

Givin' out my warning...
Now you rich people listen to me
Weep and wail over the miseries
That are coming, coming up on you
Your riches have rotted away
And your clothes have been eaten by moth
Your gold and silver
Is covered with rust
And this rust will be witness against you
And eat up your flesh like fire
You have piled up your riches
In these last days
But heads a go roll down Sandy Gully
One of these days
Heads a go roll down Sandy Gully
That's what Marcus says
Your life here on earth have been filled
With luxury and pleasure
You have made yourself fat
For the day of slaughter
You have not paid the men that work in your fields
The cries of those that gather your crops
Have reached the ears of Jah, Jah Almighty
Heads a go roll down Sandy Gully
One of these days
Heads a go roll down Sandy Gully
That's what Marcus says
Dog up a Beverley Hills
A eat T-bone steak an' drink cornflakes
While poor people in the ghetto a rake an' scrape
To get a cake

Be patient my brother be patient
As a farmer is patient
As he waits for the autumn and the spring rains
To water his crops
You also must be patient
And keep your hopes up high
Happy are those who greatest desire
Is to do what Jah Jah require
Heads a go roll down Sandy Gully
One of these days
Heads a go roll down Sandy Gully
That's what Marcus says
Bald head a go roll down Sandy Gully
One of these days
Heads a go roll down Sandy Gully
That's what Marcus says
I say; you look, you look, you look
And you can't see...
I said; you listen, you listen, you listen
And you can't hear...

“Warning, Warning” c1975 Max Romeo

Produced by Max Romeo
All songs written by Max Romeo
and published by Charmax Music Ltd

Reissue production by Steve Barrow
Digital restoration by Andy Walter at
Room 63, Abbey Road Studios, London.
Mastered and edited by Kevin Metcalfe at
The Soundmasters, London
Design by Dave Smith at Intro, London
Photography by Kim Gottlieb-Walker, 1976
Thanks to Max Romeo, Rudy, Alan Walker, Mark Ainley, Lisa Barbaris
Max Romeo interviewed by Steve Barrow, Greenwich Farm 1994

Musicians

Tracks 1-10

Bass Aston 'Family Man' Barrett/Geoffrey Chung/George Fullwood/Clive Hunt
Drums Carlton Barrett/Carlton 'Santa' Davis/ Michael 'Mikey Boo' Richards/Derrick
Stewart. Guitars Phil 'Filberto' Callender/Tony Chin/Earl 'Chinna' Smith/Michael Murray
Keyboards Geoffrey Chung/Tyrone Downie/ Bernard 'Touter' Harvey/Clive Hunt/Robert
Lyn
Percussion Clive Hunt/Michael Murray/Lee Perry
Horns Richard 'Dirty Harry' Hall/Bobby Ellis/ Tommy MCook
Harmonica Tyrone Downie

Track 11

Bass Boris Gardner
Drums Michael 'Mikey Boo' Richards
Guitar Earl 'Chinna' Smith
Keyboard Winston Wright/Keith Sterling

Track 12

Drums Michael 'Mikey Boo' Richards
Bass Boris Gardner
Piano Keith Sterling
Organ/Clavinet Earl 'Wire' Lindo
Trumpet David Madden
Flugelhorn Bobby Ellis
Tenor Saxophone Glen DaCosta
Trombone Vin Gordon
Rhythm Guitar Earl 'Chinna' Smith
Lead Guitar Ernest Ranglin
Percussion Uziah 'Sticky' Thompson

Recorded at Black Ark Studio, Harry J Studio, and Randy's Studio 17 1973-1977
Engineers Lee Perry, Sylvan Morris, George Philpott, Geoffrey Chung, Ronald Logan

Max Romeo was born Max Smith,
22nd November 1944, the eldest of nine children. In the early 1950s, he came to Kingston: I
was born in Alexandria, in St. Ann. I left at the age of nine, come to Kingston. I grew up

part of the time in East Kingston, Sanders Lane. That's right at the foot of the Wareika Hills.

I left from there, - I didn't like Kingston after a while - I went to Trelawny; come back again to Greenwich Town.

