliff's musical director and I was in Jimmy Cliff's group. But I gave him his very first hit anyway, It Hurts To Be Alone. Studio 1 had just opened and that was the tune that opened Studio 1 also. I did about four tunes for him after that but that

first tune was a very big hit for him all around between here and America.

You were also involved in the rocksteady trend. You already mentioned you worked very closely with Duke Reid. Both yourself and Lynn Tait were playing guitar and doing a lot of arranging at that time.

Lynn Tait did a lot because he had his own group also. Even when I was Federal there were times when I liked to play with Lynn Tait. I would let him be one of the members of the group that I had and of course at Duke Reid he was around as well. But I am not going to say I am the first person who did rocksteady but I would say I am the first person who did reggae. It was done with Scratch Perry and... there were two of them who were the producers...

Clancy Eccles?

That's right!

Lynn Tait may have played on what is considered by many to be the first rocksteady tune but you played on the session for Clancy Eccles in 1967 that yielded Eric Monty Morris' Say What You're Saying which many believe to be the first reggae tune...

Yes! How do you know this? You have a lot of good informants! (laughs) There was a drum-

mer called Hugh Malcolm. He was the first reggae drummer. He used to play in a band that just came back from England. I formed that band under the name Granville Williams [Orchestra]. He was a keyboard player but I tailor-made everything for him, all the arrangements, because he was the bandleader. This guy Hugh Malcolm was one of the drummers in the band and I got to find out that he really had the reggae beat going. Every session all over, Hugh Malcolm was the man who everybody wanted to play on their session, but he was with me most of the time. When we did that session he was the main drummer and we had the bass player who used to play with Duke Reid most of the time whose name I can't remember, then Gladdy [Anderson] used to play piano, his uncle was on keyboards. The bass player still plays with Toots and the Maytals until now [Jackie Jackson]. That was the group that played he first reggae that came in and I think Clancy won the title for "Reggae For Days and Extra Days" [Feel The Rhythm] Say What You're Saying was for Monty Morris as you say. It was four tunes we did anyway and that was the birth of that.

And the key landmarks didn't stop there. You played on Rivers Of Babylon as you mentioned but you also played on the rhythm for Police and Thieves for Scratch, one of the biggest roots reggae tunes of

all time.

Yes, I played on a lot of stuff for Scratch but it's hard to remember, he wouldn't always give me the title of the tune! But I did a lot of things for him.

Which of your own albums are you most proud of?

I like all of them! I tried to do all of them the best I could. People who listen I guess they are the ones who have their favourites! (laughs)

My favourite is Ranglin Roots.

Ranglin Roots I had a big enough group. I think I had Cedric Brooks on tenor. I had two drummers, I think I had two bassplayers but I'm not certain. Not to play together but maybe they did! It's hard to remember the names of the musicians because it was back in 1972! I've had so many different projects and so many things have happened over so many years! It's like how a lot of artists today are big artists and they become number one but some are not alive today. But I can't even remember some of them! It's like sometimes I meet people and they said "Oh, you did my first record for me!" and I say "Oh sorry!" because there are so many that it's hard to remember.

There is a story that you were given a special guitar by George Benson. Can you tell me about that story?

(laughs) Well to tell you the truth I've already given you a lot of stuff when I have a book I'm trying to write! And if I give you everything I won't have anything to put in my book! Whenever I have a little time I try to sit down and put down things I can still remember. I would really like to put it out whenever it's finished.

You've just played at the very well received show at the Blue Note in Tokyo with Monty Alexander and Sly & Robbie. How did this particular project come together?

I don't know if it was Blue Note who put it together because I just got the call. I think it was a gentleman from Blue Note. He had this great idea to put the group together and this was the first time we were all going to play together as a group. This is how it came along and I just accepted the offer. I'm glad everybody was pleased about it. Monty and Sly & Robbie did a great show and I'm just glad they made this all possible for me.

Are you going to be touring with that same ensemble in 2012?

Yes, I think so. Everything isn't quite put together properly as yet but I think it's going to be - I'm ready whenever they are!

You often use sheet music on stage, how big a role does it

have in what you play and how much is improvised?

I make sure I have a theme and everybody has their part. Because that's what my work is, having been an arranger for years as well as an A&R man for a lot of these record companies. So I would make sure that I give them the main theme, and then give them their part so they would know exactly what they are doing and then leave them a space for solo work.

In 2009 you were working with Lynn Tait on the film Rocksteady - The Roots Of Reggae when his health deteriorated and you stepped in as bandleader.

Yes, that was a rough time too considering he wasn't so well and didn't get a chance to do anything on it. But he gave me some of his arrangements and I made sure that we played it for him when we recorded it because these are really his works. There were a few little things of mine I did but I didn't really want to do much because I wanted everything to be his work. So I would say I was the bandleader not the arranger! (laughs) But I tried to make sure everything was done properly for him.

You endorsed 2010's Skatroniks album Skalsa #1 led by Bigga Morrison who was in Jazz Jamaica with your neph-



ew Gary Crosby.

Well, Bigga came to me with it and played it for me. He asked me if I could do some sleeve notes and I did. It sounded very nice and I liked it. It's a nice album. I don't know about anyone else but I like it!

You've also been working with Dubtonic Kru - who

many people seem to see as the saviours of reggae in Jamaica right now.

Oh that new group! Well I don't have much association with them so to speak but we collaborated on an album. The producer of that album [John Mckinley] is a very good friend of mine and I knew his father for many, many years. If you

like that album I think we will have more things to do in the coming year.

There is currently a petition circling online to "Save Foundation Reggae Music". Do you think foundation reggae needs to be saved?

I don't think so because whatever I hear otherwise I don't think it makes any sense! Because if you notice the market for those other things is going down and down. But I don't like to criticize things so I just do what I have to do. I think reggae music is here to stay.

Who are you listening to right now?

I am not really listening to anyone at the moment. I have been up and down and in and out and I don't really hear them much. Whenever I am home I just stay home. I don't really go out much. On the radio I may hear some things but not all that much because I am busy doing other things. It's bad that I am not keeping up with the times so to speak but I guess I can be forgiven for that! I hope! (laughs)

Apart from your book what other album projects are you working on?

I keep composing music at all times which is why I am so taken up most of the time. Whenever an idea comes to my mind I try to put it down. Because



you don't remember things after a while so you make sure you put it down on paper. So that's what I'm doing and I have enough for maybe two or three albums. I have the materials but the recording situation today, I don't know what is going on with it. I notice very few companies are putting out records so to speak so I will just have to watch what's going on.

One way that record companies have been trying to increase revenue today is through putting songs to advertisements. You yourself had your Below The Bassline

cut of Surfin' used on a car advertisement in the UK.

Yes, I saw some revenue from that. The only way that would be good for the musicians would be if you could get a contract to use some of your music on a movie or something like that. That is the only way because the recording business is really down. But I still compose my music and put them down because you can never tell when things might spin around. I'm just hoping for that moment.

But you still play live. You

must enjoy that a lot!

(Laughs) Well, music is life you know! And that's all I can say about it!

Ernest, Monty Alexander and Sly & Robbie will be touring the European festival circuit this summer.

TONY CURTIS

Interview by Erik Magni

"The state of the world is manmade, and we can fight them, spiritually and musically, but never physically"

Tony Curtis has been a reliable source for cultural and romantic reggae for well over a decade. His latest set – the EP *Fight It* for French Greenyard Records – showcases the same Tony Curtis as we are used to. But the production is tougher and his lyrics are refreshingly frank. United Reggae talked to Tony Curtis about the dancehall days and against what he puts up a fight.

Tony Curtis puts up a fight

Tony Curtis was born in Jamaica and got his break in the early 90’s when he won a local talent contest as best singer and met up with producer Barry O’Hare, for whom he recorded the successful single Butterfly.

Since then Tony Curtis has put out several booming singles and albums, both under his own name and as part of the all-star vocal quartet L.U.S.T with fellow singers Lukie D, Thriller U and Singing Melody.

His latest effort is the EP ‘Fight It’ produced by Zigo of Greenyard Records from France, a producer he met via rock stone deejay Burro Banton.

“We hooked up on Facebook and started talking,” says Tony Curtis on the phone from his veranda in Jamaica.

A versatile set

Fight It shows a tougher side of Tony, even though the romantic lyrics are as present as ever.

“It basically fits everybody, and it shows every side of Tony Curtis. It has some roots, some dancehall, some lovers. It’s rounded,” he says, and adds:

“The songs are solid and it’s real reggae music, not the R&B sound. Zigo master the craft – it’s the real roots sound. It’s heartical and rootical music.”

Need for a change

But the riddims are tougher than many of Tony Curtis’ previous outings and he sings passionately about putting up a fight against depression, recession and starvation.

“If you hear the tracks they will speak to you. The beat speaks to you. Like Fight It. The beat speaks Fight It. It’s what it says to your heart,” says Tony, and continues explaining why it was chosen as the title track:

“Fight It represents the whole album. It has power to it, and shows that there is a struggle in reggae music. I want to show what’s going on in the world and what better song to use. The state of the world is man-made, and we can fight them, spiritually and musically, but never physically. It’s a strong song. Word, sound and power.”

According to Tony society today is represented by selfishness, and we have to act.

“We build greed and foolishness. The rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer. Building weapons instead of taking care of the hungry. I mean, starvation could end. You just have to think about other people. If you’re not hungry, you’re not feeling it,” he says.

Bring back the dancehall

But Fight It is also about dancehall and how it used to be. In Wine Fi Me he sings – “wine fi me baby, grind fi me baby,



bring back the memories of how dancehall used to be”.

“It shows the roots of what dancehall is and where it’s coming from,” he says, and makes an example:

“Today, it’s a bunch of guys dancing in a group. Originally it was about a man and a woman sharing the night. I remember if you got a girl you’d hold on to her for the rest of the night,” he explains, and concludes:

“People standing selfish in the corner and not messing out them clothes. That’s not dancehall.”





NKULEE DUBE

Interview by Valentin Zill

Photos by Mark Miller

"I've always wanted to sing, but I have always been shy about my voice"

Her father was one of reggae's most successful legends ever - Lucky Dube. When he was shot to death on Oct 18, 2007, Nkulee Dube was in the car and witnessed the murder. Four years later, she still has difficulties talking about it. Now an artist in her own right, she has released her first album this summer, called 'My Way'. Her impressive stage presence resembles that of Lucky, but Nkulee has managed to find her own soulful style. South African roots reggae, flavored with dancehall, spiced with jazz - she calls it ethno ragga. Valentin Zill met Nkulee in Munich, Germany in August on her first world tour. South Africa's highly promising next reggae star on her music, touring life, the rich musical heritage of her native and, yes, some memories of her father.



Nkulee, growing up in a family like yours, it is no surprise really that you are doing music. But when you were younger, people told you to keep your voice under the shower.

I wanted to sing. What made me wanna do music? I've always wanted to sing, but I have always been shy about my voice. So I think it took a lot of years for me to be comfortable and be confident with my voice on stage or in front of people. I think I'm comfortable and confident in front of people now, so I released an album (laughs).

