



Burning Spear

Reggae - New Wave's Roots are showing

Walking down the road with the pistol in your waist,
Johnny you're too bad
Walking down the road with the machete in your waist,
Johnny you're too bad,
Just a-robbing and a-stabbing, and a-looting and a-shooting,
You know you're too bad.
One of these days you may hear a voice say, come.
Where you gonna run to?
You're gonna run to the law for rest, where there will be no more run.

Slickers
"Hey maan you heard the next big ting, tis reggae maan ... or have yor heard it all before?" Well it seems you probably have but I wouldn't let it put you off, after all Marley's next, *Kaya*, will be the plant's first platinum reggae album, and the rasta prophet will be just that much closer to reaching into your hearts and heads. And he'll be taking the punks (are there any left?) with him. As Don Letts, the rasta D.J. from the renowned London punk palace, the Roxy Club, says: "Like, to me, the reggae thing and the punk thing ... it's all the same f***kin' thing. Just the black version and the white version. The kids are singing about change, they wanna do away with the establishment. Same thing the niggers are takin' about, 'Chant down Babylon', it's the same thing."

And now punk's been sold, or enveloped, by the major record companies of the world, the companies that inspired the rebellion against the boring old farts grown fat, or thin, that punk sought to squeeze. Even Tim Blanks in a recent letter from London refers to "punk's dying embers".
So ...

Johnny Rotten's new band is a reggae outfit. Elvis Costello's had his roots reggae hit. The Clash recorded Junior Marvin's "Police And Thieves." And everyone knows Patti Smith's affliction with the holy land ... Ethiopia.

What the white boys lose to the white bosses, and coke in the pocket, the black man needs but knows better than to take ... unless it's on his terms ... and dinner at Sadi's isn't one of them. So white rage is just in vain cause it can't hit home ... it just revolves up it's own arse ... sucks it's own cock.

So ...
Reggae's not the next big thing ... it's only a big thing. Just take a listen to the pathetic, if understandable, selection of reggae elpees available. Big Bob and the Wailers. Seven albums on release now and all well above the average dross. Toots and the Maytals. *Funky Kingston* remains the one. Burning Spear. The ghost of black retribution with a vengeance. *Marcus Garvey, Man From The Hills, Dry And Heavy*, and now *Live!* Jimmy Cliff and company's *The Harder They Come* is essential buying. Bunny Wailer's *Blackheart Man* is great. Peter Tosh's two albums are also interesting. And yes ... *Jimmy Cliff Live* is a ranking disc.

But ...
Where are the other reggae artists now on the scene via the English rock press. Where are The Heptones whose *Nightfood* and *Party Time* are classic albums in the vocal harmony tradition. These guys, Leroy Sibbles, Earl Morgan and Barry Llewellyn sing the pants off any ... any ... soul group. Just grab a listen to their version of the Four Tops "Baby I Need Your Loving" off *Nightfood*. Where is Dennis Brown. Where is Junior Marvin's *Police & Thieves*? (Marvin is now in the Wailers). Culture's *When Two Seven's Clash?* Dub records?

The list of reggae artists now making waves among the punks is a long one. Asward (currently being produced by Eno). The Meditations. Joe Gibbs. Big Youth. Gregory Issacs. The Ethiopians. Dillinger. John Holt. And the bands in residence that are forging a distinct U.K. reggae: Steel Pulse, Matumbi, Black Slate.

What reggae is doing is saying and playing the beat of the bad street. The street you and I never have to live in. The street that provokes a response in music that the rich and decadent "stars" simply cannot attain.

So ...
Damn near every current album, be it from L.A., New York, Manchester, Sydney or for that matter Auckland, has a reggae track ... or tracks. From Warren Zevon to Nina Simone, from Ray Charles to Wet Willie. Reggae

So ...
What's happenin' ...?
Reggae!
Roger Jarrett

for all you vinyl freaks ...



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