

# If Deejay Was Your Trade

If Deejay was your trade in Kingston during the 'seventies, chances were odds-on that you'd record for Bunny Lee. Bunny, aka 'Striker', has been one of Jamaica's most successful and prolific producers. Although Channel One and Joe Gibbs had wrested dominance from him by 1977, his position as one of Jamaican music's prime movers was assured. Hitmaker for vocalists like John Holt, Delroy Wilson and Johnnie Clarke, when deejays like Big Youth and U. Roy achieved a measure of crossover success in the UK market during 1975/6 he began issuing deejay tracks galore. During the 'seventies he recorded nearly every Jamaican deejay, from Alcapone to Zukie. This compilation collects work from nine of those great toasters, boasters and jesters.

The deejay records Bunny Lee made at this time were usually done quickly; Bunny had evolved a production method in which everybody - artists, musicians, engineers - performed at full stretch with studio costs kept to minimum. The rhythm tracks - often versions of classic Coxsone or Treasure Isle tunes - were built at studios like Dynamic, Randy's and Channel One. All the deejays voiced at King Tubby's studio in Waterhouse, Kingston 11. The aim was to get the records on the street and selling as quickly as possible. In spite of limitations, this method proved successful time and again, the resultant music always enjoyable, often inspirational. Here then, sixteen pieces of old school deejaying, the real roots of today's dancehall and rap sound - so check it out yah!

Steve Barrow - January 1994

## 1. 'In The Ghetto' - Big Joe

Big Joe had worked for Spanish Town producer Harry Mudie, making fine records like 'Black Stick Rock' and 'Set Your Face At Ease', then for producers like Coxsone Dodd, Lloyd Daley and Winston Edwards before linking up with Bunny for whom he made the album 'Keep Rocking & Swinging'. Here he expounds sound system philosophy and namechecks ghetto areas like Greenwich Town, Riverton City and Payne Avenue. Rhythm track is Johnnie Clarke's stepping version of 'Satta Masa Gana'

## 2. 'War & Friction' - I. Roy

I. Roy was the first deejay to record for Harry Mudie, after deejaying his own Son's Junior set and the great Ruddy's Hi-Fi. Following U. Roy on King Tubby's Home Town Hi-Fi, he soon established himself as a master lyricist with scores of hits for many producers by mid-decade, when he made several LPs for Lee. This track features the deejay as trenchant social commentator. He delivers a meditation on ghetto violence over a booming dub of producer/vocalist Yabby U's *Death Trap*.

## 3. 'Tradition Skank' - Little Joe

Joe started out on one of the champion sets of the early 'seventies, El Paso Hi-Fi, following foundation deejays like Dennis Alcapone. He first recorded for Coxsone, cutting *Gun Court* in 1975. Sides for Watty Burnett and Pete Weston followed. He made just one track for Striker, a set of repatriation lyrics dropped immaculately onto a hi-power Ronnie Davis version of Burning Spear's *Tradition*. Prince Tony Robinson renamed him 'Ranking' Joe on a series of hits in 1977; he then recorded for Joe Gibbs, Sonia Pottinger, Sly and Robbie, and others, all whilst deejaying U. Roy's Stereograph set with selector Jah Screw. In the process he became a major influence on modern dance hall style. In 1980 he and Screw rejoined champion sound Ray Symbolic until Ray's untimely death. Since then he has been active both as deejay and producer from his base in New York.

## 4. 'Jah Is I Guiding Star' - Tappa Zukie

Unusually for a Jamaican toaster, Tappa Zukie first made his name in England, with the *Man Ah Warrior* album (1973). 1975 saw him back a yard, voicing *Judge I O Lord* for Lloydie Slim. Tracks for Striker soon followed, like *Natty Dread Don't Cry*, *Pontius Pilate* and this, an impassioned avowal of Rastafari. By mid-1976 Tappa was producing himself on hits like *MPLA* and *Rockers*. He also produced brilliant roots music with Greenwich Farm artists Prince Alla and Junior Ross. Big dancehall hits in Jamaica followed, like *Oh Lord* and *She Want A Phensic*. He crossed over the punk audience via appearances with the Patti Smith Group. He continued production throughout the 'eighties, building a varied catalogue and hitting with Dennis Brown and Beres Hammond amongst others.