With which people did you work on that album, My Way?

We recorded at Native Rhythms Studios, which is my recording company. The people that I have working with me - I'm blessed to have had like the most amazing musicians on this album. I've worked with Silly Walks from (Hamburg), Germany. They gave me two tracks, two riddims to voice. I also have Joel Klein, who is like a scientist in guitar. He's also worked with a couple of people - Miriam Makeba, just to name the one person that people recognize. (I) also have Bethuel Mbonani on drums, who I play with right now in my band. He's actually the producer of the album. I also have Thuthukani Cele from the One People Band, who was on the keys. And some other artists, beautiful voices from the Ladies that I've worked with before. I was

just surrounded by great musicians.

Few countries in the world have such a rich musical heritage as South Africa. With which sound other than reggae did you grow up?

I grew up with jazz, a lot of jazz. My Mom loved jazz - the old from the fifties, you know. Actually they didn't call it jazz then, they called it the blues. So that's something that was always playing in the house. That's the music I grew up with.

What was it that you liked so much about jazz music?

The way the jazz musicians can express themselves through notes and not saying anything. And you'll be like "oh ya, ya, I feel that, I understand". So they can just completely express themselves through music. Like only music, no vocals, which I respect, like release an album without saying anything and let the music speak for itself. That's what I liked about jazz.

Do you see similarities between jazz and reggae music?

Ya, there are (similarities), besides the music part. There are. In reggae, just like (in) jazz, we express ourselves through music. Because everyone in the world can identify that that's a reggae song. You don't have to be like, "ah ya, I'm not sure

which...". Just like jazz. If it plays like (that), that's a jazz song. So you can recognize (that) immediately. With reggae and jazz, they have their own identity in terms of sound.

Which Jamaican reggae artists have influenced you?

I like the band Morgan Heritage. I think they have a bit of an influence, cause I have crazy albums, crazy posters, I'm a fan and I think, ya, Morgan Heritage does a lot. Especially like a stage presence and how they perform on stage and how I would love to get to that level. So they do inspire me as an artist.

My favorite voice of them is Gramps.

(Sings) "She's a friend/..." I forgot it man, what's the song? "She is your best friend/who became my friend/behind your back..." That's my favorite one (tune).

How do you write your songs?

Some of those songs, I write through music that I get and listen to it and be like what can I do on it. And most of them, I wake up and they come and I just write everything that I hear in my head down before I forget it. So they just come from somewhere. But the other songs, I listen to the beats and try to create something from the beats. Usually it just comes and I write it down.



You've just pretty much toured half the world. You've been to the US, Europe and so many other places...

Yaaa... Canada, you know, Germany... Very long, long, long tour. But I enjoyed myself. I still have another half of the world to take care of. I'll be ready for it next time (laughs).

You're still very young - did you ever dream of touring the world in that age?

No. No. You know, in your dreams you dream of things that you feel are tangible, like

you can achieve them. So this one - never in a million years. Never ever I thought that I'll be in Germany again and again, in Canada, Austria, you know. It's a great dream and I'm glad it's been made real for me.

Do you feel homesick already, or could you go on like this for another six months?

(Swallows hard) I'm not sure about six months (laughs), but I have a family here, so the whole homesick(ness) doesn't really come that much, that often, because everybody here is friends and we just hang with each other, with family... But

it does happen that I miss my Mom. All the time. But that's what phones are for.

Your Mom must be very proud of you.

Ya, she is. She is very proud of me and she tells me that every day. Doesn't matter what wrong I do, she's like... OK, it matters what wrong I do. It doesn't matter how bad it becomes. Maybe I feel very sad and I feel whatever, she always says "I'm still proud of you. You've done this, you've done that, you've achieved this and this and that. And how many people can you say have achieved that?" So, in

her eyes, I'm an angel (laughs).

Talking about religion: do you see yourself as Rasta, or is Shembe the way?

(Sings) "Shembe is the way..."
Ya, Shembe is the way for me.

Few people outside of South Africa know about Shembe.

Shembe is a church, where there's a prophet called Shembe. 'Cause some people confuse the fact that Shembe may be is... 'Cause I've always been asked that in interviews like, do we praise him or do we see him as God or... No. He's a prophet. So if you know the definition of a prophet, then you know what Shembe is. We all have the same God, depending on whatever you call him. But we all have one God. So Shembe is a prophet.

Is Shembe a christian faith?

Our religion is not really that different from christianity. In Shembe, we combine religion with culture. Like the type of religion the Indians have. They do everything, but that goes back to their culture as Indians. So we do the same way in our church.

Are you attending church services regularly?

Yeah... When I'm not away. I wish I could. Every Saturday and Wednesday I go - when I'm at home. So now that I'm here,

I do a bit of prayer here and there, on the right times, when I'm supposed to be praying.

You only saw your father live on stage one or two times?

Actually once, and then the second time was when his record company had gathered their own artists together to show off. It was just a showcase. He was invited there and we went there as a family. The other one is not really a show. But a show-show was once.

I guess that was an unforgettable experience for you, as it was for the rest of us not related to Lucky Dube?

Ya, it was! I mean, at the time, I was like a fan. You watch him on stage, like (screams) aaaah. You just wanna be solid like a fan. It's a crazy feeling to switch from that to the other side. It felt very good.

What's your favorite song from your father?

From his albums? (She sings:) "Baby don't cry/I am going round the world/spreading the message/I am going round the world..." Well I think that's one of the songs that he loved. Because when he would leave for a tour, that's the song that he would sing to us, especially when he was gonna go for like six months or so.

What memories do you have

of your father as a father?

He's always been a strict dad. He was a very, very strict father, like he didn't want things that didn't really belong there, like fake hair, fake nails. You go and have your manicure and you get home and you're like "ah, I have to take all of this off, all my money..." So he was very strict as a father.

The reggae scene in South Africa seems to be pretty small. Other than Lucky Dube, pretty much all we heard of are Ras Dumisani and Black Dillinger...

Well, with reggae in South Africa... South Africa has its own type of traditional sound. So the reggae spectrum is really slowly but getting there! Especially with my Dad, I think he's the one that kinda enforced it into the people and people are now experimenting more. Artists there are experimenting more with the reggae sound within that traditional sound. So it's gonna get there, it's gonna get there.

A lot of Jamaican artists love to perform in South Africa.

Ya, they love it because South Africa has a support. It has a lot of support in terms of music. But they have to understand it first. That's why we have clubs that only play reggae, that only play dancehall. So it's kind of a different scene for them. So they get there, and it is always packed. Every Thursday night,



it is always packed. The more they get used to that - when they say, "that artist that we heard last week, remember at the club, he's coming...", then everybody wants to see you. That's how South Africa works.

Is the reggae crowd there "racially" mixed?

It's very mixed. Like you go there on Thursday nights, just chillin' with the Rastas, and you find your Indians, your Chinese... Everybody's there, having fun. It's because South Africa is a very, very, very multiracial type of country.

Would you like to perform in Jamaica?

I would love to, definitely. I would love to play in Jamaica. I know it can be but intimidating, you know, you'll get there and you're like "this is their sound"... It can be, but I would love to. I would love to meet Tanya (Stephens), I think that's one reason you'd have to come to Jamaica. I've already met Sizzla, so I'd like to meet Tanya (laughs).

Your father was the first African performer in JA.

Ya. Well, as far as I know (laughs). I would like to be the second, please. I would like to be the second and meet all these people and be like a fan and be all goo goo ga ga with everybody (laughs).

For your album My Way, you used a riddim from Silly Walks from Hamburg, Germany. I guess you got the link through Black Dillinger?

Yes. The first song, Give It To Me, that's how I got the link through Dillinger. And then after that, they just talked to me straight. 'Cause I didn't



know about them, and then they wanted to work with me and they didn't know how to get hold of me. Dillinger was like "oh yeah, I know her" and that's how we met. We've been working very nice together.

Quite some German producers have their riddims on heavy rotation in Jamaica, but South Africa is a different matter, I suppose. How was the tune you sang on their riddim received in RSA?

They are received in terms of radio. We have about three stations that play reggae music only. Reggae and dancehall music. So people that listen to radios and all that, I think it's received very well. And they play them in dancehall clubs, the ones that I'm talking about.

Oliver from Silly Walks told me recently that he had just sent you a new riddim of theirs to voice?

Yeah, he sent me one of the songs that I'll be performing tonight. It's called Luv The Way, it's one of my favorite songs. When he sent it to me, I was like "oh my Good, I like it!" And then I just recorded it that night. I got it around nine am, and by five the song was done. I just sent it to the producer, and he was gonna go through and take out whatever he doesn't want or whatever he thinks, but the song was done. I recorded it in a day.

Gentleman called you on stage at the Africa Festival in Würzburg, Germany earlier this year.

Ouh ya! That was one of the moments... That was one of the most amazing moments, the most nerve-wrecking moments of my life. I forgot the words, I forgot what I'm gonna say, I forgot... 'Cause I was like, it's Gentleman! It's Gentleman, I'm on stage with Gentleman. How can I remember anything? It's Gentleman! But ya, I pulled it off. It was one of my highlights, one of the highlights in my life.

(On stage with Gentleman), that was one of the most amazing moments, the most nerve-wrecking moments of my life I couldn't tell you were nervous at all.

That's the thing with me. When I'm nervous, people say "you know, you should be nervous more often. 'Cause you perform when you're nervous. And when you're cool, you're like 'oh, collect it'". I don't know, when I'm nervous, I become to be too much - I don't know, I exaggerate, I try to make things even more up, because I think people can see that I'm nervous. But I'm always nervous when I perform. It helps! Always. I never get on stage and be like, I'm cool, I got this... No. I'll always be like what if they, what if this, what if that... You're always thinking about what if my earring falls down. And then someone has to slap you and say, calm down, you'll be fine. But I'm always nervous.

BY THE RIVERS

Interview by Karl Pearson

New UK 6 piece band with a very promising future.

As the summer ended last year writer Erik Magni reported here on how there has been something of a resurgence in the popularity of live bands in Jamaica with groups such as The Uprising Roots Band, Dub-tonic Kru and Raging Fyah leading the way. Now in the UK there is some hope for 'live band' reggae music with the arrival of Leicester 6 piece By The Rivers, a cleverly derived name from the fact that two of the

founding members Nile and Jordan both share their names with rivers.

This young band, all of whom are in their late teens or early twenties, have been building a solid reputation on the live circuit in the UK, performing predominantly their own compositions at various festivals and supporting the likes of Maxi Priest, Dawn Penn, Musical Youth and John Holt. They have also released two EP's so far, available from bytherivers.bandcamp.com, iTunes and Spotify and have just entered the studio to record their debut album.

With the future looking promising for this band I took the chance to catch up with them and find out more about who they are and their brand of Roots Reggae for a new generation!



How did you all come together?

Well, me (Nile) and Jordan, have been friends since birth, and it was us who originally set up the band. But everyone else in the band we have known through music in some way, either from seeing them in other bands, or having played with them at some point.

