

RED, GOLD & GREEN MEMORIES

Compiled by Wendy Russell

There are reggae artists I treasure, with songs I play every radio show, no matter that the CD is no longer current. One such artist is roots man, WINSTON JARRETT and the RIGHTEOUS FLAMES, so I searched him out to find what might be his own fond memory:



Alton Ellis

I grew up in Kingston, Jamaica in the government houses there. The streets are numbered First Street and so on, to Thirteenth Street. I lived on Fourth, ALTON ELLIS lived on 5th Street. He was much older than me, maybe 22. We were all good neighbors, like a family so to speak. MORTIMER PLANNO lived on Fifth too and all the Rasta they come from north,

south, east and west for the nyabingi there. He would teach the children too. I'd go listen and learn. They would sing in Amharic and I liked to play the drums there. I remember Mortimer telling me that if I was going to come in as a youth amongst elders, to cover my head. This was in the late colonial days in the '50s and '60s. For community development in Trenchtown they put on Opportunity Knocks! at the Girl's Club on Seventh. It was so the youth had an opportunity to get on a stage – one band backed everybody – and put on a good show and maybe get a chance at fame. One day I went up there solo. I was 17 and sang "Girl, I've got a date." I put everything I had into the music – I was not scared, but instead feeling very happy to get my first time on stage – but KEN BOOTHE took first and I placed second. He won a trophy and since it was at a school we won presents like books, pens, ink, rulers, pants, shirts – like that. JOE HIGGS, DELROY WILSON and Alton Ellis were there too. It was on fire! Me and

Alton Ellis next started a group together: ALTON ELLIS AND THE FLAMES. The others had their careers too and I later started my own group called WINSTON JARRETT AND THE RIGHTEOUS FLAMES.

We just had our history lesson! Can you imagine Mortimer Planno, one of Rastafari's most prominent elders, living just down the street? What about this next memory - another likkle lesson from agent and manager, COPELAND FORBES:

My memory of SUGAR MINOTT is from 1993 when I did a tour, REGGAE SUPERFEST '93, which had Sugar Minott, JUNIOR REID and MUTABARUKA along with the DEAN FRASER-led 809 BAND. We did six shows in East Germany which was the first time since the Berlin Wall came down, that an authentic reggae concert was held



Sugar Minott

in that part of Germany. Sugar Minott was such a big hit in that region that he was mobbed by reggae fans when he went shopping in a plaza – he had to run for his life as the fans wanted a piece of him for souvenir!

Let's next hear from CARLOS GUTIERREZ, way down south in Calexico, a town that bumps the border of Mexico:

I was 10 or 12 years old. We ended up at a friend's party with a local reggae band playing outside. That's where I first heard reggae. I was eating chips and salsa. I asked who is that singing? Someone said that it was INNER CIRCLE. I loved it and went and purchased the cassette tape right away, Inner Circle's *Reggae Dancer*. I felt I had found something I was missing... I don't know how to say it, but the lyrics and the beat relaxed my mind and gave me inner peace. I knew it was all right

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Martin Campbell

for me as I listened to it over and over and chose it as my favorite music. I had to go buy reggae in Yuma, AZ back then. Now my favorite artists are MARTIN CAMPBELL of course, MIDNITE, INI KIMOZE, ISRAEL VIBRATION, GROUNDATION, SNOW (Canada), CULTURA PROPHETICA (Puerto Rico), GONDWANA (Chile) and CHALA RASTA (Argentina). I found reggae – and myself.



Circa 1975, Promoter Warren Smith, pictured here (center) with Sugar Minott Jackie Mittoo

Here is a memory from early JA recording pioneer, EPIPHANY RECORDS founder and SNWMF promoter, WARREN SMITH:

In July, 1975 I was attracted to San Francisco to join KINGSTON PRODUCTIONS to do a three-day concert at the historic WINTERLAND AUDITORIUM, bringing in – for the first time ever – TOOTS AND THE original MAYTALS, INNER CIRCLE,

featuring JACOB MILLER with EARL CHINNA SMITH on guitar, along with a young upstart singer named DENNIS BROWN. Tickets were \$5 advance, \$6 at the door. The show took place and it was great! After the show I was approached about the possibility of Toots performing for MICK JAGGER. Mick had seen that Toots was in the States and wanted Toots for his birthday party, so we did the party for Mick. Dennis Brown had shows in JA so he went home, but Jacob Miller and Inner Circle played too. I remember Jacob Miller was real extroverted; he'd start wooing the girls from the stage and by shows' end he'd jump from the stage and disappear with one. He'd be gone all night, the next day, miss sound check and then strut in at show time, jump up on stage, give a great show, then do the same thing all over again!

FAZAL PRENDERGAST, who we lost in a tragic road accident last year, was not only a foundational musician in reggae music (look on the back of your old roots reggae albums and CDs!), he was also a beloved father. His daughter, DEARDHRA MCGEOUGH PRENDERGAST, age 10, treasures her memories and shares with us:

I remember when my daddy Fazal would play at reggae festivals or shows, he would bring my mom, COLETTE, and me along with him. I loved this part because we got to stay at very nice hotels where I could go swimming. My daddy would always let me choose which bed I wanted first, and he and

my mom would take the other.. I always chose the bed by the window so I could look out and see everyone. My daddy would then take me to the show with mum. There I would get to meet lots of people and sometimes I would meet kids like me and make new friends. At the show I get to stay up late and dance to his music. I would stay backstage until he finished playing. After, he would like to go straight back to the hotel. At the hotel while I played, he would be busy getting his band paid and making important phone calls. He would let me take his calls for him sometimes. My daddy always got up in the morning very, very early. He would go to the sauna and then come back for mum and I, to go swimming with him. He taught me to swim – I have a picture beside my bed of my daddy and I swimming together. We are both laughing and splashing water at each other. On the way back home, daddy would always stop at the mall and buy me something like new clothes – or like last time he got me a skateboard and a guitar. I love my daddy very much and I miss him very, very much.

