

# Don't Check Me With No Lightweight Stuff (1972-75)

In the days of sound, when Neil Armstrong discovered the moon and words were duly invented, there once was a deejay called I-Roy. Around 1969, he began earning a reputation as a formidable toaster on a sound system named Son's Junior, working from the former capital of Jamaica, Spanish Town. In the history of Jamaican dancehall music, the great deejay U-Roy will always be recognised as the creator of the modern deejay style; when he held the top three positions on the Jamaican chart in early 1970, few would have said that the practice of talking over rhythm tracks that he pioneered would last very long, let alone become a major form of expression in its own right. But U-Roy's example soon inspired others to follow him into the recording studio; men like Dennis Alcapone, Charlie Ace, King Cry Cry, Scotty, King Sporty, Sir Harry, Winston Scotland and others. The same year also witnessed the recording debut of another member of that pioneering generation of deejays: Roy Reid, known professionally as I-Roy.

*Born in St Thomas in 1944, Roy Samuel Reid actually began his deejay career in late 1966, initially on a part-time basis:*

Me was a civil servant, I work a Customs (at) Princes' Street and Water Lane - from Manifest Branch to Correspondence Desk. As a middle-income earner now, me start follow the discotheque dem. You use to 'ave a Wednesday disco party a Victoria Pier downtown, where the Oceania Hotel is. You 'ave a technician now, Jamaica's number one radio-amplifier-television technician, 'im name Denton. 'Im fix anyting weh bruk down. 'Im set up a disco an' give (it to) I-Roy, name Soul Bunnies - a my disco weh me control. Me use to play a Jazz Hut on Fridays, a Rose Lane. So people use to come an' hear me, an' seh: bwoy, dat bredda deh great, dat man 'ave logic - is a SHAME.

*These sessions soon convinced him of his own deejaying abilities, and brought him to the attention of other sound system owners:*

So you 'ave sounds like the sound me use to play firs', name Son's Junior, weh me come a Spanish Town with, an' tek over the town. 'Im name (was) Son's, a Chineyman from Waltham Park Road. 'Im 'ave a son name Leroy an' one name Cornell, dem livin' a New York. Me come Spanish Town come play about three times - a lawn name Ackee-Wackee was the main lawn dem time deh. Everybody crowd up now, an' come lissen dis great I-Roy from town. Me find some new-found friends here who seh: baas, it good fi you come Spanish Town come live, beca' a the firs' capital dis, an' the way people love you, an' dem ting deh.

*I-Roy soon came to a decision to move from Kingston:*

A so me come a Spanish Town, rent a old house from a lady name Mrs. Simpson, an' jus live. Me go on an' play Son's Junior sound - in those days it was the greatest sound here. When Son's Junior did deh, even great sounds like the great King Tubby's Hi-Fi come a Young Street an' play, about twenty chains away from me - me deh a New Yorker Club - an' dem eat dem curry goat demself, the promoters! Son's Junior tear dung the whol' place! Son's Junior was a man weh, when 'im go a Coxsone Dodd an' a cut dub, all two day 'im deh a fold 'im foot an' a drink 'im Pepsi. 'Im was a master of craft when it come to dub - 'im ave Heptones an' Abbyssinian tunes weh NO sound in a Jamaica NEVER play, dat time here or after or before.

*After the owner of Son's Junior emigrated to the USA, I-Roy moved to the leading Spanish Town set, Ruddy's Supreme Ruler Of Sound aka S-R-S. Rudolph 'Ruddy' Redwood had been the man who first cut custom versions of Duke Reid rocksteady hits with engineer Byron Smith at Reid's Treasure Isle Studio, thereby pioneering the 'remix' technique and laying the foundations for Tubby's later dub innovations.*

*Ruddy's sound system had been dominant in Spanish Town since the days of ska; before I-Roy, Ruddy had deejays like Mango and Wicked emceeding his set. As one of Duke Reid's most important patrons, Ruddy played dubplates of all the big Treasure Isle hits; he had guitarist Lynn Taitt cut exclusive instrumentals of many of these, giving them special names like Coming Through Tars Pen and Mind Your Own Business:*

Me a fi deal with a sound weh me love - me start play S-R-S, Ruddy's the Supreme Ruler. In a dem early days, soundclash ting, me was jus' one deejay - me never 'ave no second, an' third, like now you 'ave all four man 'round a sound, four selector, an' one a play early, an' so on. Dem times deh, from six o'clock when dance start, me play until daylight when sun hot. Me use to 'ave some fans, like Panty, Ossie, Sterling, Cody, Knoxie - dem was the activist weh rule the town, the bad men dem, an' the hartical Rasta man in dem days deh. Dem call Panty, Ossie an' Sterlin' the three blind mice. Dem was the mos' rugged - any man come here, police or bad man or otherwise, dem beat dem so bad that as dem run away, dem 'ave all dem gun 'pon dem, an' forget! Man face mash up so bad man seh: shine your flashlight an' show me weh the station deh!