What made you decide to start a Reggae band?

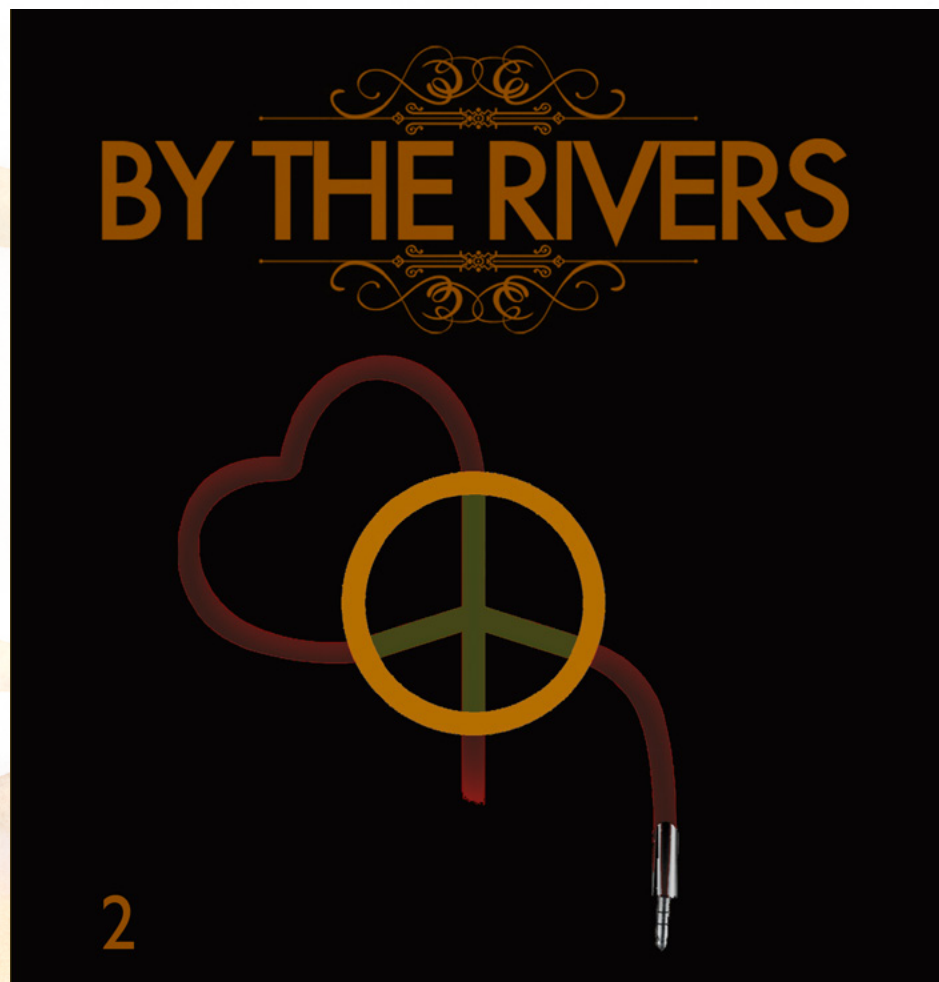
Me and Jordan have always had a passion for Reggae music, it was a style that we really related to, and because of that, we felt it should be something we should pursue ourselves.

Who are your influences?

We have many influences, not just Reggae artists. But obviously one of those being Bob Marley, and mainly Roots Reggae, such as Twinkle Brothers, Culture, Abyssinians, Third World etc.

Have you found it hard being a reggae band to get your music out there and heard?

In some ways yes and in some ways no. People seem to be more open to it, as you don't see many young bands doing Reggae compared to the amount say doing Indie music for example.



Towards the end of last year you supported the Specials, how did that come about and how did you find it? I caught you at the Alexandria Palace show where you were very well received.

We had a gig supporting Neville Staple in Derby, and after the show, Neville asked for a CD, so I gave him an EP and a business card. A few days later I received a phone call from him saying he loved the EP, and would pass us on. Not too long after, I got a call from Lynval Golding, saying he was really liking our sound, and would see about getting us on the tour... The next thing we knew,

we were being asked to play a 15 date UK Arena Tour supporting The Specials, and it was incredible!! It was so surreal playing to packed out Arena's every night, and being able to watch The Specials after. They are a big influence to us, and so to have been able to support them and meet them was such an unforgettable experience.

Your single 'One Word' is out now and I saw somewhere that it went up to around #7 on the iTunes UK reggae chart, how does it feel to be in there amongst your peers?

Yes, our EP package ended up reaching No.2 in the iTunes

Reggae Album Charts, coming second to Bob Marley. It was unbelievable seeing our music up there with the greats, and an honour to be sat next to Bob Marley and many other Legendary Reggae artists in the charts!

What plans do you have for the immediate future?

We are currently in the Studio recording our debut album, which will be released around the end of 2012 with singles being released prior. Also, we are currently setting up our own tour, and have confirmed a string of European dates supporting The Slackers in April.



INNER CIRCLE

Interview by Erik Magni

"Reggae is like a Picasso - you can't duplicate it"

Reggae band Inner Circle is today probably best known for early 90's smash hit singles Bad Boys and Sweat (A La La La Long). But Inner Circle had their fair share of success in the 70's and their lead vocalist Jacob Miller is said to have been bigger than Bob Marley in Jamaica. United Reggae's Erik Magni got a lecture in reggae history when he spoke to one of the group's founders – Ian Lewis.

Inner Circle's Ian Lewis on the course of reggae music

Ever seen U.S. reality TV show Cops? If you have you're probably familiar with its theme Bad Boys, a tune written and performed by Jamaican reggae band Inner Circle in the early 90's.

The core of Inner Circle is bass and guitar playing brothers Ian and Roger Lewis, and an early line-up of the band also comprised three future members of Third World. But the most recognized star in the group was late lead singer Jacob Miller. And with him in the group things started to happen in the mid 70's.

According to Ian Lewis he and his brother met Jacob Miller at a bus stop singing. And the rest is as you say history. Together they brought forward both heavy as lead Rasta praises as well as disco-fused reggae albums, such as Everything is Great, which included We a Rockers, the lead motif to the cult reggae motion picture 'Rockers'.

Wants to clarify certain things

I reach Ian on the phone from Miami where he has lived since the 80's. He and the band are doing interviews to promote a tribute concert to Jacob Miller in Miami, USA, on February 24th. One of the first things that Ian makes clear is that facts tend to be missed out in the history of reggae music and that he

wants to clarify certain things. He also seems to be upset that reggae is usually referred to as "weed music" and not for what the genre has accomplished.

"Reggae was born out of boogie woogie and most musicians were jazz musicians. But the political nature changed when Jamaica got independent. It was created out of political change" believes Ian, and continues:

"Reggae was born from the sufferation and consciousness of the people and out of dreams of independence."

Cheerful memories

It's obvious that Ian has strong and cheerful memories of the early days of reggae.

"It was a joy to go to a reggae show. The vibe was strong and intense," he says, but adds:

"Now it's like anything goes. It's not a matter of genre. It reflects what the youths feel."

We will come back to Ian's thoughts of the reggae scene today. So let's go back to the early 70's when Ian, his brother Roger and many, many other singers, deejays, musicians and producers strived to make a living out of their music.

"A typical session had about five to six singers waiting outside the studio and it was a groove back then. We could record 15 to 20 songs in one day

and got like three dollars to play one song or like six dollars for ten to 20 songs. Today it's one song in one day. You lose a little mystique," explains Ian, and continues:

"Back in the day the singer would sing and then we played the riddim. Today it's riddim first and then it's the songs," he further explains, and makes an example:

"Cherry Oh Baby, Eric Donaldson stepped in the studio and sang what he was feeling. And we played what he felt. Now it's computerized, more planned," he says, and adds:

"You had the Waterhouse sound with Junior Reid, the Trenchtown sound, the uptown sound, the downtown sound. People like Freddie McKay or Studio One and Channel One. It's gone. It won't happen again."

"Bob was mystical"

During our chat Ian comes back to one particular tune a couple of times – The Wailers' Stir it Up.

"We played on that, but were never credited," claims Ian, and continues:

"But we don't worry about that. It took about four hours to record. We played it over and over. Just grooving."

Ian also has a clear memory of Bob Marley.



“He had a Ford Escort, a big smile and this afro. He was just a little kid coming in. It was always something with him,” remembers Ian, sings a couple of notes from Small Axe and continues:

“Bob was mystical. I can’t explain it. You can’t find another Bob or Jacob Miller again. They were born to sing. And you can never find another Carlton Barrett. He was unbelievable. Humble, always a laugh and a joke,” he says.

Reggae needs respect

The late drummer Carlton Barrett was together with his bass playing brother Aston “Family-man” Barrett an important part of the Wailers and later Bob Marley & The Wailers. And they were also a crucial part of the reggae history and the sound of the genre. According to Ian the Barrett brothers haven’t received their fair share of credit.

“Police stole the sound from the Barrett brothers. Let the world know the truth. Reggae music was influencing English punk. People need to know what reggae music has done. Never got the respect and due for what it has done for 50 years,” he states.

Lacks bass line

This is when our conversation turns to contemporary reggae and dancehall. And Ian is disappointed of what reggae, and especially dancehall, has



evolved into.

“You talk about dancehall; it’s what’s played in the dancehall. Dancehall is a place and it used to be a lawn, and not a club. It was music that surrounded the dancehall,” he says, and continues:

“Today people promote the artist, and not the vibe. We used to export reggae, now we import it” he believes, and asks a question:

“How can you play reggae music without a bass line? It’s not reggae music,” he says, sings some notes from Satta Massa Gana, and adds:

“I don’t want to judge, but I can’t feel it.”

Why Ian Lewis loves reggae

Even though Ian seems frustrated over a certain musical direction he is proud over what Inner Circle in general and reggae in particular have accomplished over the past 50 years.

“Today reggae is a worldwide music and reggae music unites the world. Reggae will always survive and reggae is a way of life. It is original. It’s like a Picasso – you can’t duplicate it. People feels something in the music,” he states, and asks me a question:

“Have you seen the baby listening to Bob Marley’s Buffalo Soldier on Youtube?”

“That’s why I love reggae.”

U BROWN

Interview by Angus Taylor

“I never expected the music to take me to these places. I was doing it for the joy of it”

Following our talk with Ranking Joe, United Reggae presents another foundation deejay interview – with the legendary U Brown. Born Huford Brown in 1956 in Kingston the young U Brown, like Ranking Joe, was exposed to music via his father. Along with

many deejays in the late 1960s and early 1970s he was inspired to take up the microphone by the great U Roy. But for U Brown, as his name might suggest, the connection to U Roy was deeper than just musical influence – he views it as nothing less than his spiritual calling in life. And again like Ranking Joe, he decided to combine his deejaying work with production – having been encouraged to start his Hit Sound imprint by local sonic entrepreneur Bunny Lee. Angus Taylor spoke with the man who could be the first to toast the iconic lines “Blow Mr Hornsman Blow” after a doubleheader performance at Reggae Jam in Germany with his friend and next generation deejay Prezident Brown. U Brown speaks calmly and deliberately, but in a short interview window, he had a lot to say...