Here is a message from a man with a song...

Greetings in the mighty name of JAH! MISTA MAJAH P here and I want to share an experience I had last year performing in California at MONTEREY BAY REGGAE FESTIVAL. I was doing my "Mama" song when I saw a couple of people standing in the crowd, like they were lost in thought. I saw tears were coming out of one of the guys' eyes. After I finished performing they

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approached me. I thought maybe they were family but they did not know each other. They explained to me that they both had lost their mothers and when I did that song it brought back so much memory of the good times they each shared with their mother, and the advice they got and took. They said it was good to know that I was giving praise to all mothers. That moment was special for me because I had touched the life of another with one of my songs. It brought a tear to my eye. I felt the love of these brethren and the love for all mothers worldwide."

Music is indeed a powerful conduit. We are able to glimpse inside a music maker's visions by studying the lyrical creations they put forth. Reggae's premier anthem - heralding roots and rights to the upmost highest - came from the Abyssinians, written by this man, BERNARD "SATTA" COLLINS, who has rejoined the classic roots harmony group in the last year after a long absence:

I remember working as a messenger during the late '60s. I had decided to save, in regards to recording my first two songs, "Satta Massa Gana" and "Jerusalem." I was told by COXSONE DODD that the session would cost 100 pounds, which was about JA11,000 dollars. I remember it was March 1969, at the age of 21, that I had my first recording. That record now, has one of the

most played songs, "Satta Massa Gana" - give thanks - released on my own Clinch record label.

Next, radio producer and DJ, ANA AVITAL tells us that Cupid dances to a reggae beat in upstate New York:

It was July, 1991 and REGGAE SUNSPASH was in town on that glorious day, performing at a wonderful outdoor venue, the SARATOGA SPRINGS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER. I was backstage meeting and greeting folks and was introduced to a man with a camera who took a few pictures of me with MAXI PRIEST and with DENNIS BROWN. The man said a few words and my exact thoughts were, "What a nice man!" He had a striking melodic, soothing vibe that caught my attention. Well, that wonderful cameraman became a very fun friend! We laughed and giggled for hours on the telephone and hung out as friends do. We saw one another at a few reggae shows and exchanged the music with one another; he turned me on to U-ROY; I turned him onto others. I remember dancing to romantic BERES HAMMOND ballads once. Then, over quality time, cupid shot her arrows. This gem of a man, JAHVTZ, became my husband with whom I share my heart and soul. Our passion for the Music, the Message and one another continues to beat to the reggae riddims. With his steadfast support, I pursued another career and completed a lengthy program at radio and television broadcasting school and - low and behold, I now have my own weekly show on commercial radio! However, none of this would be possible

without the steadfast love of my man, our love of reggae music, and our Blessings from the One. Our path is the Reggae Way. Our yearly cycle follows the Judaic Way and we are on the Way... for our 15th year we are planning our way from Saratoga, New York, to REGGAE ON THE RIVER in California. Onward and Forward!"

It seems like all my own happy reggae memories involve food somehow:

This is one of my favorite memories and yes there's food! Whole fresh red snapper. MIKEY DREAD is in the kitchen saucin' up some onions, peppers – and more peppers – in brown gravy. SCIENTIST was nearby with my husband, MARK BERNSTEIN, watching sports on TV with the sound down and MISTY IN ROOTS playing on the stereo with the volume up loud. The kitchen door was wide open and FULLY FULLWOOD, TONY CHIN, DALE HAUSKINS, ZEBBY and I were just outside. We were enjoying the garden, the blessings of the day and relishing the night's performance to come, all while watching



Wendy Russell

The Abyssinian's Bernard "Satta" Collins visualizes that "land, far, far away where there's no night, there's only day..."

Fully Fullwood gut and clean the fish. Fully did not like my dull knife and grumbled, "Wendy, you need a new knife – you need a ras sharp knife!"

I remember that day often, probably every time I use a knife, but also in my daily life Fully's words keep coming back to me at the strangest times; in a tense situation I might think, "I best be ras sharp now!" Or at my radio show as I select, "This better sound ras sharp!" pops in my head. Or deep in conversation, when struggling to be clear, I pray that my words become ras sharp and go right to the heart of the problem. By his few words in jest, Fully conceptualized the power of Rasta fully (ah ha! Is that how he got his name?), so that I eventually realized the fullness thereof. I just know that this world is not easy – we gotta' be ras sharp! ♡

Wendy Russell lives in Fresno, CA, with husband, Mark, three dogs and more than 70 turtles and tortoises, where she loves to spend time in her gardens and with her grandkids. An active promoter and festival organizer for many years, Wendy is also a radio DJ on *Satélite Radio Bilingue*, with its many stations nationwide, along with a monthly political talk show on KFCF 88.1fm, *Stir It Up*. Along with being Co-Editor (she asked to slow down a little, so she and Kristine joined forces), writer and photographer for *Reggae Festival Guide*, she has Top 10s, CD reviews and photographs online and in various publications whenever asked, including Wendy's Perspective columns at www.JahWorks.org. reggaeW@aol.com 559/226 9280



Wendy Russell