

# In Dub

**David Sinclair, known to the world as Tappa Zukie, was born in Kingston, Jamaica on July 2nd 1955. By the late sixties he was a follower of ghetto sound systems:**

'When I was a little boy I usually run around with the sound systems. I started to play I-Oses Discotech. I use to talk a lot of tings, give jokes... I use to help them lift up the box - I was just a little hyper youth that everybody like. So every now an' then when nobody not talkin', I would tek the mike an' talk a couple little tings, an' they use to say 'Ah - 'im sound good!' They start give me the mike a couple of time, me start gwaney gwaney. People started to like me an' I started to get boost in mi community. I was the first little boy deejay - those time there was U.Roy, Dennis Alcapone, Prince Jazzbo, an' I.Roy - oh, my respect, Jah Youth was around from them time too.

Then I started to play Maccabees sound permanent. It goes on, an' I becomes everybody favourite. An' yunno, rude guys follow sound an' ting, so I become even the rude guys favourite. So I was like a lickle spoilt child in the community. - I could do as I like, I could do anything. Well, to my mother I was too active, too hype, I was goin' around with too much people that she thought was bad company, because she had sense more than me. That's when she sent me to England. I was around 17 years old - that's when I started playin' Viego Sound, the People's Sound. Well, when I came to England I remember U.Roy had a show. It was for some Rastafarian in Ladbroke Grove. Pinto was the head of it, Rasta Pinto. Bunny Lee arrange it, an' introduce me on stage that night, my second night in England. I went on stage an' I did cover Slim Smith's song 'The Time Has Come', I toast over that an' everybody went crackers.. When I came back off the stage Larry Lawrence hold mi hand an' say me goin' into the studio tomorrow mornin', an' we went. That's where I mek 'Jump and Twist', an' go on until I mek 'Man A Warrior' album. Lord Koos release it on single first an' then give it Count Shelly to put on the album, beca' Count Shelly take the album from Clement Bush and he put out 'Man A Warrior', which didn't make no impression for my career then.... I stay around in England until I finally get homesick an' come home to Jamaica'

**Following his return in late 1974, Tappa began moving more closely with the posse around producer Bunny 'Striker' Lee:**

'Bunny Lee - we grew up together, my brother grew up with him - he knew my family an' everything. So I start to bein' a bodyguard for 'im, because at that time nobody didn't rate me as a musician or artist. So, I had to hang out with Bunny Lee. He use to live in the studio like a nighthawk, an' I 'ave to be dere with 'im. I only go to sleep when Bunny Lee go to sleep. If I'm not there, the session put off, 'im no feel comfortable, beca' me kinda involve with the ghetto people an' dem 'ave a great respect for me. It's not that I'm a bad man, but is just the principle me stan' up for in life. By doing things now, I automatically become part of the reggae business, beca' is like me live with it.'

**Tappa's first record back in Jamaica was the deeply-felt 'Judge I O Lord', issued by Lloydie Slim utilising Lee's version of the evergreen 'Drum Song' rhythm.**

'That was the first effort after comin' back from England, 'cause I was around Bunny Lee an' he wouldn't voice me - Lloydie Slim was in the studio workin', an' I said 'Lloydie, I can do a ting on this', an' Lloydie say 'Gwan', an' that's how 'Judge I O Lord' come up. It's the only tune I do for Lloydie so far.'

**Tappa continued working and learning in the studio:**

'Bunny would more time be doin' a song an' Johnnie Clarke not findin' the right lyrics, an' 'im seh: 'Zukie, you an' Johnnie Clarke work out a ting now', an' me an' 'im go outside an' when we come in back, we 'ave the tune ready. Couple a times Bunny Lee wasn't in the studio, yet still he is a good producer - 'im know weh 'im want. 'Im we learn from, how fi handle the studio, but after 'im see we can handle it certain way 'im leave it 'pon we. So I round 'im now, but by this time I want to bring out Tappa Zukie. I want to be an artist, but I would do anything for this man, just to mek 'im produce me.'

**Lee did eventually put out the powerful 'Jah Is I Guiding Star' (included on 'If Deejay Was Your Trade' Blood & Fire BAFCD 001), as well as 'Pontious Pilot', but it was the release of 'Natty Woman No Cry' that provoked a rift between artist and producer:**

'He arrest me, he 'ave me locked up because I was rebellin', that I was round 'im an' he wasn't doin' nothin' for me, an' I wanted to go in music business. So me an' 'im kick off down Orange Street, an' 'im lock me up for five minute, lock me up an' come back for me. Is really beca' 'im know if 'im never come back for me probably the people in the ghetto would stone 'im... so 'im come back for me. The reason for that, I did a song for 'im - 'Natty Dread Girl Don't Cry' - an' Trojan put it out. I ask 'im about it an' he was tellin' me to phone Trojan an' ask them. I say I can't talk to them because me an' dem don't do any business, an' that's where it start...'