How did you get into music?

I originally loved music even as a kid but I couldn't identify if I should dance, sing, deejay or select a sound. So by going out with my dad, when he was having a drink with his friends and listening to the music I started to identify the things that I loved. Fortunately for me I moved from Western Kingston, two doors above Treasure Isle studio, which was the first place where I saw people like Tommy McCook and Winston Wright, Wire Lindo, and Jackie Jackson the bass player. I moved to Kingston 11, not exactly Waterhouse but the next community called Tower Hill, which was between Cockburn Pen and Waterhouse, an adjoining community.

That was where you got involved in sound system?

I was so lucky that, at that time, you had King Tubbys, the number one roots rock rub a dub sound, and you had the master deejay Ewart Beckford, known to the world as U Roy. I started to identify things within myself that were in U Roy. U Roy always played King Tubbys sound but occasionally he had a friend called Kentone which was a small sound that came from Cockburn Pen. So while I'd still sometimes go to dance, the impression I got from U Roy and the vibes that I'd feel made me feel connected. So that's where I started out in the dancehall business by repeat-singing his songs,

like Wear You To The Ball, This Station Rule The Nation, and my friends started to recognize that my voice sounds close to U Roy. So sometimes we'd go to a little sound close by and when they played the flipside, I would be standing by the soundbox singing things into my friends' ears. My friends would be saying "Gwaan take the mic, take the microphone" but I was very shy as a young boy. Until finally one Wednesday evening, I remember it was in Phillip Avenue, Kingston 11, I went and took the mic. The name of the sound system was Silver Bullet - pull it and full it! (laughs)

You got your first break on Tubbys sound when U Roy had a road accident.

After deejaying on Silver Bullet, a small community sound, I got another chance to deejay with another bigger sound that was called Sounds Of Music. The owner was Phillip Munroe, who is the father of Macka Diamond, so Macka Diamond was born with music inside her. Then from Sounds Of Music I got the break with King Tubby because U Roy met an accident and fractured his leg. And I Roy, Roy Reid, was also a very good deejay at the time, what they call man of the moment in the spotlight, he was travelling back and forth all over Jamaica so he couldn't be the resident deejay. Because in those days every sound system in Jamaica had a resident deejay. If you wanted to hear Big Youth or Jah

Youth, you had to go to Emperor Lord Tippertone, and if you wanted to hear U Roy you had to go King Tubbys, and if you wanted to hear I Roy you had to go to Ruddy's. I knew a guy Trevor, who we called Tower Hill because he lived on Tower Avenue in Tower Hill, that worked with King Tubbys and took care of the sound while he was on the road. He said to Tubbys that he knew a little 'prentice and Tubbys who gave me the ok, so that's where I got my real big first break on a real known sound system.

How did you get to make your first recording?

My first recording was for a producer called Winston Edwards. There were two songs I recorded for him, Jamaican Tobacco and Wet Up Your Pants Foot. Then my third song was for the late Vivian Jackson, known to the world as Yabby You, which was called Dem A Wolf. He sang the vocal [Anti Christ] saying some people are sheep but when you check them out they are wolves - and I did a version that. Then I started to record for the great Striker Lee himself.

How did you link with him?

Bunny Lee was a resident producer in King Tubbys studio where he mixed most of his tracks. So as a young apprentice playing on King Tubbys sound, they were impressed by what I was doing. Bunny Lee then asked me to do some re-

-cording and I gladly did so. Because at the time when we were singing, we weren't talking about money - the main thing was to get your voice playing on the radio. When you were in the community and a song came on the radio and everybody recognized your voice - that was the joy. It wasn't like today. We never understood the business part of it, we just loved the music as the music. Because, I'm going to be honest, having been in the business over thirty years, if you asked me in '68, '69, when I started playing on a little sound system, I could not tell you that this music would take me to places like Reggae Jam and Summerjam in Germany.

So would you say U Roy was the catalyst for your career?

I have to give thanks to U Roy because everyone is connected with someone out there but some of us don't take time out to find that person that you are connected with spiritually. I'm glad that U Roy was living in the same neighbourhood at the time. There would not be a week that would pass when I would not see U Roy, unless he was travelling. U Roy would pass, in those days we were riding pedal bikes, before motorcycles, and I'd see him one time each week. And every time I'd see him I'd just admire not only his music but his principles, the way he'd conduct himself. I've known U Roy for over thirty odd years and I've

never heard U Roy enter into an argument with anyone. If he disagreed with something he would say no, he's not doing it. But no argument or fight or anything, he is my mentor so respect to him always.

Did you take your name from him, as is often reported?

No. Because U Roy was born Ewart Beckford and how I understand he got the name, if I'm right, is one of his cousins was trying to call him Ewart but couldn't pronounce the name. So he would say "Ew-woy!" and the name just stuck. But I was born as Huford Benjamin Brown and because of the deejaying some people called me U Brown but some people still called me Hugh Brown from when I was younger.

You talked about Gregory Isaacs on stage today. You knew him well.

I knew Gregory very well, for over twenty years, from when I first started in the business. I knew him from the days of Orange Street in about 1974 when most of us were usually down there at Bunny Lee's record shop, Niney The Observer's record shop, and Gregory Isaacs had his office on Orange Street, for Progressive, one of his first labels.

Tell me about how you started producing and releasing your own material.

It was Bunny Lee again, give thanks for him. Because while I was around Bunny Lee, they had a saying in Jamaica "You have to show a man how to fish". Bunny Lee opened my eyes saying "Yes, you are an artist who can record songs but you must also try to learn something about the business and it will become more interesting". My first rhythm track that I produced I didn't make. It was from Bunny Lee from a Barry Brown song [Mr Money Man] where I did a version called Badness A Madness. I gave that to Federal Records to release. And if you can find that record you will see that was the first time I tried to design a label, called Hit Sound. I couldn't even afford to pay for the art work so we had to do the basic and just draw up the letters across, instead of making a design, because I was just a young youth coming into the business.

But you weren't discouraged...

I was lucky again because Bunny Lee got me a trip to London to perform and when I came back I had a little money and decided to go further into producing. I came to realize that no matter how good an artist is or whatever product [you sell] is, it's not every day that people are going to buy that product. But as long as you have experience in what you're doing then you can invest so food will always be on the table. So I went in the studio and I tried

to produce two tracks. These were the first two tracks I really spent my money on to call musicians and they were Weather Balloon and a remake of Dennis Brown's Perhaps, sung by Al Campbell, the first he did for me.

Tell me about your version to Take 5 called Blow Mr Hornsman – which has inspired remakes from Welton Irie's cut shortly after yours through to Tippa Irie's new cut of it which he performed at Reggae Jam 2010.

I had a good friend named Chester Synmoie, who was also a producer. He is the one that gave Lone Ranger his first hit song Barnabas. He had that rhythm and came and asked me to do a track on it. It was an instrumental he laid called Take 5 (or Russians Are Coming) and when I heard that [Saxophone] the lyrics just came to my mind spontaneously and I just recorded it. Because I was like the Beenie Man or the Elephant Man at that time. But back in those times when you told people you were a deejay, not even your parents wanted you to be a deejay because they thought it wasn't reaching anywhere as a young person growing up. When the police used to come to stop the dances and ask the deejay his name and you would say "U Brown" they would swear at you and tell you to go home. So like I was saying to you before, I never expected the music to take me to these

places. I was doing it for the joy of it. And because the joy of the music connected with another part of the world the people love it and that's why I'm here today.

Finally tell me about yourself and the younger deejay Prezident Brown, your partner on this tour.

Well me and Prezident Brown, our connection it happened spiritually, the same kind of connection as when I met U Roy. Prezident Brown was a young youth born in Clarendon and growing up in St Mary and I was born in Kingston. At that time I was one of the men of the moment and he gravitated onto my music. His brother was also a big dance-fan of me and anywhere I deejayed his brother would come so he started to come and listen to me. He liked my style and he started to find a spiritual connection. And when I first met Prezident Brown I didn't even know it was Prezident Brown I was talking to because he was just a humble youth like I was humble. The only reason he knew it was me was because I had started to get recorded and everyone knew it was U Brown. So finally, a few years back, I came across him and we started to communicate more and spend more time around each other so day by day we found out that we have something in common. He's a very easy humble genuine person like myself, we communicate like brothers and, up until this day, he is one of my best friends.

Post script :

After this interview was completed we got wind of a new U Brown album called King Tubby's archives - soon to be a limited edition released on the deejay's own Hit Sound label. We contacted U Brown again and he added the following:

"This album is recorded as a tribute to the late Osbourne Ruddock, known to the world for the roots rock reggae dub segment, and the enhancing of deejays selecting an deejaying on soundsystems, becoming international recording artists all over the world, including myself, and the legendary Daddy U Roy. In his studio is where producer Bunny Lee recorded an mix some of his classical tracks with people like Johnny Clarke, Cornell Campbell, John Holt, the late great Delroy Wilson, myself UBrown, URoy, IRoy, Dillinger, Trinity, Jah Stitch, just to name a few. So King Tubbys had a lot of great music coming out of his studio by recording an mixing for several producers, not to mention dub-music on dub-plates, before dub-plate specials came on the scene. Everybody makes dub-album tributes to KING TUBBY'S which is good. But there was more than just dub coming out of King Tubby's studio. So I had to bring some of these recordings from out of the archives of King Tubby's. There are combination tracks with me U Brown and Johnny Clarke, Cornell Campbell and Daniel Ray, an original roots rock rub-a-dub singer from back in the days of Jahlove Soundsystem with Brigadier Jerry plus straight tracks with myself. These tracks are dub versions of some of the classic vocal tracks produced by Bunny Lee, an mixed by King Tubby's himself."

Twinkle Brothers Culture Defender

The Twinkle Brothers defend roots reggae culture.

