

Shock black bubble downbeat bouncing

Rockwise tumbledown sound music

Foot drop find drum blood story

Bass history is a moving is a hurting black story ...

(Linton Kwesi Johnson 'Reggae Sounds')



The Cool Ruler,
Gregory Isaacs.

Hey, wha'appen? Suddenly the Well Dread fraternity is dis ya country is alone no more. After some three summers in the wilderness, we are again welcome in the record shops. Now, if we could just get

mainstream radio to show some interest ...

But who knows, that may yet come. Certainly, the major record companies have begun to respond to the rebirth of interest in reggae. Virgin have released their excellent *Massive* compilation and are promising a UB40 dub work, plus

the LP by Lovers Rock Specialist Maxi Priest. Jayrem have released the very fine Gregory IS-SACS/Dennis Brown collaboration *Judge Not* and are also promising more, while Festival, who have access to just about the finest reggae catalogue outside JA, are weighing in with the *Island Reggae Greats* series, brought out in Britain in association with Red Stripe beer. Only three of the series have been pressed locally, because Festival Australia is still indifferent to reggae, but the rest are being imported. You gotta be quick (the LKJ comp sold out instantly, but cassettes are still available in some Auckland shops), but the prices are better-than-average and the product overall is of a high standard.

Some of these albums are already in the shops (the Toots, Wailers and Third World LPs are the local pressings). The LKJ, as already mentioned, has come and gone (will they bring in more?), and the rest will trickle in over the next month or so. Keep your eyes open for the covers, all sketches or paintings and all beautiful. Let us step through the rockers gallery ...

reputation, piercing British racism though the heart, reminding the youth of their culture and heritage, a subject dear to his heart.

Johnson took a long break from recording after *Bass Culture*, immersing himself in playing live, as well as researching a definitive history of Jamaican music which resulted in a 10-part radio series, *From Mento To Lovers' Rock*. Last year, he returned to the studio to cut *Making History*, an album of profound vision and wisdom.

"Knowledge is essential for living," he says. "You have to be well-informed if you're going to be able to survive in the modern world."

There's not a single dud track on the LKJ compilation, but its finest moment has to be *Bass Culture's* 'Street 66', a moody piece of sparse riddim, brittle and pent-up emotion, teetering on the brink of violence. An ominous harmonica heightens the seething atmosphere as LKJ deadpans the story of a party raided by the police. This man will not be denied.

Simpson then recruited Errol Nelson from the Jayes and a young man named Michael Rose, who had recorded with Prince Jammy. This trio cut the first Uhuru LP, *Love Crisis*, later reissued by Greensleeves as *Black Sounds of Freedom* (a literal translation of the group's name). The album has stood the test of time but did not achieve the expected success at the time. Nelson quit, and Simpson and Rose decided to seek a woman vocalist as a replacement.

Puma Jones, an American from South Carolina, was discovered by Simpson in an apartment building, singing Bob Marley's 'Natural Mystic'. She had converted to Rastafari while still in the States and came to Jamaica to further her religious studies, recording with Ras Michael and the Sons of Negus. The classic Black Uhuru was born, the sound being completed with the rhythm section of Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare. These two were seeking a suitable vehicle for the new sound they were developing, fusing

Linton Kwesi Johnson

Jamaican-born but a British resident since 1963, Linton Kwesi Johnson at 33 has recorded four LPs which stand as both musical and poetic landmarks. By combining his dark, prophetic verse with the bubbling, backfiring rhythms of Denis Bovell, LKJ has created a new force: the Dub Poet. His groundbreaking work has spawned many others, such as Mutabaruka, the late Michael Smith and Oku Onouira.

LKJ holds an honours degree in sociology and in 1977 won the Cecil Day Lewis Fellowship, becoming Writer In Residence for the London Borough of Lambeth. He has published two books of verse, *The Living and the Dead* and *Dread Beat An' Blood*, the latter also forming the bulk of his debut LP of the same name. The two follow-up LPs, *Forces of Victory* and *Bass Culture*, consolidated and strengthened his



Black Uhuru

Certainly the most militant face of Rastafari in the Island catalogue, Black Uhuru have had a long and chequered career, marked by frequent disagreements and changes of personnel. They were founded in the mid-1970s, when Derrick 'Duckie' Simpson teamed up with Garth Dennis (now with the Wailing Souls) and Don Carlos, now an established solo performer. This incarnation cut only one single before splitting, and

reggae and funk into a light but very potent beat, held together with the syndrums which have become a Sly and Robbie trademark known as 'The Taxi Sound'.

The group produced five albums, peaking with 1981's *Red*. Michael Rose departed earlier this year, to be replaced by Junior Reid, a light dancehall-style singer, whose debut single with the group failed to impress. It seems we've seen the best

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