In 1965, after winning a talent show run by a guy called Mr Denham in Clarendon, he started to think about music as a career: After leavin' school,

I drifted for a while. I didn't know what career I was to pursue. Then, Jamaican music was just gettin' its break on the international scene. People always tell me I have a good voice an' a good sense of humour, so I figure to give it a try. It wasn't easy; I went to most of the major producers, like Duke Reid, Coxsone, Beverley's and they figure I wasn't ready. After a few tries I met this guy Ken Lack (aka B.J. 'Bobby' Kalnek) and the Caltone label, on Mark Lane.

He use to import figurines, vase, an' all dem ting - he also was managing the Skatalites. He asked me to be a handyman, takin' 45s to the shops and radio stations.

Max cut a number of titles in 1967-68 for Caltone, including his debut "Buy Me A Rainbow", and "Rudeboy Confession", under the group name of the Emotions. They were recorded at WIRL studio with Lynn Taitt's band.

He also acquired his stage name of 'Romeo' around this time; one morning he was talking to a girl in Greenwich Farm. When the girl's father came back in the afternoon, Max was still chatting to her. The girl's father remarked that as the youth had been talking to his daughter all day, he must be a 'Romeo' and the nickname stuck. Producer Bunny Lee began calling Max by the name; when Max cut "Wet Dream" in 1969 for Bunny, it went international, reaching the top 10 of the UK charts when released on Pama Records. The song used the rhythm for Derrick Morgan's "Hold You Jack" (1968); it was banned by the BBC because of its bawdy lyric although by today's X-rated standards it is fairly tame. Morgan also produced singles on Max around this time, as did H Robinson, including "Belly Woman", "Wine Her Goosie", "Mini-Skirt Vision"; he also did covers of "Blowing In the Wind" and "Melting Pot".

As the seventies dawned, Max began recording more serious songs: I've always been a militant singer - I say what's happenin' for the people to hear. In those days people use to listen for singers to tell them what's happenin', beca' it's not everybody can read but most people hear, yunno? They hear the singers telling, look, the prices too high, things are too hard and what have you. That was the direction my music was takin' then".

As well as continuing his association with Bunny Lee, by 1970 Max was moving with producers like Lee 'Scratch' Perry and Winston 'Niney' Holness. One day Niney was reading a Maccabee bible, given to him by Robbie Shakespeare; he showed it to Max, who came up with a lyric. The next day, Max recorded "Maccabee Version" for a producer called Willie Francis, who released it on his 'Little Willie' label; it was a strong seller.

Max made crucial roots songs like "The Coming Of Jah", "Aily & Ailaloo", "Rasta Bandwagon", "Beard Man Feast" for Niney, and "Ginalship", "Babylon's Burning", "Public Enemy No:1" for Lee 'Scratch' Perry. In late 1971 he recorded "Let The Power Fall On I" for Derrick Morgan. The song was picked up by the PNP (People's National Party) and used in the 1972 election campaign: That wasn't really made for a political campaign; Michael Manley feel it was appropriate. They launched a bandwagon and we went all round the island - Port Antonio, Sav-La-Mar, Mandeville, - and make sure they won. Even in Rae Town, his (Manley's) constituency.

The PNP won a landslide victory in 1972; the expectations of the Jamaican working class were high. That year, Max recorded several more songs that supported the PNP, like "Press Along Joshua" (Soul Beat 45). Joshua was Michael Manley's political moniker - it cast him as the prophet Joshua, come to lead the people out of oppression and get rid of 'Pharaoh' (Hugh Shearer of the JLP), beating the oppressor with his "Rod of Correction". Max remembers those heady days:

The first year or so, people was questioning what's happening, is this 'socialism' ? Those songs were actually encouraging him. He was an idol of mine; I idolised two Jamaican politicians, Michael Manley and Alexander Bustamente. I had to come up with other songs to build up his confidence. It goes on for a while too, with (songs like) "Socialism Is Love"

The PNP victory caused the Jamaican bourgeoisie to become decidedly nervous; most of the rich supported the conservative JLP. They began to evacuate themselves and their money, principally to the USA, fearing that Manley wanted Jamaica to become socialist like its neighbour, Fidel Castro's Cuba. Max addressed the situation on another Soul Beat 45, "No Joshua No": With 'No Joshua No', that was the boom; that one was telling him, look: 'You took them out of bondage and they thank you for it/You sing them songs of love and they try to sing with it/But now in the desert, tired, battered and bruised/ They think they are forsaken/They think they have been used/So since you are my friend Joshua/ I want you to know/ Rasta is watching you' He appreciate it; he invites me to Jamaica House and commend me on the song. He said he had it on a cassette in his car, he played it night and day. It's his inspiration to do something. He came with the Land Lease project, the Crash Programme, JAMAL (a literacy programme) - because 90% of the people couldn't read and write. All social programmes he bring in 1972-3 was influenced by the song 'No Joshua No', he told me that with his own mouth, so it was effective. It did what it suppose to do.