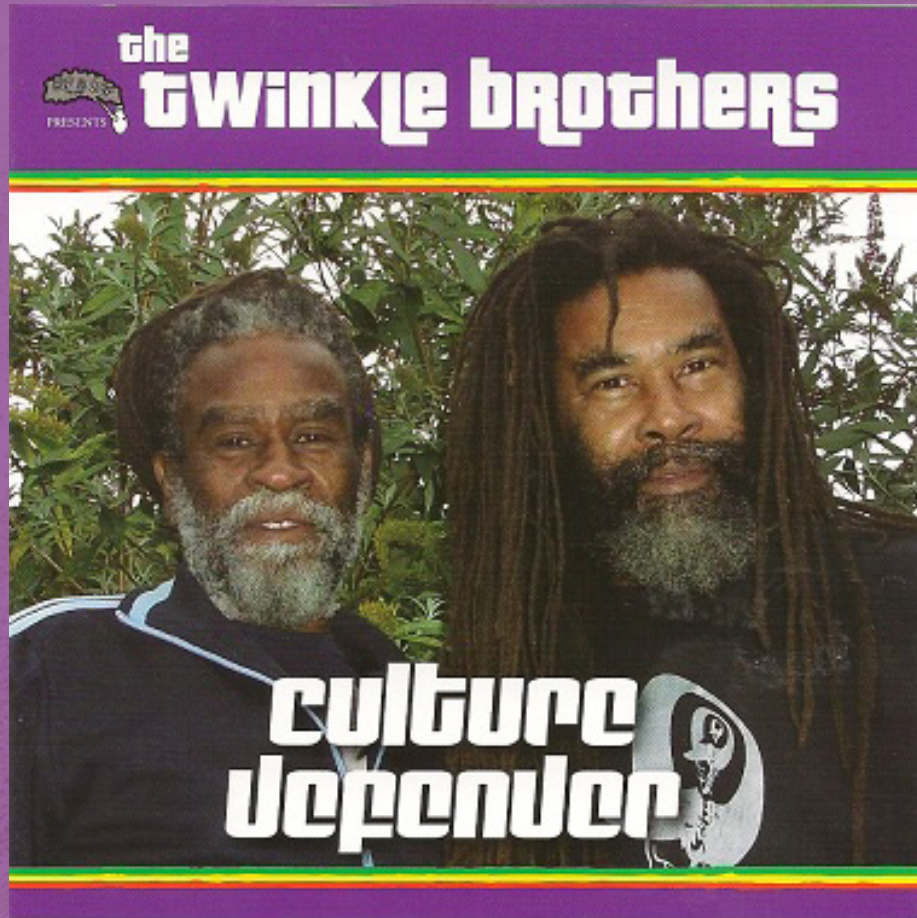
Review by Erik Magni

The Twinkle Brothers have stayed true to their roots for more than 30 years. They started in the 60's as a hotel-circuit band, but transformed to one of the deepest and most spiritual vocal harmony groups in roots reggae music.

Their debut album 'Rasta Pon Top' – put out in 1975 – included titles such as Give Rasta Praise and Beat Them Jah Jah set the standard.

They've continued in the same vein ever since and have relentlessly put out albums with positive and defiant messages. Cross-over is just not for Ralston and Norman Grant and they won't succumb to lyrical slackness.

The latest album from The Twinkle Brothers is 'Culture Defender' – the follow-up to the excellent Barry Issacs-produced 'Praises to the King' showcase set released in 2009.



'Culture Defender' is produced by Gussie P and combines The Twinkle Brothers two showcase ten inches on the Sip a Cup label together with unreleased mixes to the in demand Repent showcase as well as an unissued tune and some exclusive dub mixes.

Norman Grant's agitating chesty delivery together with militant and heavyweight steppers riddims provided by talents such as Mafia & Fluxy makes this a crucial set for anyone who is interested in warrior-styled roots reggae.

Various Artists Club Reggae Re-release

Out again one of Trojan's best selling reggae collections.



Review by Karl Pearson

In 1969 Trojan Records, having failed to make the same kind of impact on the UK albums market that they had on the UK singles one, decided to take the brave decision of releasing a compilation, titled 'Tighten Up'. Priced at around the cost of two singles the album collected together some of their biggest selling singles and put them all together in one nice big package. The album was a great success, but with the hits still coming thick and fast, they soon realised that further similar album ranges could be as equally successful. And so it was that early in 1971

Trojan launched 'Club Reggae', a compilation series that would run for a further six volumes and go on to become the company's most commercially successful series of all-time.

Now for the first time ever that original album is being re-released on CD. It has been mastered from the original tapes and uses original artwork plus at the budget-busting price of £3.99 and with the CD having that vinyl look about it this is as close to the original as you are possibly ever going to get. It may not be one of the strongest collections from Trojan or as revered as the 'Tighten Up' series, but it is till a good collection that includes the rousing '54-46 Was My Number' from Toots & The Maytals, the UK #1 single from Dave Barker and Ansel Collins 'Double Barrel' and the clip-clop of Andy Capp's (Lynford Anderson) spaghetti western flavoured 'The Law'. It also captures some of the diversity in reggae styles of the era with The Fabulous Flames almost hymn like 'Holly Holy',

the calypso steel drum, swing of Selwyn Baptiste's 'Mo' Bay' and touches of funkiness and soul on The Pioneers 'I Need Your Sweet Inspiration' and Hopeton Lewis and The Chosen Few 'Boom Shaka Lacka'.

If you owned this album the first time around then it's a no brainer way to update one of your prized assets and if you didn't it still makes for a solid compilation that captures a thriving time in UK reggae history when just about every teenager in the UK had at least one of reggae record in their musical collection.

Pura Vida and The Congos We Nah Give Up

Sounds like The Congos are back at the Ark.

Review by Erik Magni

Jamaican vocal harmony group The Congos are responsible for one of the best reggae albums ever made – ‘Heart of The Congos’. It surfaced in 1977 and showed the extraordinary talents of producer and engineer Lee Perry.

A full-blown masterpiece like Heart of The Congos is naturally hard to follow-up. Maybe one or two thought The Congos would manage to do it in 2010, when the album ‘Back in the Black Ark’ was put out. This was a decent set, but no way near their debut, and felt more like a marketing gimmick.

But last year The Congos quietly dropped ‘We Nah Give Up’ – a 17 track double disc recorded and produced together with Belgian reggae rockers Pura Vida. This album is by far the best album by The Congos since their magnum opus back in the 70’s.

‘We Nah Give Up’ is the brainchild of Pura Vida’s lead singer Bregt “Braithe” De Boever, and the blueprint of the set was laid in Jamaica.

The album boasts nine ex-

cellent cuts from the Congos with lead vocals shared between Cedric Myton’s falsetto, Congo Ashanti Roy’s tenor and Watty Burnett’s baritone as well as eight equally first-rate vocals and dub-instrumentals from Pura Vida.

The atmospheric, steamy and hypnotizing Black Ark sound texture is present throughout the album. The vocals soar overhead the swirling instrumentation with sublime melodies and

unexpected arrangements.

It’s a shame this album was so poorly marketed. Had I heard it last year it would have been put on my list of best albums of 2011. Anything else would have been an outrage.

‘We Nah Give Up’ is available as a limited edition double LP from Lost Ark Music and as digital download.



Necessary Mayhem Future Cuts

Promising future for Necessary Mayhem.

Review by Erik Magni

‘Future Cuts’ is the third compilation from UK label Necessary Mayhem led by producer Curtis Lynch. It offers a mixed bag of old and new material by several familiar singers and deejays from Europe and Jamaica.

The title of the album refers to the idea of giving a glance of what’s currently happening around the label. And there are some really interesting tunes and riddims involved, telling tales of a promising future.

Most promising is the severely under recorded Jamaican singer Jahmali and his grim Blood Thirsty, on a riddim inspired by Ken Boothe’s Black Gold and Green.

Other highlights include J.C Lodge’s Way Up on a new mix of Curtis Lynch’s relick of Gussie Clark’s Rumors riddim and the four vocalist combination As Mi Forward, where Million Stylez, Etana, Busy Signal and the violently fierce



French female deejay Netna rides a particularly ultra heavy riddim. I mean, this isn’t the kind of bass line you bring home to meet your parents.

Curtis Lynch has once again proven that he is a producer

to be reckoned with and one that seems to be obsessed with relentless bass lines.

‘Future Cuts’ is currently available on vinyl. The digital download edition drops on February 14th.

Singing Melody They Call Me Mr Melody

A rotation favourite for Valentine's Day.



Review by Angus Taylor

Last year when United Reggae asked the venerable Junior Murvin which younger artists he admired he had high praise for Singing Melody - who likewise acknowledged the older man's influence on his voice. As if on cue, for 2012 the member of the harmony group L.U.S.T. has released his first solo album in ten years.

In the early 1970s singers like Jimmy Cliff, Nicky Thomas and Alton Ellis sang songs that paid tribute to American soul music. 'They Call Me Mr Melody' is a continuation of that tradition except its subject draws on the more sophisticated contemporary balladeering styles that "rough and ready" old soul purists eschew. There's

straight up 2000s R&B in the mode of an R Kelly or Calvin Harris (opener No More) post Dropleaf one-drop-pop (radio friendly single Collide) super club smooth lovers (Never Get Over You) and slick gospel (closer Call On His Name).

However, should you think Mr Melody is all about the crossover he and fellow crooner Lymie Murray remind us that he's Reggae To The Bone on an organically arranged update of Alexander Henry's Please Be True rhythm. Reality themes of family breakup and bereavement are woven into the romantic messages. He's even joined by U Roy for the jaunty Smile (not to be confused with the Daddy deejay's duet with Sandra Cross of the same name) while dancehall is catered for by the Mr Vegas-like Wi Set Di Trend.

Where Junior Murvin's most famous output was delivered in a high falsetto Singing Melody prefers a slightly lower register. But we do hear a brief demonstration of his upper range in the intro to his combination Must Be The Girl with the earthy yet sugary dancehall singer Stacious. His voice has an opulence and power

that cuts through the studio gloss laid by Jamaican who's who producers Donovan Germain, Dave Kelly, Fatta Marshall and Skatta Burrell. Even synth brass and strings are made to sound fat, rich and silky as the real horns and tree percussion in their hands.

For fans of the intersection between Jamaican lovers music and 21st century R&B this SHEM/Fateyes partnered, VP distributed release will be a rotation favourite for Valentine's Day.

Jah Sun Battle The Dragon

Jah Sun's best yet.

Review by Erik Magni

To me, the Californian reggae was for a longtime synonymous with ska/punk bands such as Sublime and Reel Big Fish. But that's of course far from the truth.

There is a thriving reggae scene in both southern and northern California with artists, bands and producers like Messenjah Selah, Blaak Lung, Lustre Kings, Dub Vision, Groundation and Itation Records.

And then there is the former teenage rebel and street thug Jah Sun, who got a conscious awakening when he heard Bob Marley for the first time.

His third album 'Battle the Dragon' - and the follow-up to the 2010-released EP 'Gravity' - is produced by a host of mostly European producers and features - just like his previous outings - several combinations. This time guests include Gentleman, Alborosie, J Boog, Peetah Morgan, Stevie Culture and Perfect.

'Battle the Dragon' collects 15 tracks of up-tempo contem-



porary roots reggae with influences from latin, such as Amoré, a tune that resembles Stevie Wonder's Pastime Paradise, and dancehall, where the auto-tune drenched title track, and the pulsating Alborosie-combination Ganja Don, are the most obvious examples.

But these influences aside - 'Battle the Dragon' is European modern one drop, and if you

are familiar with the pounding and engaging production style of Bost & Bim and Special Delivery you'll get the picture.

This is Jah Sun's best album to date, and you ought to check out Jah Children, which echoes of the scorching Diseases riddim, the hammering Plastic City and the radio-friendly Where is Your Love.

Augustus Pablo Message Music

Message Music an acquired taste.

