

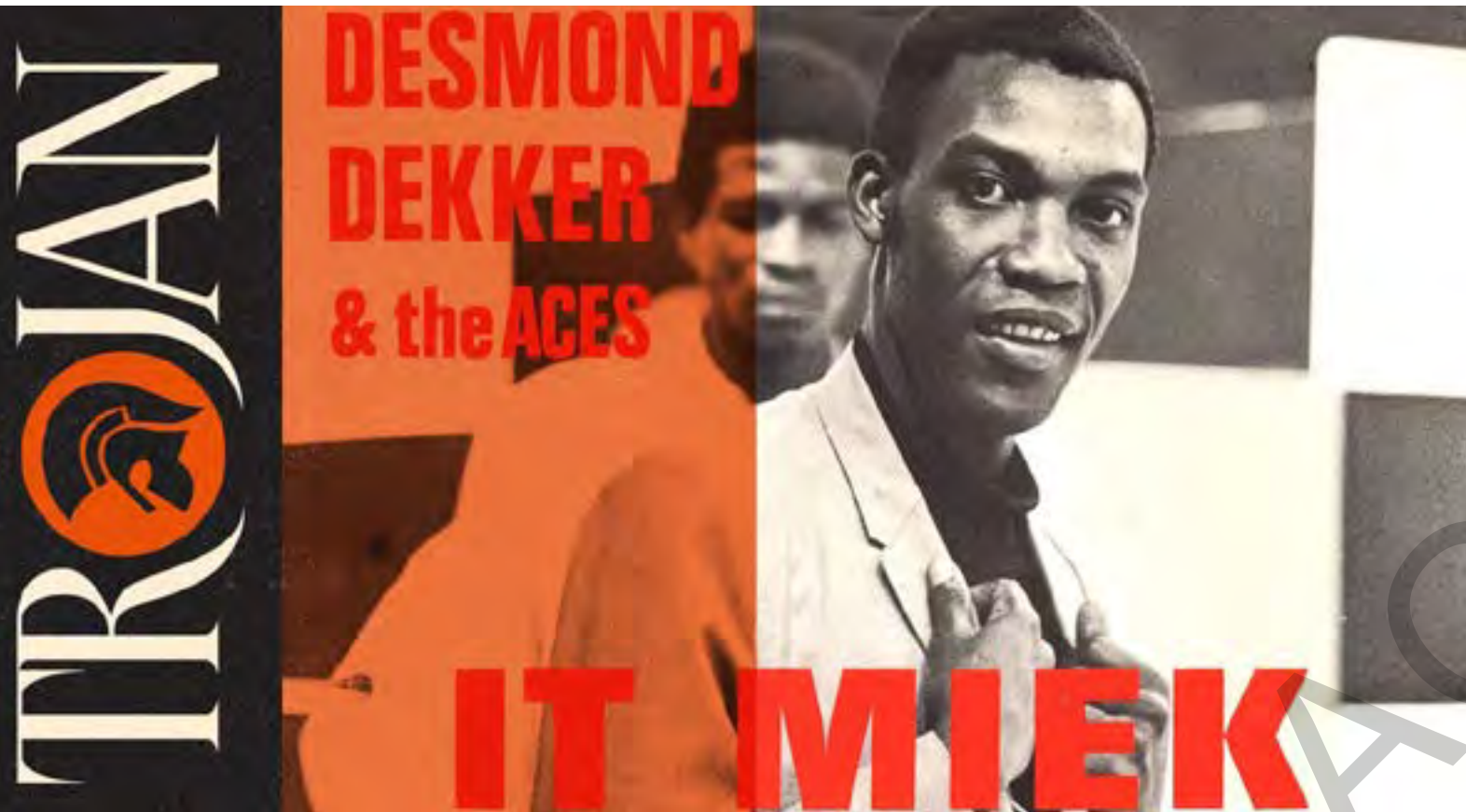
15 Roots Reggae Songs You Should Know

While a population of slightly more than 2.5 million people makes Jamaica roughly the size of Houston, Texas, the influence and creative legacy of classic roots reggae—the Caribbean island’s most beloved export—on contemporary music, culture, and fashion are immeasurable. As I write this, Omi’s “Cheerleader,” a reggae-influenced pop music juggernaut, is still at the top of the charts worldwide after becoming one of the summer’s most ubiquitous party anthems. In the 30 or so years since it began to morph into dance-hall, reggae has become the go-to soundtrack for civil- and human-rights uprisings, social and political revolutions, Arab Spring rebellions, stone-y bro-com movies, and, inevitably, saccharine cruise ship TV ads. The 20th century produced more than its share of perfect cultural storms: Paris in the ’20s. New York City in the ’50s. London in the ’60s. But when it comes to music, few of these lauded historical flashpoints have had the enduring contemporary influence of Kingston in the ’70s. Rarely have there been so many that burned so brightly, from such a small and relatively isolated area, and in such a short period of time, with 10,000 sun-drenched hours under their belts and a colossal score to settle.