So that was the end of my political song career !

Max continued recording for a variety of producers; he cut the folklore adaptation "Chi Chi Bud" for Randy's, "Word Sound Power" for Prince Buster and "Jordan River" with Glen Adams for Alvin 'GG' Ranglin. Although his work was no longer directly linked to the PNP, his songs, like 1974's ferociously anti-clerical "The Reverend" for Winston Riley were no less political. Now his vision was informed by Rasta - as on "Every Man Ought To Know" from 1973 included here - and Garveyite ideology, as well as socialism. He began releasing 45s on the Black World label from 1974; the same outfit also released sides by the Ethiopians ("Conference Blues" 1975). Many of these cuts, together with songs like "Three Blind Mice" that had originally appeared on the Upsetter label in 1974 - were collected on the album that forms the core of this reissue. "Revelation Time" was originally released in the UK on the short-lived 'Sound Tracs' imprint in 1975, (it was later reissued briefly on United Artists in the USA) . It was a crucial album in Max's artistic development:

'Revelation Time' marks the beginning of my idea of makin' a concept album, rather than just packing tracks. You sit down, you write ten songs, an' you make sure they correspond. The whole album tells a story - someone is not just listenin' to music, they're listenin' to a story. Each track is projectin' something, an' each of them is basically depicting the same subject; you call that 'concept album'. That is my first concept album - it had to be good, in order to get that concept over. That album is really a revolutionary album. It came from 1972, when we had a revolutionary movement, with Mr Michael Manley trying to change society from capitalism to socialism. At the time I was socialist-minded - beca' it's the only form of poor people government, socialism. So, bein'

a socialist, that album was actually fed into that area; it was helping to project awareness among really uneducated people.

Many of its songs had been recorded at Lee Perry's Black Ark where Max had become a valued collaborator of the legendary producer: I'm like the second brain around; I don't know if I overrate the relationship between me and Scratch, but I don't think he had another relationship with an artist as he had with me. I was like his number one man.

Him and Bunny Lee - in my book Bunny Lee is the greatest producer ever live in reggae music. With those two people, you always tick when you go round them, you always remember the vibes, it invoke the old vibe. Tappa Zukie have that type of dynamic power too, a very good producer.

With Perry, Max went on to make the "War In A Babylon" set, released by Island in the UK in 1976; early that year Max had enjoyed a Jamaican hit with the title track. The vitriolic "Fire Fe The Vatican" on this set is another cut to this great Upsetter rhythm. The "Reconstruction" album followed in 1977 produced by Max himself. "Melt Away" was included on that album; the cut included here appeared only as a 12" single on the Afric label in 1977.

Max left Jamaica in 1978, taking up residence in the USA. He worked with Michael Butler, the US producer of the musical "Hair", writing songs for and appearing in the Broadway musical "Reggae". Max also worked with the Rolling Stones on their album "Emotional Rescue"; guitarist Keith Richards subsequently played on Max's album "Holding Out My Love To You".

Throughout the 1980s Max continued to work; he appeared on the Japanese version of Sunsplash in 1984; he also released two albums on Lloyd Barnes' Bullwackie label, based in Bronx, NY. Max Romeo returned to Jamaica in 1990 residing in Greenwich Town, where he still lives today with his family. He has been touring on a pretty regular basis since the early 1990s, playing festivals and concerts in Europe, particularly in Spain and France where he enjoys considerable popularity. The same period also saw two albums - "Far I Captain Of My Ship" and "Our Rights" - produced by UK soundman Jah Shaka in 1992; Tappa Zukie issued another excellent album in 1995. His latest set is "Selassie I Forever", released early 1999 on Mafia & Fluxy's label, produced by the UK duo and Max himself.

Throughout his long career Max Romeo has proved that he is one of Jamaica's most enduring stars; twenty-five years after it was recorded his epochal "Revelation Time" album makes its first appearance on CD and takes its rightful place as cornerstone of Max Romeo's considerable catalogue.

Steve Barrow April 1999