Review by Erik Magni

‘Message Music’ collects 16 dubs and instrumentals produced by Augustus Pablo spanning roughly from the mid 80’s to the early 90’s. The tunes are rootsy and partly digital, partly with live instrumentation.

This is the third compilation dedicated to Augustus Pablo out on Pressure Sounds. And it’s the least accessible yet. It’s ethereal, meditative and unique as label manager Pete Holdsworth put it in the booklet.

Several riddims are familiar. The reworkings offered are harsh and potent. Ammagid-deon Dub on Jackie Mittoo’s Drum Song is one example, the stripped version of Java another.

This brilliant album sheds light on a previously somewhat neglected period of Augustus Pablo’s career. There hasn’t been anyone like him in reggae music since he passed in 1999. It was too early as this album clearly shows. But his music lives on thanks to great labels such as Pressure Sounds.



I-Octane Crying To The Nation

I-Octane considers himself a brand as well as an artist – and this record maintains his brand values.



Review by Angus Taylor

Thus far, grainy-voiced singer-deejay I-Octane has built his upwardly-mobile career trajectory on a mass of simultaneously-rotated singles, periodic EPs, cross-brand multiplatform tie-ins and explosive live shows. Finally his official debut album (not counting Japanese Koyashi Kaikyū release ‘Thank You Father’) is ready - having been completed too late for the original September 2011 issue date.

Overseen by Shaggy impresario Robert Livingstone and distributed by VP records, it’s very much a “proper album” in that it most of it was laid down in an intensive one month period. It’s also a fairly lavish event with high production values, fusing digital dancehall synths with live instruments (often played by members of C-

Sharp band) to create a hybrid sound suited to I-Octane’s wide-scoping biddable vocal talents. Livingstone and Paul Cashflow Mitchell take the lion’s share of producers credits, with engineers including marquee names Shane “Jukebox” Brown and Tippy of I Grade Records. With his multiple backers (Livingstone’s Scikron Entertainment, VP, and Destine Media) and big budget (in these low fi times) the business-savvy Byiome Muir must know the pressure is on for this to be a success.

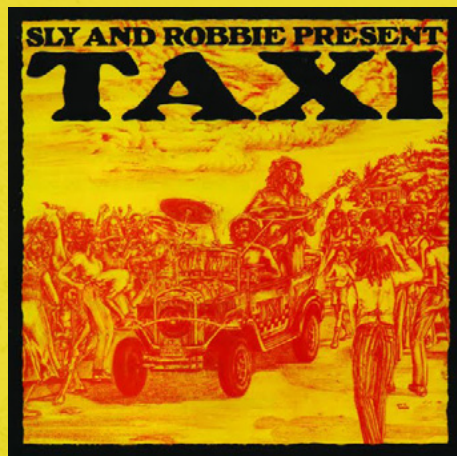
And in artistic terms, for a debut, it is. A big strength is that - bar proven hits like Lose A Friend and unusually candid herb anthem Puff It - much of this material is fresh. Yet despite being recorded under the clock little feels thrown together. Roots, pop hooks, and cyber dancehall elements are blended in a way that, oddly, recalls Gentleman’s last longplayer ‘Diversity’ in overall sound. The one-drop reggae-based tracks are particularly strong. First single, the Christopher Birch helmed L.O.V.E. Y.O.U. combines catchy sweetness and crafted simple lyrics with a propulsive mid-70s-inspired drumbeat belied by its slushy intro. All We Need Is Love (produced by DJ Frass) with friend and tour-mate Tarrus Riley

is arguably one of the greatest message songs either man has committed to hard drive. Dean Fraser’s Vanity Will Come and TJ Records’ System A Beat Them are tightly wound minor key roots lamentations of quality - even if fans of pre dancehall reggae who refuse to accept the latter’s significance may struggle with their, at times, futuristic instrumentation. As dancehall artists such as Busy Signal and Mr Vegas are making one drop albums, I-Octane offers a halfway house, with some tracks sitting so neatly in between that “Jamaican music” is the best description to hand. The pace sags in places (perhaps trio of ballads Once More, Master’s Plan and Lose A Friend could have been broken up) but everything feels part of a cohesive whole.

I-Octane considers himself a brand as well as an artist – and this record maintains his brand values. Whether he conquers the globe (as the name of his production company suggests) or reaches status akin to Bob Marley or Shaggy (as he hopes) rests on the vicissitudes of fate. But ‘Crying To The Nation’ has enough memorable songs to send him further on his way.

Various Artists Sly and Robbie Present Taxi

Message Music an acquired taste.



Review by Karl Pearson

Both Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare had been slowly establishing themselves separately in Jamaica as professional musicians, Sly drumming for Skin, Flesh and Bones and Robbie playing bass with The Aggrovators. When they both finally got together as part of The Revolutionaries, for the newly created Channel One studio, they found that they shared very similar influences and ideas about mu-

sic and so joined forces and went on to become arguably the best riddim players and makers out of the island ever.

In 1979 the 'Riddim Twins' started their own TAXI label to showcase their creations and enlisted many top reggae artists to supply vocals. 'Sly & Robbie Present Taxi' is a collection of songs from that initial start in '79 to the albums original release in '81. Lyrically most of the songs here tend to be on the softer side of reggae with many concerning love and emotions, such as Jimmy Riley's My Woman's Love, the Wailing Souls catchy Sweet Sugar Plum and classics Oh What A Feeling by Gregory Isaacs and Sitting And Watching from Dennis Brown. On the more rootsy side are the likes of Black Uhuru with World Is Africa, Junior Delgado's haunting tale of Fort Augustus the notori-

ous offshore female only Jamaican penitentiary plus there is a lighter side from General Echo with some dancehall chat on the amusing Drunken Master.

The album also serves as something of a gateway in to the changes that were about to happen in reggae with electronic touches here and there plus Sly's use of syndrums. This collection of songs, with the exception of instrumental Hot You're Hot which is one of those two steppin', clubby, reggae, soul concoctions, seem to have stood the test of time well and not become too dated.

Released on CD as part of Spectrum's 'Originals' range, there are no frills just the original album and art work; it's great to see this somewhat seminal album finally being made available again.

Various Artists Niney Presents Deep Roots Observer Style

Four crucial Niney productions reissued- and this record maintains his brand values.



Review by Erik Magni

There have been several well-compiled compilations dedicated to Jamaican producer Winston "Niney" Holness aka The Observer. 'Niney The Observer - Roots with Quality', 'Blood & Fire - Hit Sounds From The Observer Station 1970-1978' and 'Observation Station' should belong in any record collection.

17 North Parade – a subsidiary of reggae giant VP Records – has now issued a new box set dedicated to this hard-edged and uncompromising producer.

'Deep Roots Observer Style' includes three previously released albums – Dennis Brown's 'Deep Down', The Heptones' 'Better Days' and its dub companion 'Observation of Life Dub' – along with a compilation of I Roy singles titled 'The Observer Book of I Roy'.

Niney got his big break in the early 70's with roots masterpieces such as Max Romeo's Rasta Bandwagon and The Coming of Jah as well as his own haunting Blood & Fire.

His production style is the essence of rebel music and is often sparse with a brimstone and fire kind of feeling.

This style suited the late Dennis Brown very well and some of his best material was recorded for Niney. So Long Rastafari and Open the Gate are two sublime vocals included on the 'Deep Down' set, actually one of Dennis Brown's earliest roots albums.

The Heptones' 'Better Days' has Naggo Morris instead of Leroy Sibbles on lead vocals and was originally put out in 1978. It contained ten tracks – among them the sublime God Bless the Children – but this version is strengthened by five roots anthems. Through the Fire I Come and Temptation, Botheration and Tribulation are two of the best conscious tunes ever voiced by the trio.

The dub counterpart to 'Better Days' is a lethal drum and bass deconstruction and even though Niney is most well-known for producing singers rather than deejays he managed to capture I Roy in his essence with tunes such as Jah Come Here and slack Sister Maggie Breast.

'Deep Roots Observer Style' was released on February 13th and the CD version includes an eight page fully illustrated booklet with liner notes courtesy of Harry Wise.

Gappy Ranks Cookies

Cookies is a high grade package of modern reggae mastery.



Review by Irie Dole

Leading reggae and dancehall artist Gappy Ranks from the UK loves his cookies. But these cookies aren't for eating. During his last tour through California, USA, Gappy Ranks was introduced to the "girl scout cookies" cannabis strain, and his musical inspiration has never been the same.

The 'Cookies' EP, available on iTunes on February 24th, features six herbally inspired

tracks released on Gappy Ranks' Hot Coffee Music label, delivering five previously unreleased bangers from a variety of leading international producers.

Several tunes thematically revolve around California. West Coast carries a pounding one drop bass line and is sure to be the anthem this summer from San Diego to Bellingham or any other West Coast you might be on. In Wundah's mid-tempo dancehall tune Dah Herb Deh Gappy declares his internationality by telling us that "I'm a Amsterdam, I'm a Californian, I'm a ganjaman" and has already been an instant hit in Northern California.

Another Cali tribute is I Wanna Get High, where Gappy displays his versatility in lyrical gymnastics over a new age riddim from Special Delivery.

In Peace by Xillent G again shows the diversity in Gappy's delivery and message and tells of the social and medical benefits of the herb, and calls out to the world leaders for legalization.

In the bouncy Throw Mi Corn riddim remake Maddest Ting from Mustang/Hot Coffee Music, Gappy asks "Which herbalist have the maddest ting a road?", while he in the fast paced, in your face thumper, packed full of bass and laced with distortion rock guitar Herbs proclaims "I'm an herbalist for life!"

Any way you break it up Cookies is a high grade package of modern reggae mastery, and Gappy Ranks continues to satisfy the demand for quality music all over the globe.

Roots Nation Temperature's Risin'

Roots from the past brought to the here and now for a new generation of reggae fans to love.

Review by Karl Pearson

Initially released via iTunes in August last year Roots Nation's album 'Temperature's Risin' has only really just started to make waves and stamp its mark in the reggae arena.

This band, that formed in 2003 and hails from New Hampshire in the USA, are trying to bring roots reggae back to basics on a driving engine of drum and bass, a steady fast trio of brass offset by melodic guitar, keys and percussion with three part vocal harmonies rounding it all off. They are heavily influenced by Studio 1 sound and guitarist Andy Bassford even has two guitars that have in his words "recorded countless hits for the likes of Dennis Brown, Horace Andy and Burning Spear to name but a few" plus he owns a Danelectro amp that once belonged to Coxsone himself. So with all this going for them have they actually achieved this? Well the answer is simply yes and in bucket loads. Production is clean and understated allowing each instrument to hold its own ground and help create some genuinely timeless, easy flowing grooves. Roots reggae is obviously the core founda-

tion here, but they are not afraid to spice things up with a bit of Ska shuffle or R&B blended in on pacier numbers like It's Serious and Only Human which features some very deft guitar work from Mr Bassford. The lyrics cover familiar topics like sufferation, and combating the system with truth and rights but not from purely a Rasta point of view but rather keeping it all relevant and on a level that people globally can relate to. Lead singer and trombonist Greg Pearlman delivers these lyrics in a soft, yet gruff and at times almost spoken manner that can be quite plaintive, especially on Shark Attack as he sings of watching out for the bad things and people that can come your way in life. To offset his dourness Julie DiOrio provides some shimmering accents that find the two complimenting each other much like sugar and spice.