It Miek
by Desmond Dekker & The Aces
1970

Desmond Dekker

ESSENTIAL ARTIST COLLECTION



Artist Info

Desmond Dekker (born Desmond Adolphus Dacres; 16 July 1941 – 25 May 2006) was a Jamaican ska, rocksteady and reggae singer-songwriter and musician. Together with his backing group the Aces (consisting of Wilson James and Easton Barrington Howard), he had one of the earliest international reggae hits with “Israelites” (1968). Other hits include “007 (Shanty Town)” (1967), “It Mek” (1969) and “You Can Get It If You Really Want” (1970).

Song Info

It Mek (sometimes appearing as “A It Mek” or German[discuss] “It Miek”) was a 1970 hit song by the Jamaican musicians Desmond Dekker & the Aces. After being re-released in June 1969, the single reached number 7 in the UK Singles Chart. The track was written by Dekker (under his real name of Desmond Dacres) and his record producer, Leslie Kong, and was recorded in Jamaica with the brass accompaniment added in the UK. It spent eleven weeks in the UK chart, and by September 1970 had sold over a million copies worldwide. A gold record was presented by Ember Records, the distributors of Dekker’s recordings.

The song’s title is Jamaican patois meaning “that’s why”. According to the liner notes the phrase was also used as a schoolyard taunt roughly meaning “that’s what you get.”

Lyrics

Aaaahhhh

You think I never see you when you jump over de wall
You think I never see you when you accidentally fall
Me said a it mek, mek you pop your bitter gall
A it mek, while you accidentally fall
A it mek, hear she crying out for ice water

Aaaahh, aaaaahh

I check you out and you’re cool (cold), girl
I dig you out and you’re cool (cold), girl
Rock it to me, children

I told you once and I told you twice
Why, sweet nanny goat a go run him belly good
Me said a it mek, mek you pop your bitter gall
A it mek, while you accidentally fall
A it mek, hear she crying out for ice water

I check you out and you’re cool (cold), girl
I dig you out and you’re cool (cold), girl
Rock it to me, children

I told you once and I told you twice
Why, sweet nanny goat a go run him belly good
Me said a it mek, mek you pop your bitter gall
A it mek, while you accidentally fall
A it mek, hear she crying out for ice water

Aaaaahh, aaaaahh, aaaaahh



You Don't Love Me
Dawn Penn
1994

**DAWN
PENN**



Artist Info

Dawn Penn is a Jamaican reggae singer. She started her musical career during the rocksteady era, between 1967 and 1969, but is most known for her chart topping single “You Don’t Love Me (No, No, No)” which became a worldwide hit in 1994.

Dawn Penn is one of the original queens of reggae music. A native of Kingston, Jamaica, she grew up in a musical family, studying piano, and classical violin and performing with her sisters Pat and Audrey in churches. Her first recording was “When I’m Gonna Be Free” in 1966. She was then recorded by the legendary Coxsonne Dodd at Studio One and her first hit came in 1967 with the title “You Don’t Love Me – No, No, No”, one of the most famous reggae hits of all time which has been covered by countless artists around the world.

Song Info

“You Don’t Love Me (No, No, No)” is a song by Jamaican singer Dawn Penn, released in February 1994 by Big Beat as the first single from her first studio album, No, No, No (1994). The song’s lyrics are credited to Penn, Bo Diddley and Willie Cobbs, and production was handled by Steely & Cleve.

Penn had originally recorded a version of Cobbs’ 1960 song “You Don’t Love Me” in 1967, incorporating elements of its music and lyrics. It is claimed that the Cobbs song was, in turn, based on Diddley’s 1955 song “She’s Fine, She’s Mine”. Thus, both are credited as songwriters on Penn’s recording.

