

Dub Gone 2 Crazy

At the time the recordings contained in this compilation were made, the triumvirate of producer Bunny Lee and engineers Osbourne 'King Tubby' Ruddock and Lloyd 'Prince Jammy' James represented the past, present and future of Jamaican music. Lee had been the dominant record producer during the period 1969-1975, sound system owner/operator Tubby had come to define dub at his Waterhouse studio, and his then protege Jammy would go on to be the pre-eminent producer of the eighties and beyond, responsible for ushering in the digital age in Jamaican studios. Their association began in the late sixties, when Jammy introduced Bunny to Tubby. At that time, it had been on Lee's suggestion that Tubby began utilising the innovations in mixing then being practiced by the leading sound system in Spanish Town, Ruddy's Supreme. The owner of that set, Rudolph 'Ruddy' Redwood, had inadvertently discovered the remix - in Jamaican parlance the 'version'- when making some dubplates for his sound at the studio of Duke Reid with engineer Byron Smith in 1968. By the mid-seventies King Tubby had developed and refined what amounted to a new popular artform out of those early experiments. It wasn't simply the fact that Tubby and his cohorts used reverb and delay effects in their mixes; these effects had been available long before - for example, in the sound of the echo chamber at Hollywood's Gold Star studio where Phil Spector recorded his legendary 'Wall Of Sound' productions, or the instantly-recognisable echo present on the rockabilly records produced by Sam Phillips at the Sun Studios in Memphis. The difference with Tubby was that these effects were used to enliven radically-remixed versions of songs that had already been recorded. Initially, this was simply a method for men like Bunny Lee to extend the musical life of their productions without additional expense. Tubby, a skilled and resourceful electronics expert who controlled one of the all-time great sound systems - King Tubby's HiFi - was seemingly able to improvise endlessly with his studio equipment. As King Jammy recalls:

When I was at King Tubby's studio mixin' dubs, a lotta those equipments, King Tubby build those 'imself, yunno what I mean? If 'im don't build most a them, 'im jus' improvise on them an' mek them different from the original, so we had something different. The reverb unit that we used to use there, it was a Fisher reverb, an' we change it up to become a King Tubby and Fisher! (laughs). The slides that we use' to use, we change them from the original slides, because the mixin' console was so old you couldn't get replacement parts for it. We use other models to incorporate in that console.

These improvisations, initially born out of economic necessity, together with the limitations of what was then only a 4-track mixing and voicing studio, enabled the small Waterhouse studio to corner the market in dub. Indeed, the limitations imposed by only having four tracks available acted as a further stimulus: In the seventies at King Tubby's studio, dub records used to sound fantastic, to what we hearin' nowadays as dub. The main reason for this is because King Tubby's use to have a 4-track studio. The way how we use to create the dub, the feelin' of the music, we only had four controls to deal with, four slides to deal with. It was easier to mix with your slides instead of buttons. Nowadays you mix with buttons, because you're mixing on a 24-track console. Dub music has to be a fast mixin' thing - most of the instruments were already mixed on one track. So when you draw down like the riddim track, you draw down horns, guitar, piano and organ. So it was easier for you to mix it and faster. That's why you got the dub in those days so brilliant. It can be mixed on these modern consoles, but you have to group the instruments. And the slides are not flexible like the mixin' board console that King Tubby's had. Those slides were flexible.

The results are presented herein; most of the dubs here were mixed by Jammy, who had become Bunny Lee's favoured engineer. Indeed, by 1977, Lee was actively encouraging Jammy to pursue a career in record production, a move which Jammy would soon make when he discovered Black Uhuru in his neighbourhood. When James started production with the aforementioned roots vocal trio, and the Mighty Travellers, he soon established himself at the forefront of Jamaican producers. Throughout the eighties he was both leading Jamaican producer and owner of the champion sound, King Jammy's Super Power. Today, he continues his extensive operations from his studio in Waterhouse. His son John John has also become a hit making producer in his own right, and his former pupils like Bobby 'Digital' Dixon are also amongst the ranks of the leading Jamaican producers. But in spite of his current elevated position, Jammy will never forget the late King Tubby, who was tragically gunned down outside his home in Duhaney Park, Kingston, on the 6th February 1989:

Well, that's like a never endin' friendship. It's like family, yunno - I grew up with King Tubby's - I used to live on Dromilly Avenue. Ever since I lived on Dromilly Avenue I can't forget one day (when) I didn't spend some time with King Tubby's. The great King Tubby's - yunno, they don't call people 'great' or 'King' for no reason - the reason why they call 'im great King Tubby's and King Tubby's, (was) he was such a nice person. If 'im ever get vex with you for five minutes, the nex' minute, he is o.k. A lotta good 'im do fe the community. His loss was one of the greatest loss to me - I don't know about the music fraternity, but to me,

personally, because he was my teacher, yunno. It was so unfortunate that he had to go that way - that was terrible.

This compilation adds further chapters to the history of dub; most of these tracks have never been available on album until now. They illustrate yet again the inventiveness of all concerned - engineers, musicians and producer. That this music can find a new audience today is a testament to their creativity, a point that King Jammy himself emphasizes:

Dub mean raw riddim. Dub jus' mean raw music, nuttin' water-down. Version is like your creativeness off the riddim, without voice. For your musical pleasure without measure, we present more dub. Steve Barrow / May 1996

version to version:

- 01 Dub of Rights "Declaration of Rights" Johnnie Clarke
- 02 A Living Version "Live Up Jah Man" Johnnie Clarke
- 03 The Poor Barber "The Barber Feel It" Jah Stitch / Dr Alimantado
- 04 Higher Ranking "Top Ranking" Johnnie Clarke
- 05 A Heavy Dub "Just Say Who" Delroy Wilson
- 06 A Stalawatt Version "The Stal-O-Watt" Cornell Campbell
- 07 King Tubby's In Fine Style "Power Of Love" Ronnie Davis
- 08 African Sounds "African People" Johnnie Clarke
- 09 Version Of Class "Death Trap" Jackie Mittoo
- 10 Channel One Under Heavy Manners "Pomps And Pride" Leroy Smart
- 11 Breaking Up In Dub "Breaking Up" Johnnie Clarke
- 12 Channel Get Knock Out "Girl I Love You" Johnnie Clarke
- 13 Channel Is A Joker "Just Give Up The Badness" Johnnie Clarke
- 14 Drums Of Africa "Time Will Tell" Johnnie Clarke

Respect due to these sources:

King Tubby In Fine Style by Dave Hendley and Ray Hurford
(in 'More Axe' published by Black Star, Helsinki Finland 1987)

I Remember King Tubby by Martin 'Mandingo' Williams
(in 'Tubbzine' published by Tribulation Rocker Posse, Caernarfon Wales 1989)

Thanks and respect also to Lloyd 'King Jammy' James, Dennis Alcapone, Ranking Joe Jackson and Paul 'Jah Screw' Love for their information over the years.

Also: Bunny Lee interviewed by Lol Bell- Brown & Steve Barrow, London, October 1993.

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Pat Kelly interviewed by Steve Barrow, Meadowbrook, Kingston 10th October 1991