The vocal side of the album finishes unfortunately with two of the weakest cuts in Chalice of Love with its rapped lyrics and Minutiae, a song that is lyrically good as it focuses on the small details of life and how they can have great effect, but for me leans to heavily on a synthesized sound that



gives it a dated feel. This is then followed by four dubs that add echo and snippets of the original vocal here and there, but where the understated production that works well with the vocal cuts perhaps a bit more flamboyance on these would really make them stand out on their own. Roots Nation are without doubt a group of very talented musicians. Not all of the songs here work for me, but these small negatives don't take away the fact that the bigger picture is of a good, solid roots album that takes heed of the past and brings it right into the here and now for a new generation of reggae fans to love.

The CD 'Temperature's Risin' can be purchased directly from the rarerootsrecords.com or on the Roots Nation website.

Winston Jarrett in Paris

Photos of Winston Jarrett's live performance in Paris.

Reggae veteran Winston Jarrett attended the New Morning in Paris on January 7th on the occasion of Ethiopian Christmas.

Opening act Messagana from France did a strong set, and Winston Jarrett glowed with charisma as he revisited his classic roots reggae and rub a dub.

A special big up to the Moon Band that backed both artists.

Report and photos by Franck Blanquin



Shaggy and Friends



Shaggy's charity concert took place on January 7th featuring Tarrus Riley, Cocoa Tea, Beres Hammond, Gyptian, Stephen and Damian Marley, Lauryn Hill and more.

Held on the lawns of Kings House, the 3rd staging of The Shaggy & Friends Charity concert whose objective this year was to raise funds to help the construction of a 15-bed cardiac intensive care unit at the Bustamante Hospital for Children in St Andrew, was a huge success.

The philanthropic series, which is the brainchild and special project of Grammy award winning

artiste, Orville "Shaggy" Burrell got off to wonderful start with a silent action in the platinum area; a section reserved for the highest tiered seats. Items up for bid included a track shoe and jersey from Olympic record sensation Usain Bolt and a top designer watch valued at over 5,000 US dollars. Patrons in the platinum section also had the distinct privilege of being treated to succulent shrimp, other tasty local treats and a selection of premium brand wine.

One of the most touching elements of the night happened when the crowd shared in the moment the tiny patients of The Bustamante Children's hospital where able to watch the first few performances of the night via live broadcast, courtesy of telecommunications provider L.I.M.E. The joy on their faces as they got to be a part of the event was very apparent, and moving.

The performances started at 8pm sharp and from strength each act built on the other. Romain Virgo, Assassin, Half Pint, Shaggy & Maxi Priest, Mr. Vegas, Denise Williams, Eve, the Marley brothers Stephen and Damian "Junior Gong" had the crowd almost eating out of the palms of their hands. Cocoa Tea, who has been blazing the trail everywhere he has been over the last year, turned the place out as well. Surprise act Beres Hammond delivered three to four songs and left the audience screaming for more.

Special guest Lauryn Hill closed the show but her set was a bit of an anti-climax. Patrons who had come really expectant and excited to see her left underwhelmed. Her lengthy band change and her constant complaining to her backing band about the audio levels detracted from her performance.

All in all when the curtains came down, millions of dollars were raised for the Bustamante Children's Hospital. All the artistes who gave their services for free made it a night to remember.

Report and photos by Steve James



Julian Marley and James Malcolm in Miami

Live performance for the Omeriah Malcolm Music Foundation on December 23th.

December 23, 2011 was an enchanting night for the Omeriah Malcolm Music Foundation (OMMF) to host their first annual charitable fundraiser at the lush botanical Pinecrest Gardens in Pinecrest Florida. As we were seated in the Banyan Bowl amphitheater, the whistling of crickets and the distant serene sound of rushing water confirmed to all that this was a magical night we would never forget. Presenting sponsor, host and Pinecrest mayor, Cindy Learner greeted us all and informed us about James “Jimmy. B” Malcolm and his OMMF foundation. James, accomplished pianist, composer and younger cousin of Reggae Legend Bob Marley, founded this non-profit organization in 2009 to provide music education and equipment for underprivileged children in Addis Ababa Ethiopia, South Florida, Jamaica and several other countries. Arming us with this information, Cindy welcomed us to the show. African chanting and the heavy pounding of the drum started the show which brought a very sacred feeling to the audience. Dancers Chipo Afamefuna, Anita McBeth and Derron Linyear came on and danced along to the rhythmic drum appearing to tell a story with their bodies as James joined in on grand piano. Instantaneously, the EBT choir joined the stage. At this point, there was an overwhelming feeling that we were all invited as guests to a special holy gathering as Jimmy accompanied the choir. It was truly a moment of upliftment while a joyous, soul stirring version of His Eye Is On The Sparrow was performed by Valerie Parham and Francine Ealey Murphy. Jimmy made it his mission to allow his fingers to dance along the keys of the piano while the choir clapped and harmonized in praise in this instance of unscripted worship.

The heavy anointing that filled the venue was the perfect blessing for Julian Marley to come and entertain us. It was very surprising when the OMMF orchestra assembled in front of us to join Julian, Jimmy and the choir on stage. WOW! A choir? and

orchestra? fused with Marley reggae? The blend was perfect as each section was a compliment to the other. Julian center stage with his guitar was filled with determination as he sang Lion in the Morning from his first album. During Get up, Stand up Julian decided to show his passion for the music using his hands to conduct the orchestra, putting a hand to his ear for the crowd to encourage the young musicians while strumming along with his guitar.

Mellow Mood showcased Julian’s growth as a performer and singer reminding us of his father moving and gesticulating very similarly. Three Little Birds kicked the place into a higher gear with a version that seemed to be a rock and roll revival. It was obviously loved by Julian very much as he stepped into the audience, sharing the microphone for the crowd to sing along. Looking around on the stage as Julian sang Just in Time we all noticed ethiopian artist Merid Tafesse creating an art piece, painting along with the music. At this point, Julian had an energy that couldn’t be ignored, singing Rainbow Country and One Love he took hold of the audience and projected his energy out to us. Everyone in the amphitheater were on their feet dancing and singing along to the reggae hits. It was during his encore Exodus that he decided to have fun with Jimmy B and the orchestra as he bent down and began tinkering on the keyboard alongside Jimmy and strolling over to the string and horn sections of the orchestra bringing the mic along with him as if to amplify the vibe he was feeling. At the end of the show there were huge smiles from everyone on stage - showing a gratitude that couldn’t go un-noticed.

In the end, this was an amazing evening, showing that nothing is impossible, it was fully entertaining and full of purpose for an amazing cause, the love of music. We can’t wait for the surprises in store for the next event.

Report by Sarah Soutar
Photos by Gail Zucker





Shinehead meets Rocker T in San Francisco

Unsung Hero of Reggae schools Nighty-Nine Point Nine.

San Francisco reggae fans got a special treat January 28, 2012, when local promoter and DJ Irie Dole brought Shinehead and Rocker T to the Rockit Room.

Brooklyn born singjay Rocker T currently lives in Oakland and has been closely involved in the Occupy movement. Besides feeding the protestors, his song Nighty-Nine Point Nine, has become their official anthem. Check it on youtube.

He shared his sane views of the protest with us along with his consistently positive and uplifting songs such as Jah Soljah. Clearly Rocker T has been schooled by innovative artists that came before him, including Shinehead.

With a career that began in 1980 on the New York dancehall circuit, Shinehead is one of the originators of hip hop/reggae mix. His classic songs include Raggamuffin, Golden Touch, Rough & Rugged, and Strive (check out the video of him performing this at Sunsplash 1991).

Energetic, dynamic and humorous, Shinehead demands contact with his audience. Never missing a beat, he jumped off the stage several times and sang as he walked around the dance floor, hugging, questioning, and engaging. Towards the end of his set he called individuals to the stage, including a man who flew out from New York just to see him, and asked each in turn to tell the audience how long they've know him, impressing on us all that he has been in the business for a very long time, is well loved, yet is clearly under-appreciated today. On the small stage, surrounded by Rocker T, Irie Dole, and a host of musicians and fans, Shinehead basked in the love, not letting us forget for a moment that he is one of the true unsung heroes of reggae. Music lovers, know your history. Reggae is a continually evolving art form with deep and varied roots. Much respect to Shinehead.

Report and photos by Lee Abel



Back To Africa Festival 2012 (Chapter 1)

The first staging of the Ariwa Back to Africa Festival was held on January 19-26th in Batukuntu, Gambia.

The event attracted several UK artistes, European reggae bands and sound system selectors. The week long festival was filled with various activities which included workshops, a beauty contest, concerts and a beach party. Among some of the highlights were performances by John McLean, Swiss band Najavibes, conscious DJ Macka B, Sister Audrey, Tipa Irie and one of UK's finest rhythm section duos Mafia and Fluxy. Swiss sound system selector Asher Selector delivered some heavy dubs and selection. One night of the festival saw many of Ariwa's top artiste delivering some of their hits. Sandra Cross, John Mclean, Leroy Simmonds and Earl 16 all represented the Ariwa label well. The final night saw Frankie Paul backed by Mafia and Fluxy tearing the place down and bringing the crowd to their feet. Though not advertised locally, the attendance progressively increased every night as the event drew patrons from the surrounding communities. With some minor adjustments to the stage production, the Back to Africa Festival will in a few years be one of the premier events on Africa continent.

**Report and Photos by
Steve James**



Back To Africa Festival 2012 (Chapter 2)

After Steve James report about the festival that took place in Gambia in January, enjoy a second one by David Katz with Aude-Emilie Dorion as photographer.

The idea of going 'Back To Africa' is one that has resonated throughout reggae music from its very inception. For most black people in the Diaspora, an awareness of the African Motherland has been a primary source of inspiration, and many artists and reggae fans alike have long dreamt of returning to the land of their ancestors; even European fans and music makers with enough historical and cultural awareness may hearken to make a pilgrimage to the continent that is undoubtedly the Cradle of Humanity. And for around 400 music-minded souls from the UK (plus a smattering from Europe, the US and South America), an experience of Africa was but a distant dream, until the Mad Professor offered the chance to make it a reality.

Since Professor's Ariwa stable has been pushing the boundaries of reggae, dub and lover's rock from his south London base since the late 1970s, it makes sense that the 'Back To Africa' festival would result from his vision. Since reggae and dancehall are heavily popular on the continent, holding a reggae festival in Africa makes

perfect sense, so something like this has been long overdue. And despite some of the teething problems that naturally resulted from the inaugural issue of what will hopefully be an annual event, it felt like a real blessing to be present.