Lyrics

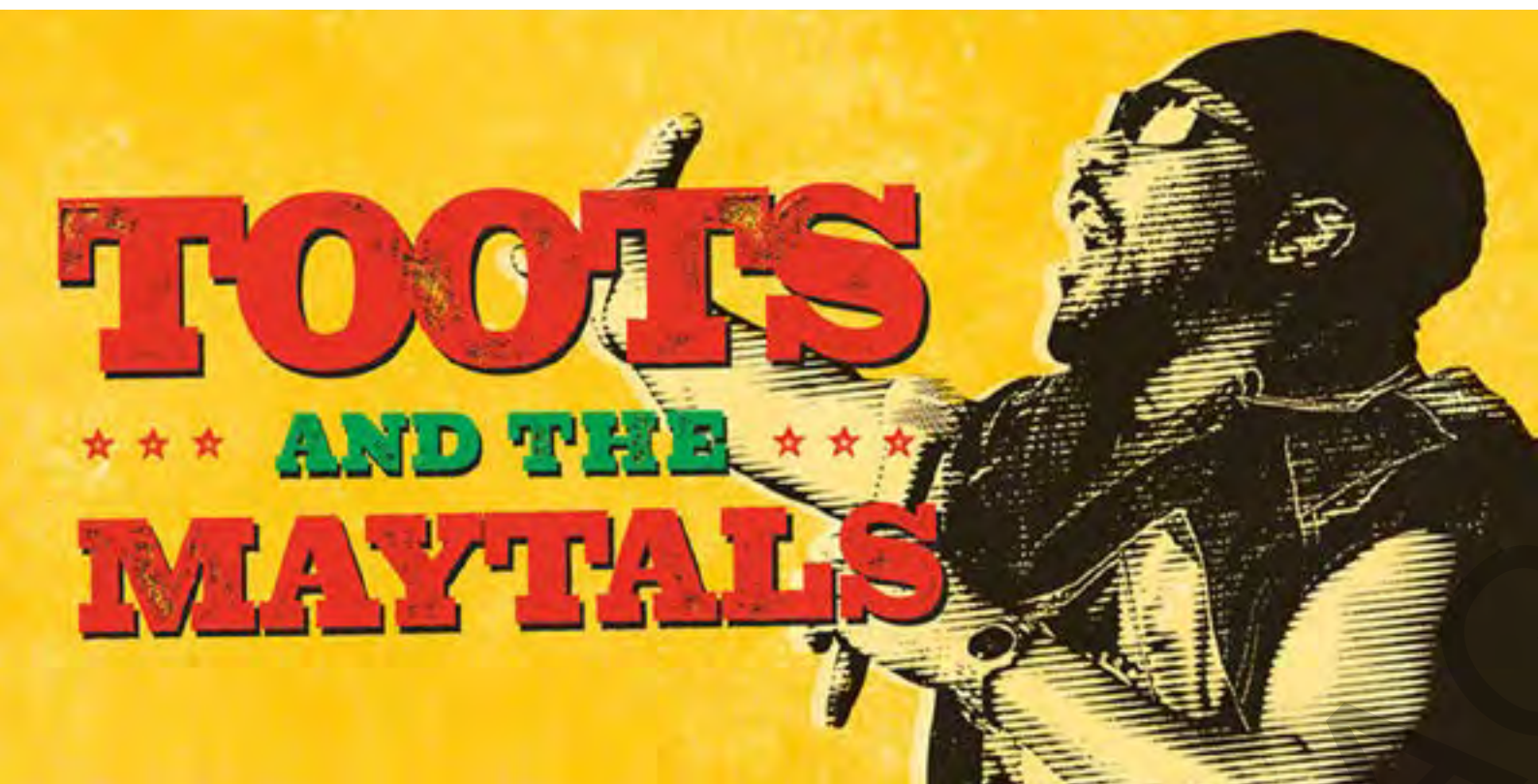
No, no, no
You don’t love me
And I know now
No, no, no
You don’t love me
Yes, I know now

‘Cause you left me, baby
And I got no place to go now
No, no, no
I’ll do any little thing you say, boy
No, no, no
I’ll do any little thing you say, boy
And if you ask me, baby
I’ll get on my knees and pray, boy

No, no, no
You don’t love me
And I know now
No, no, no
You don’t love me
Yes, I know now



54-46 That's My Number
by Toots and the Maytals
1968



Artist Info

The Maytals, known from 1972 to 2020 as Toots and the Maytals, are a Jamaican musical group, one of the best known ska and rocksteady vocal groups. The Maytals were formed in the early 1960s and were key figures in popularizing reggae music.

Frontman Toots Hibbert, who died in 2020, was considered a reggae pioneer on par with Bob Marley. His soulful vocal style was compared to Otis Redding, and led him to be named by Rolling Stone as one of the 100 Greatest Singers. After Hibbert's death, the Maytals indicated that they would continue as a working group.

Song Info

54-46 (That's My Number) was originally released on the Beverley's label in Jamaica and the Pyramid label in the UK.