*Amongst many fond memories of the period, I-Roy remembers, above all, the music:*

But reggae dem days deh: it was Duke Reid an' Coxsone as the two forefront men. You did 'ave Scratch, you 'ave Bunny Lee, an' you 'ave all dem producer. But fi dance hall tune, it was Duke Reid with the Alton

Ellis dem, an' the Techniques, an' the Paragons, an' the Uniques; an' Coxson with the Heptones, an' Ken Boothe - dem tunes deh use to RULE dancehall.

*When Ruddy's sound played, the dance hall patrons were looked after in ways other than musical:*

When we go all a Papine an' play, Papine down the hole, we use to give a tin a condense milk, a tin a milk an' a box a oats. Dem days deh tings cheap. Fi go a dance a two an' six. (12.5p = 20 cents)

*The main competition to Ruddy in Spanish Town at this time was Stereo, owned by electronics technician Seymour Williams.*

Then, after me leave Ruddy's now, me play Stereo, the immortal sound. Now Stereo is a professional technician, audio technician, weh build audio. 'Im build some heavy-duty sound. 'Im did 'ave the heaviest sound, like how you'd say the great King Edwards the Giant, which was the heaviest sound in town in a the early days. That bredda weh name Stereo was the heaviest, heaviest bredda in Spanish Town. Me go on play 'im sound fi 'bout a year an' a half, an' it get slow - 'im stop spend money 'pon record.

*Luckily around this time, another source of income from deejaying would be revealed to I-Roy, through the explosive arrival of U-Roy on record:*

An' then, BAM - dere comes U-Roy with Wake The Town An' Tell The People fi Duke. Me use to go a dance all a Gold Coast (Club), an' dem place weh U-Roy play Tubby's sound. Me did 'ave a girl a Tower Hill, a 124 Olympic Way, name Soran, an' me go deh very often, lef' me yard a Spanish Town, an' gone a town, as an original City man weh a come in a Spanishtonian. U-Roy now, when 'im play Tubby's sound, 'im 'ave 'im crowd a Rastafari 'round 'im, an' 'im a rap NICE. Every man a lissen 'im. 'Im go do the tune fi Duke, Wake The Town, an' Chicka Bow, an' dem tune deh get the place HOT!! Everybody now start come a dance, an' run up an' down. A so the vibes go in a dem days deh.

*It wasn't long before I-Roy himself went in the studio:*

Me link up with a man name Mudie, Harry Mudie, an' mek my firs' record name Musical Pleasure, Drifter, Heart Don't Leap, an' dem tune deh. Me buy me firs' S-90 bike now, an' 'ave my bag with my record dem. Me nah stop buy tune - me collec' tune, an' play 'pon sound. *Harry Mudie had been a record producer since the early sixties, when he recorded Babylon Gone with the Count Ossie group. He also operated a sound system, and owned the Scaramouche Garden Amusement Center in Spanish Town. From 1968 he had become more active in record production, cutting some scorching reggae at Studio One in Kingston with singers like Dennis Walks, and saxophonist Carl 'Cannonball' Bryan. For the veteran Mudie, I-Roy voiced the deejay shots he mentions above, plus a strong-selling version of the Ebony Sisters' Let Me Tell You Boy, and a toasting cut to Walks' Margaret. These tunes did much to establish him on record, albeit at first in the shadow of U-Roy, and to a lesser degree, Dennis Alcapone. But over the course of the next five years he would record for nearly every producer on the island, forging a unique style based on witty and erudite lyrics delivered in a magnificent rich-toned voice that seemed tailor-made for toasting. In the meantime, during 1970-71, he distributed records for Harry Mudie to various outlets in Kingston on his Honda bike, all the while continuing to sharpen his verbal skills in the dancehall:*

Me jus' leave Stereo an' go play a sound in a May Pen now, Clarendon, name V-Rocket. A guy name Johnnie own it - 'im dead now, 'im pass off an' gone. 'Im did own a bakery name Western Bakery. Me bring that sound deh to the top, beca' any sound me deh 'round, me move it up to the top. Dem days deh, as a one man a work, people from all walks of life gather 'round fi hear I-Roy talk. Yeah man, dem come in droves an' thousands a dance hall, fi hear me, as a one man. Me nah 'ave no second - an' me nah put down mike, an' every tune is a different tune. From all two o'clock, a pure psalms 'til daylight, an' man a lick ganja pipe, an' ganja pipe a catch a fire! A so we use to live in a dem days deh.