## 5. 'Set Up Yourself Dreadlocks' - Jah Stitch

Stitch boosts the natty dread over a storming Aggrovators version of *Please Be True*, with Cornell Campbell's dubbed vocals prominent.

## 6. 'Chant To Jah' - Doctor Alimantado

Striker dusted off Slim Smith's *The Beatitude* from 1968 for one of Tado's best toasts, wherein the deejay turns the Sermon on the Mount into a sermon in the dance hall. Tubby dubs new life into the rhythm, pushing Tado to higher heights of inspiration.

**7. 'Mash It Up' - Doctor Alimantado**

Previously unreleased, the good doctor tries a progressive thing over Delroy Wilson's *Mash Up Illiteracy* rhythm. Evidently Striker and Tubby didn't think it was working - you can hear both their voices clearly from midway, as well as Jazzbo deejaying in the background. The dub mix is excellent, with great delay effects courtesy Dr. Satan's echo chamber.

**8. 'The Barber Feel It' - Doctor Alimantado & Jah Stitch**

The rhythm track versioned here, *Ali Baba*, was originally a hit for John Holt on Treasure Isle in 1970; Striker built his version in 1975 for singer Jackie Edwards, then used it to create a series of records whose premise was a war between barbers and dreadlocks. Since on an earlier cut Tado had shot the barber, he celebrates the victory by riding around on a motorbike with Jah Stitch, laughing insanely at every barber shop, checking out the daughters and looking for a spliff.

**9. 'Bury The Barber' - Jah Stitch**

Stitch says last rites over the 'poor barber' on Striker's cut of *Stealing*, pausing to remark only that a woman was behind everything. Stitch made many good sides for Striker, interrupted only when he was shot in 1976. Miraculously, the bullet entered above his right ear and exited below his left, leaving the deejay alive. His first release after micro-surgery was the album *No Dread Can't Dead*.

**10. 'Black Harmony Killer' - Jah Stitch**

*Just Say Who* by Horace Andy is the backing track as Jah Stitch extols the virtues of the sound he deejayed during the mid-seventies. Stitch came to prominence on Tippetone Hi-Fi with Big Youth and Jah Wise. He was very popular in the UK with hits like *Danger Zone Chapter 3* and this '76 soundboy killer.

**11. 'Greedy Girl' - Jah Stitch**

Horace Andy on the rhythm again, the "brother cool as candy" as Jah Stitch styles him, over one of the all-time heavy basslines.

**12. 'Regular Girl' - Dillinger**

On a version of the Studio One *Mean Girl* rhythm, Dillinger fashions a catchy 'singjay' track about a very friendly girl. Dillinger started when Alcapone used to give him the mike on El Paso in the early 'seventies, first recording with Lee Perry who gave him his stage name. He has recorded prolifically up to now, first hitting big internationally for Channel One in 1976 with *CB200* and *Cocaine*.

**13. 'Daylight Saving Time' - Dillinger**

Over a version of Johnny Ace's R 'n B opus *The Clock* by John Holt, Dillinger drops some snatches of nursery rhyme and slang using his best ragamuffin delivery.

**14. 'Gal Boy I Roy' - Prince Jazzbo**

Feuds have been a feature of Jamaican music ever since Prince Buster called Derrick Morgan a 'black head chinaman'. During 1975, Bunny had I. Roy, Derrick Morgan and Jazzbo name calling on record, just for fun. Jazzbo savages I. Roy on Cornell Campbell's *Stars* rhythm.

**15. 'Good Memories' - Prince Jazzbo**

Another Coxson graduate, Jazzbo defends his way of life, praises the herb, and offers horticultural hints on a previously-unreleased version of Johnnie Clarke's *Memories By The Score*, a 'double-drum' recut of the Paragons' Treasure Isle classic.

**16. 'Shuffle & Deal' - Prince Far I**

Far I was toasting from the early 'sixties on El Toro Hi-Fi using the name King Cry Cry. Here he toasts his *Deck Of Cards* lyric over a tough bass and drum; he did the same lyric for Joe Gibbs in 1976. This track comes from early 1974, according to the tape box. Far I cut many brilliant records from mid-decade, when he started his own label Cry Tuff. He was tragically killed in summer 1983.