

01. Blazing Horns *extended* (8:18)
02. Tears Of Love (2:51)
03. Glorious Lion (3:14)
04. Mine Eyes (3:02)
05. Jamaican Place (3:46)
06. Yellow Bird (4:23)
07. Tommy's Mood (4:23)
08. Ites Of Zion (3:31)
09. Jah (2:31)
10. Lamb's Bread (6:42)
11. Riding West *12" Mix* (5:18)
12. More Music (2:24)
13. Tubby's Control (3:35)
14. Everyday Sax (2:50)
15. South Side Feeling (2:54)
16. When I Fall In Dub (2:59)
17. Far Over Yonder (3:05)
18. Gold Street Skank (3:01)
19. Harry Meet Tommy (3:15)
20. Way Down In South (2:36)

Total Time 75:01

The tenor saxophonist & flautist Tommy McCook [born Havana, Cuba 1927, died May 5th 1998 Atlanta USA] left an indelible stamp on the course of modern Jamaican music both as founding member of the legendary Skatalites and as a master session musician thereafter. His interest in music was stimulated early on in his life; his mother had returned from Cuba with her young family to Kingston and worked at the Bournemouth Club. When he was 11 he entered the world-renowned Alpha Boys School; there he received his first musical training. In 1943 he joined Eric Dean's Orchestra, one of the leading Jamaican swing bands of the period; from there he worked in the vibrant Jamaican jazz & swing scene, including a stint with bands led by Don Hitchman and Roy Coburn, which lasted until the early 1950s. In 1954 he relocated to the Bahamas, not returning to Kingston until 1962. Coxsone Dodd, mindful of his competitors in the sound system scene, asked him to join and lead an all-star band the producer was assembling. Eventually, Tommy joined; according to accounts of the key protagonists, it was Tommy who christened the band 'Skatalites'.

Between 1964-1965, the band recorded extensively for Coxsone Dodd, Duke Reid, Lloyd Daley, Lesley Kong, Vincent Chin and Justin Yap. After trombonist Don Drummonds' arrest and incarceration for the murder of his girlfriend, Tommy moved on to the studio of Arthur 'Duke' Reid, where he fronted the Supersonics. Like the Skatalites, this group in its turn became the defining instrumental voice of rock steady. In the mid-seventies, some former members of the Skatalites band also participated in sessions for producers Clive Hunt and former Skatalites bassist Lloyd Brevett, which resulted in an album, although the band never really properly got back together - without of course, Drummond who had died in Bellevue Mental Hospital in

1969 - until a series of gigs at the Blue Monk Jazz Gallery in Kingston in 1983. This led on to live dates in New York City and ultimately, to a new record contract with Island Records. In 1984 that company released the LP "The Return Of The Big Guns" and the group played to a rapturous reception at the London Sunsplash that year. They also cut a live LP at the original Jamaican Sunsplash. McCook and the Skatalites toured the world - as they should have done in the 1960s, if things had been different. They did record more albums, principally for Shanachie Records in the USA; Tommy made a couple of sets for US revival-ska labels Moonska and Stubborn.

After his 1960s heyday, Tommy hooked up with trumpeter Bobby Ellis, along with alto saxophonist and former Treasure Isle band mate Herman Marquis to supply horn lines on a significant portion of 1970s reggae sessions. In the process, he worked with nearly every Jamaican producer of note, supplying the right hornlines to sides without number as key member of the Revolutionaries, Aggrovators and other studio groups. He also laid down several instrumental sets under his own name [or in tandem with trumpeter Bobby Ellis] for Bunny Lee, Rupie Edwards, Winston Riley, Vivian 'Yabby You' Jackson and Glenmore Brown. Some of the work Tommy did for the two latter producers makes up this current reissue, which brings together two 1970s vinyl LPs; for good measure also included is a 12" single recorded in 1977 for producer Bunny Lee. At heart a gifted jazzman, Tommy was able to fit his conception to the varying approaches of the producers involved with ease. The first 9 tracks on this reissue were originally issued on vinyl in the set "Blazing Horns" on the short-lived Grove Music label in 1979; coincidentally, the original LP was mastered by Kevin Metcalfe who also mastered this current reissue for CD some 24 years later ! The title track of this reissue is also extended by a different b-side dub mix, originally called "No Water" on the 1979 7" 45 rpm Grove release. Track 10 appeared as the b-side of a Grove 12", a version of a Patrick Andy tune. Track 11 is the sole Bunny Lee-produced cut on this CD, "Riding West", a 'rockers' recut of a Billy Hope r&b tune originally recorded by Hope - brother of the celebrated saxophonist Lynn Hope - for the New Jersey-based label Savoy in 1956. The Glen Brown LP - tracks 12-20 - first surfaced on a white label pressing circa 1977, but never saw an official release, even though it was assigned a catalogue number [GR 010]. Tommy had first recorded for Glen Brown in 1972 [ the 45 rpm "More Music" / "Tubby's Control"]; the remaining tracks were recorded over the next few years, whenever Glen could obtain finance for studio time. Tommy blows over a selection of Glen's best rhythms, including "Slaving" ["Everyday Sax"] "Dirty Harry" ["Harry Meet Tommy"] and others. This represents the first appearance on CD for all selections.

Steve Barrow / August 2003

sources:

Brian Keyo's booklet notes to the Heartbeat CD "Tribute To Tommy" give a good account of Tommy's career in far greater detail; the music is similarly recommended.

tracks 1-10 produced by: Vivian 'Yabby You' Jackson

track 11 produced: by Edward 'Striker' Lee

tracks 12-20 produced by: Glenmore Brown

all tracks mixed at King Tubby's studio by King Tubby / Prince Jammy

reissue produced / annotated by: Steve Barrow

digital restoration by: Tony Webster@ CEDAR Audio, Cambridge

mastered for CD by: Kevin Metcalfe @ The Soundmasters, London

vinyl transfers by Colin Bird

design by: Simon Dovar @ Intro, London

cover photo by: David Corio

thanks to: Bob Harding, Patrick Payet, Juha Vaahtera,

Musicians:

Tommy McCook, tenor sax

tracks 1-10 only

Bobby Ellis: trumpet

Sly Dunbar: drums

Robbie Shakespeare: bass

Clinton Fearon: lead guitar

Albert Griffiths: rhythm guitar

Bernard Harvey: piano

Ansel Collins: organ