*Between 1972 and 1975, I-Roy began recording more prolifically. In 1972, for example, he cut tunes for Winston 'Merritone' Blake, Lloyd 'Printer' Campbell, Lloyd Chalmers, and Lloyd 'Matador' Daley. In 1973, he was even more productive, working with at least fifteen different producers, including Glen Brown, Leonard Chin, Fud Christian, Augustus 'Gussie' Clarke, Rupie Edwards, Derrick Harriott, Byron Lee, Lee 'Scratch' Perry, 'Prince' Tony Robinson, and others - Clive Chin, Keith Hudson, Bunny Lee, Jimmy Radway, Pete Weston and Roy himself - whose work is included on this compilation. All of these tunes were top-quality toasts and raps. Meanwhile, back in the dancehall, he had been number one deejay for King Tubby's Hi-Fi since mid-1972:*

Now after me leave V-Rocket, Tubby send fi me, the great Osbourne Ruddock, King Tubby, 18 Dromilly Avenue - ca' me use to live deh a Tower Hill in the days when Tubby did jus' own a lickle sound name Tubby's Home Town Hi-Fi, no King Tubby's. He use to 'ave a girl name Valerie, an' one name Joy, dem was the two main dancers 'round the sound. Then you 'ave Mighty, Duppy-So, Pious, Grinner - dem was the enforcers 'round the sound. Mos' a dem dead an' gone, ca' younger men dem than me, but dem choose another road, an' dem head top get lick up, y'understand?

*In those days, as a deejay in demand, I-Roy was also particularly noted for his keen dress sense, whether he favoured wearing a white three-piece suit and a cane, or something more casual. He acquired the*

*nickname 'Knits' during this period, because of his wardrobe of expensive Italian knitwear. For footwear, it was strictly Russell & Bromley. This sartorialism, combined with a powerful self-assurance, was enough to draw the attention of Tubby:*

In dem days deh, Tubby's is a man who always admire me as a bes' dress man, an' man with 'nuff lip-service. So whenever a date come up now with the sound, an' U-Roy deh 'pon tour, or any lickle difference with 'im an' U-Roy, 'im send fi me, an' me come play the great King Tubby Hi-Fi, an' people jus' 'ave it fi say: bwoy, how (come) I-Roy sound like U-Roy? But we are two different people. Ca' U-Roy is Ewart Beckford, an' I'm Roy Reid. So I'm I-Roy, U-Roy a U-Roy. Me a no given name, me a registered an' sealed in a the Spanish Town archives. My birth certificate is Roy Samuel Reid, so me no put on the name I-Roy, me jus' put a 'I' in front a my name, beca' is I-Roy dis !!

When me play Tubby's Hi-Fi fi a period a time, one time U-Roy go 'way 'pon tour an' come back. You 'ave a dance in Penwood Road, an' you 'ave a lickle bwoy name Papa Three Card who love rape girls. 'Im come in a the dance about eleven o'clock, an' jus hold on 'pon a girl, an' carry her round a Tubby box-back. A so me leave King Tubby's sound now: me 'ave on a white suit, me never forget that night. An' 'im, Papa Three Card, tear off the girl clothes an' a sex the girl behind the sound box. So some man come call me, an' me go 'round an' say: this cyaan go on when me play this sound, this CYAAN go on. You a fi send fi clothes fi put on the girl, an' DONE. A so it go: man in a the area get irritated, an' seh: bwoy, me fight 'gainst man, an' me cyaan play Tubby's sound in a the neighbourhood again. Me seh: wha' - how unnu a chat so? Unnu could 'ave all ninety-nine gun - me nah 'fraid a dem ting deh. Bam, about seventeen minutes after the big commotion, dere comes U-Roy, come off a tour, an' come tek the mike, an' me jus ride out. Me show Tubby's, me seh: watcha man, when you 'ave a difficulty, like the sound a play, an' U-Roy no turn up, you jus' send a man come call I-Roy, an' I will turn up. I will come play the sound, but I man nah go be the number one man around the sound again. An' so the sound start fade.