**Striker furnished Tappa with a set of rhythm tracks:**

'So he decided to give me around seven or eight riddims. He gave them to me an' I voice them in two hours, the eight a dem in two hours. I went back an' get two more riddim, one from Jo Jo, which is the

'MPLA' riddim, an' another one from Ossie Hibbert, which is the 'Pick Up The Rockers' riddim, an' I voice those in like, half hour, an' that's how I come up with the 'MPLA' album. That's where my career started. From then I was on my own'.

**Lee assisted the UK release of Tappa's first self-produced singles as a deejay on the Klik label in mid-1976, including the UK reggae hits 'MPLA', 'Rockers' and 'Natty Still Waiting'. The 'MPLA' album quickly followed, promoted via an acclaimed tour of UK clubs by Tappa. In Jamaica, Tappa had established his own label, Stars, distributed from Bunny Lee's shop at 101 Orange Street, and had released his first self-produced singles:**

'Before I leave to London I did put out one a the song, 'Marcus', an' it start, an' one more - 'Chalice To Chalice' - and it started to give me a little click!'

**Right from the start, leading session musicians showed a keen interest to record for the young producer:**

'Well, Robbie Shakespeare, Santa, an' Chinna, through I was around everywhere they was, dem say: 'Zukie, we goin' give you some riddim, through we don't want you stray an' ting. So dem mek some riddim for me, an' me call in Junior Ross an' Prince Alla, an' start doin' some work on dem. Well, I went to England with the intention to sell them those ting - I had a song name 'Bosrah' out at the time - but when I go up there, people wanted me as a artist.'

Nevertheless, Tappa's productions on artists like the superb Greenwich Farm-based singer Ras Alla (Keith Blake, better known as Prince Alla), Junior Ross and the Spears (also known as the Palmer Brothers), Ronnie Davis of the Itals, and Linford Newgend signalled the arrival of a producer with a finely-tuned ear for genuine roots music.

Tappa's first dub album includes versions of many of the songs discussed above, mixed in fine style by engineer Phillip Smart. Known as Prince Phillip during his time at King Tubby's famous studio on Drumlie Avenue in Waterhouse, Smart later moved to New York, opening his HCF studio on Long Island in the early 'eighties. By the end of that decade HCF had become the leading Reggae studio in the USA.

'Tappa Zukie In Dub' quickly sold out the first and only pressing limited to 300 copies in mid-summer 1976. Tappa had obviously picked the right rhythms.

The title track, a version to Ras Alla's 'Bosrah', rides a deep recut of the 'Joe Frazer' rhythm originally done at Studio One in 1970 and used for Burning Spear's 'He Prayed' that same year. Tappa's version of the rhythm has a distinct Black Ark feel.

'Pick Up The Dub' is a version to Tappa's 'Rockers', laid at Channel One studio by Sly, Robbie and the Revolutionaries. The original rhythm was made at Studio One for the Royals' 'Pick Up The Pieces' back in 1971. This recut version had first been used by producer Ossie Hibbert to propel Dennis Brown's 'Whip Them Jah'.

'Dub MPLA' is a further cut to Tappa's hit 'MPLA', also laid at Channel One. Little Richard's 'Freedom Blues', covered by Roy Richards at Studio One in 1969, had inspired the Channel One recut, also called 'MPLA', and a big hit for the Revolutionaries earlier in 1976.

'Rush I Some Dub' and 'Cool This Dub' are dubs to Linval Thompson vocals ('Black Princess' and 'Cool Down Your Temper') originally produced by Bunny Lee and given to Tappa along with Lee versions of Alexander Henry's 'Please Be True' ('Rub This Dub') which Tappa used for Ronnie Davis's 'No Weak Heart', Slim Smith's 'Give Me A Love' ('Loving Dub') and the Abyssinians' 'Declaration of Rights' which Tappa used for Junior Ross and the Spears' 'Judgement Time' ('Judgement Dub'). The remaining dubs include versions of other Junior Ross songs like 'Babylon Fall' ('Falling Dub'), and 'Rasta Man' ('Beautiful Dub'). The CD contains two bonus cuts, 'Jah Speak In Dub' and 'Way Over In Dub' which are versions of Ross' 'So Jah Jah Say' and 'Send Me Over There' respectively.

During the late 'seventies Tappa enjoyed a series of massive deejay hits with tunes like 'Natty Dread A Weh She Want', a combination with the great singer Horace Andy, as well as the immortal 'She Want A Phensic' (1978), a devastating rejoinder to thrillseeking uptown girls and of course 'Oh Lord', another boom shot which celebrated ghetto pulchritude.

These days Tappa has his own pressing plant and retail premises at Eastwood Park Road in the heart of Kingston. His current catalogue features top-quality artists like Beres Hammond, Dennis Brown, Gregory Isaacs, U.Roy, Max Romeo, Mykal Rose, Brigadier Jerry, Frankie Paul, Yasus Afari, and Yami Bolo.

First issued when dub was still relatively fresh, and long unavailable, 'Tappa Zukie In Dub' proves a fitting cornerstone to the producer's career, so just string up and stand back, and let King Tappa rock the musical atmosphere!

Steve Barrow July-August 1995