The Gambia is Africa's smallest nation, a sliver of a country that runs along two sides of a massive river, surrounded otherwise by the larger Senegal. It is a truly beautiful place, alive with all manner of bird life, and the people who live there are incredibly friendly. There has long been a Jamaican presence in the country as well, helping reggae to become more entrenched. Yet, the place is not entirely utopian: it is ruled by an autocrat who seized power in 1994, and is incredibly impoverished, despite being a well-established package holiday destination. Nevertheless, its mild climate meant that each night of the festival, its programme could be presented under the stars, in the small village of Batukunku, close to Prof's Gambian home base.

With a week's full programme of events, some days were bound to be better than others, and although last-minute line-up changes brought some disappointment, there were several outstanding performances that must be highlighted here. Following the opening ceremony on Friday evening, with local dignitaries present

and fantastic traditional dance moves by the staff of a local nursery school, Tippa Irie gave an upbeat performance, with thematic discs spun afterward by Sugar Dread from London's Vibes FM. The next night, Mac-ka B had the crowd entirely entranced, delivering a great set with full live backing. Sunday afternoon saw a beautiful session, held right on the beach, with veteran DJ Tony Williams playing feel-good music; then, back at the venue, there was an unusual dub set by producer McPullish from Austin, Texas, and an even more uncommon live performance by the Argentinian dub band, Nairobi, mixed down by Professor's son, Joe. The next night gave us the Ariwa showcase, PA style, with Earl 16, Cedric Myton from the Congos, John McLean, Sister Audrey and Sandra Cross; the roots music went down very well, and even though the lover's rock singers were on fine form, the locals seemed a bit baffled by the style. Tuesday night's highlight was a live dub set from Mafia and Fluxy, playing in combination with Black Steel, but the cream of the crop was saved for the closing night, when, following some rough performances by Gambian hopefuls, Frankie Paul took the stage to deliver a thrilling performance that was greatly appreciated by all.

With afternoon debates on culture and history, plus optional excursions to Kunte Kinte's

birthplace, wildlife spots and places of historical and cultural importance, there really was a lot to take in and experience. The local food was delightful as well, once you knew where to go (think of grilled barracuda with tomato rice, or beans and sweet potato leaves stewed in palm oil, not to mention the heavily fermented palm wine, known locally as Jungle Juice).

Of course, a festival of this duration, held in a country with so little infrastructure, was bound to encounter a few difficulties: certain hotel rooms were decidedly below standard, and some attendees complained that getting to and from the venue was an ordeal (the distance was far, the free shuttle bus did not run to schedule, and sometimes drivers demanded petrol money).

Nevertheless, such hurdles simply increase the chances of future editions running more smoothly. This is a festival with enormous potential, and the beauty of the Gambia, with its exceptional setting in West Africa, meant that this experience was an extra special one that will surely remain in the hearts of those in attendance for many years to come.

**Report by David Katz
Photos by Aude-Emilie Dorion**



Rebel Salute 2012

The festival took part on January 14th, 2012 at Port Kaiser's Sports Arena, Alligator Pond, St. Bess, Jamaica.

Golden Salute

"I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality.... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word." ~Martin Luther King, Jr.

Although, music soothes the savage beast, reggae music, is the voice of the people, breaking through endless barriers of truth while seeking righteousness, hope, faith and unity. The truthful impact of reggae music today is recognizably diffused, producing a sense of disillusionment and frustration, especially with those who experienced the foundation years. And yet, every January, there remains a golden globe of consciousness that unites true believers into a sense of a brighter musical tomorrow. Tony Rebel, producer and creator of Rebel Salute, remains the harbinger of good will and promotes a salute to reggae gold nearly as bright as the thousands of lighters flickering throughout in the darkness of night.

Rebel Salute, held every January in Alligator Pond, never fails to reinforce that strong messages of 'unarmed truth' paired with 'unconditional love' can make a significant difference far greater than the many politicians who pontificate empty promises to the suffering masses. This collaboration of musical art demonstrates the continual affirmation by those near and far who believe in the adage "who feels it, knows it." Rebel Salute continues to bring together a magical mix of reggae artists and media from across the world to document a twelve hour stage show perfect in peace, love and creativity.

Golden Touch

This year marked Tony Rebel's fiftieth birthday and Jamaica's fiftieth year of Independence. The line-up was as brilliant as the Olympic Torch. The night easily transitioned to morning against the echoing sound of vuvuzela horns picking up in pace as the most highly featured artists arrived on stage. Talented offspring were an observable feature including a special birthday tribute to Tony Rebel by his twelve children. Tony, a proud Rastaman by faith, believes strongly in the strength of family and incorporates their support into the musical works of Flames Productions. Their talents range a broad spectrum from singing to accounting. His son and daughter, Abatau and Davi Rebel

took the stage as performers, as well as Max Romeo's two younger sons. Other featured artists included Cen'C Love and Asadenaki, Damian and Stephen Marley, two of Stephen's sons and Gramps Morgan, all children of well known foundation artists. The amazing level of second and third generation talent lends even further to a golden future of reggae.

Golden Opportunity

Rebel Salute proudly scours the island and offers upcoming artists an opportunity to showcase their works. Knowing that some of these artists will be tomorrow's brilliant stars is reason enough to arrive early. The night began with searing performances by Teranchilla, Abatau & Davi Rebel, Anthony Selassie, and Chronixx. All of these artists bring a maturity and inspiration to reggae music. Chronixx, born and raised by a musical father, chanted about the days of slavery while remarking "dem nuh care about de poor people dem." He further ignited the night with messages of truth and rights. Anthony Selassie solidly represented the pure definition of consciousness and social activism. Not only are his songs highlighted by a sweet rootsy voice, his lyrical content is powerful and urgent. Anthony Selassie, promoting his new cd "Rising Above" has a commanding stage presence united with musical substance

Although reggae has long been accused of not giving women artists the respect and honor they deserve, Tony, a strong supporter of women in the industry, assured the Rebel Salute crowd a golden peek at some of reggae's finest female singers. Queen Ifrica, a glowing mother to be, sparked a sea of red, gold and green flags as she poignantly emphasized female empowerment with songs such as "Daddy" and "Lioness on the Rise." Jah 9, dub poet, singer-songwriter and social activist reached out to the youth, suggesting the use of lyrical weapons instead of violence and guns. Nelly Stharre, hailing from the island of Dominica, captured remarkable revolutionary essence with "Rise My Sisters" and the plea for peace and love. Her upcoming cd entitled "Lion Queen" is bound to break new barriers for female royalty. Cen'C Love, daughter of Bunny Wailer, captured the aura of female elegance, arriving in an outstanding white silky dress adorned with delicate cowrie shells looking very much like a royal Greek goddess. Accented by her trademark black guitar, Cen-C Love educated the women in the crowd to always be themselves and not let society promote behaviors of self destruction. In a similar vein, with brother Asadenaki, "Starving Artist" talks to the importance of keeping the message strong without relenting to compromise.

Golden Past and Present

Foundation reggae was

effectively punctuated by a host of legendary singers including Max Romeo, Errol Dunkley, Yami Bolo, Edi Fitzroy, General Trees, Leroy Gibbons, Admiral Bailey, Johnny Osbourne, Johnny Clarke and Eric Donaldson. Johnny Osbourne returned to the stage after a fifteen years sabbatical. These artists defined the essence of reggae roots bringing Port Kaiser's to their feet dancing and singing, embracing vintage gold as a tribute to the immortality of roots reggae music. It's "Sipple Out Deh" and "War Inna Babylon" launched Max Romeo's set into a high fever of participation. The history of reggae unfolded like a treasure chest of pirate's bounty.

Tarrus Riley, Luciano, Maxi Priest, Stephen and Damian Marley, Capleton, Gramps, Romain Virgo, Mikey Spice and Duane Stephenson provided a solid rock of current reggae favorites acknowledging that reggae talent continues to abound through the magic of Rebel Salute, arguably one of Jamaica's greatest stage shows. The crowd literally went wild when Damian Marley came out of the shadows to join his brother, Stephen onstage. Jamaican favorite, Romain Virgo, overcome with emotion, released tears down his cheeks, visibly embraced by the message he was delivering, a cathartic moment for both artist and audience.

Cali P, Prophecy, Iba MaHr, Jah Cutta, Jahdore, Lejahni, like lions in the jungle, canvassed the stage while cultivating new fans across the island. The mix

of artists is a true testament that reggae music can reign powerful in the fight against evil. Consciousness can prevail above all and humanity and can rise above the closed minded box that society uses to imprison the minds of the people.

Golden Rule

Tony Rebel has clearly demonstrated year after year that Rebels rule.

Rastafari lives deep in the hearts and minds of those musically fighting the societal system. It is simple, one must do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It is imperative that those who have the power to offer support to the arts and development of their countries, wake up and embrace the reality right in front of them. Promote and educate the youth by giving them a constructive outlet for their emotions. Invest in the artists who so eloquently frame the history of a nation. Black gold is an irreplaceable natural resource especially in Caribbean countries where the people mine their words and wisdom into crucial art forms shaping history while defining the misguided actions of governments and power.

Report and photos by Sista Irie







Singing Melody Album Launch

Singing Melody launched his new album last month in Kingston, Jamaica.

Everton Hardware, better known as Singing Melody launched his album dubbed 'They call me Mr Melody' on January 13th at PLUG n PLAY at Joonkanoo Lounge, Wyndham. It featured performances by Lymie Murray, L.U.S.T and U-Roy.

Singing Melody's 13 track album was released on January 17, 2012, so look out for it.

Report and photos by Ishangophotos



Trench Town Rock Concert 2012

The event took place in Kingston on Saturday February 4th.

Trench Town Rock Concert was recently held at the Vince Lawrence Park which is located right across the street from the former home of Bob Marley. The area has produced some of Jamaica's great reggae icons such as Bob Marley himself, Alton Ellis and many others. The venue was filled to capacity and many tourists who are here to join in the celebration of Bob Marley's 67th birthday and Reggae Month celebrations could be seen. The event was sponsored by telecoms provider LIME and featured a number of artistes. The show started at approximately 7 p.m. with several upcoming acts and shifted into high gear in the wee hours of the morning. Tarrus Riley was the first big act to move the crowd with songs like Lion Paw, She's Royal and Shaka Zulu.

Brian Thompson (formerly of Brian and Tony Gold), Romain Virgo and Cen'C Love delivered splendid performances. Kymani Marley was the first Marley to hit the stage followed by Julian, Stephen and Damian Marley who appeared simultaneously. Though a bit short, their performance was charged with high energy. Things further slipped into higher gear when the Marley's invited Junior Reid, Capleton and Jah Cure to perform. The show was brought to an end when the law enforcement officers indicated it was time to bring the event to a closure.

Report and photos by Steve James



I-Wayne, Fantan Mojah and Ijahman Levi in Paris

Check these photos of the show at Cabaret Sauvage.

Veteran singer Ijahman Levi is currently on tour in Europe. He was joined by I-Wayne, Fantan Mojah and House Of Riddim on selected dates. They were in Paris on February 12th.

Report and photos by Franck Blanquin



UNITED REGGAE

MAGAZINE

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

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

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