*By late 1973, I-Roy would be in England; he played a residence at the Roaring Twenties club in London's Carnaby Street, deejaying the leading UK sound of the day, Sir Coxson. The same year, Gussie Clarke released the deejay's first album Presenting I-Roy followed quickly by his second set, the self-produced Hell & Sorrow. When he returned to Jamaica in 1974 he recorded for Winston Edwards, Joel Gibson and Errol Thompson. He also continued with Pete Weston, producer of some of his finest work. Pete eventually issued the excellent Truth & Rights album on his Micron label in 1975. The scene at home in Jamaica was changing; U-Roy had started his own sound system, called Stur-Gav Hi-Fi, named for his two sons. Ray Symbolic was the champion sound, with selector Jah Screw at the controls and the unstoppable Ranking Joe as deejay, whilst Tubby's legendary sound system was shortly to become a memory:*

The last dance dem play, St.Thomas, goin' out a Duhaney Pen, me never even reach the dance, an' a policeman name Scorcher a shoot up the sound an' go in a the dance. The sound build a name that (it) is pure bad man (who) follow the sound now. Anyway, the sound go a St.Thomas, an' a policeman name Scorcher shoot up the sound, without any reason. Shoot up the truck, shoot up the man amps dem, kick off a belly woman who deh 'pon the truck, pregnant, a girl who use to follow the sound, an' a portion of men go a jail. When I reach Duhaney Park, I jus' see all the amps dem scrap, an' dem tek weh all the transformer dem weh dem could a get dem hand 'pon. Beca' dem days Tubby's sound did 'ave the number one sound quality 'pon the island. When me tell you 'bout sound quality - dem days deh steel horn use to hang up in a mango tree or a breadfruit tree, but Tubby's is the firs' man who come with top-end box, like you see Stone Love an' dem sound now. Tubby's a the firs' man who come with tweeter, an' top-end speaker 'pon top of 'im box, plus 'im 'ave horn in a the trees, wha' play 'pon 'im high-mid. Wicked!! Anyweh you deh, if Tubby's play an' you deh a Spanish Town, you hear 'im, beca' the horn dem high in a some tree, tie-up. We use to 'ave bigger crowd when we play, people walk miles beca' dem hear the sound, the sound a travel, an' dem come fi miles fi come hear the great King Tubby's Hi-Fi.

*Subsequently, I-Roy went on to further success; he hit for Channel One in 1975 with 'Welding', beginning an association with label /studio boss Jo Jo Hookim wherein I-Roy took on the role of house producer for Channel One, alongside men like organist Ossie Hibbert. He was responsible for such hits as the instrumentals MPLA and IRA, dub albums like Vital Dub-Satta Dub, and songs by the Mighty Diamonds. He also made a memorable and hilarious series of hits the same year for Bunny Lee and Pete Weston, participating in a musical feud with fellow deejay Prince Jazzbo. But that's another story; for now, we present some of the very best by one of the greatest Jamaican deejays, at the peak of his inimitable form. As Roy himself says:*

In a my days, when me young, an' out there, an' spurt an' sprint, no guy couldn't kick weh my foot....

*Like the good brother says, you better believe it!*

Steve Barrow, December 1996

### **1 Sidewalk Killer**

The deejay version of Sidewalk Doctor by Tommy McCook, this was produced by Rudolph 'Ruddy' Redwood in 1972. The first cut of this rhythm is Woman Of The Ghetto by Phyllis Dillon for Ruddy's favourite producer Duke Reid.

### **2 Hot Stuff**

Produced by Keith Hudson, this is a version of the producer's vocal cut, also called Hot Stuff. The atmospheric intro recalls a curfew, when army jeeps patrol the ghetto.

### **3 Buck And The Preacher**

I-Roy, the movie fan: 'No movie nah come a Jamaica weh me no see'. The intro features Errol 'ET' Thompson and the deejay talking about the movie featuring Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier. The rhythm track, known as Leggo Beast is in fact a Pete Weston-produced update of Roy Shirley's immortal Hold Them.

### **4 Ken Boothe Special**

Musical tribute to the great singer, this is a version of a medley that includes Moving Away and Puppet On A String. U-Roy also did a deejay version on the other half of the medley, likewise produced by Pete Weston.

### **5 Black Talk**

A version of Ken Boothe's Your Feeling And Mine which originally appeared on the album released in 1973 on the Jaguar label entitled Ken Boothe Meets The Gaylads.

### **6 Look A Boom**

The spoken intro, concerning I-Roy's power to unsettle rival deejays, is a gem. The rhythm is a Pete Weston recut of the Heptones classic Tripe Girl.

### **7 Don't Get Weary Joe Frazier**

Produced by Joe Gibbs' protege Winston Edwards in 1974 and voiced at King Tubby's, I-Roy's heartfelt tribute to Joe Frazier rests atop Melodian Tony Brevett's Don't Get Weary.

### **8 Sound**