A follow-up version released a year later, "54-46 Was My Number", was one of the first reggae songs to receive widespread popularity outside Jamaica, and is seen as being one of the defining songs of the genre. It has been anthologised repeatedly and the titles of several reggae anthologies include "54-46" in their title. The lyrics describe Toots' time in prison after being arrested for possession of marijuana.

Lyrics

Stick it up, mister!
Hear what I say sir, yeah yeah
Get your hands in the air, sir!
Then you will get no hurt, mister, no no no

I said yeah (I said yeah)
What they say (listen what they say)
Don't you hear? I say, yeah (yeah yeah)
Listen what they say (listen what they say)

Do you believe I would take such a thing with me
And give it to a police man?
I wouldn't do that (ooh, ooh)
And if I do that, I would say "Sir
Come on and put the charge on me"
I wouldn't do that, no (ooh, ooh)
I wouldn't do that (ooh, ooh)

Give it to me one time (huh)
Give it to me two times (huh-huh)
Give it to me three times (huh-huh-huh)
Give it to me four times (huh-huh-huh-huh)

54-46 was my number
Right now, someone else has that number

54-46 was my number, was my number
Right now, someone else has that number

I said yeah (I said yeah)
Listen what they say (listen what they say)
Oh I say hear me now (yeah yeah)
Listen what they say (listen what they say)

Give it to me one time (huh)
Give it to me two times (huh-huh)
Gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme
Gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme
No, no, no, no

I'm not a fool to hurt myself
So I was innocent of what they done to me
They was wrong
They were wrong (ooh, ooh)



Sweat (A la la la la long)

by Inner Circle

1992



Artist Info

Consisted of brothers Roger Lewis and Ian Lewis on guitar and bass (together with different backing players also known as the Fatman Riddim Section), Bernard "Touter" Harvey on keyboards and lead singer Jacob Miller were responsible for the international successful career of Inner Circle with the pro Weed / anti cocaine hymn "Mary Mary" and the Island Gold Album "Everything Is Great" in late 1979 / early 1980. After the untimely death of the legendary Jacob Miller in March 1980, the group lost its Island Records contract and had a commercial drought for more than a decade before hitting big time again with the summer smash hit "Sweat (A La La La Long)" (1993) and the title track for the Hollywood movie "Bad Boys" with then Lead Singer Calton Coffie.

Song Info

This track was by Inner Circle, a Jamaican reggae fusion group, released first in July 1992 as the lead single from their twelfth album, Bad to the Bone. The song is a catchy and sensual tune that invites a woman to dance and get intimate with the singer. It contains the refrain "a la la la la long", which has been interpreted as a euphemism for sex.

The song was a huge hit in several countries, reaching number one in Belgium, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Switzerland, and Zimbabwe. It also reached number three in the UK and number 16 in the US.

Lyrics

I've been watchin' you
A la, la, la, la long
A la, la, la, la long, long li long, long, long
Come on
A la, la, la, la long
A la, la, la, la long, long li long, long, long
Hey

Standing across the room
I saw you smile
I said I wanna talk to you
For a little while
But before I make my move
My emotions starts running wild
My tongue gets tied
And that's no lie

I'm lookin' in your eyes
I'm lookin' in your big brown eyes
Ooh, yeah
And I've got this to say to you
Hey

Girl, I want to make you sweat
Sweat till you can't sweat no more

And if you cry out
I'm gonna push it some more-ore-ore
Girl, I want to make you sweat
Sweat till you can't sweat no more
And if you cry out
I'm gonna push it
Push it, push it some more

A la, la, la, la long
A la, la, la, la long, long li long, long, long
Come on
A la, la, la, la long
A la, la, la, la long, long li long, long, long

So I say to myself
If she loves me or not
But the dread don't know
That love is his to get
With a little bit of this
And a little bit of that
The lyrics goes on the attack
My tongue gets tied
And that's no lie
A la, la, la, la long
A la, la, la, la long, long li long, long, long



Beat Down Babylon
by Junior Byles
2018



Artist Info

Junior Byles (born Kenneth Byles Jr. in a poor part of Kingston on 2 February 1948; died 15 May 2025) was a Jamaican reggae artist remembered for his strong spiritual warnings about materialism and egoism. By 1975, Byles' health had begun to decline. Suffering from depression, he was deeply affected by the death of Haile Selassie, unable to reconcile this with his belief in Selassie's divinity, and attempted suicide, but survived. He then had a very tough life and was living on the street in USA, scavenging for food in dumpsters, and begging from passers-by. Byles occasionally resurfaced, recording albums 1989, and 1992. He returned to live performance in 2004 in Jamaica, receiving positive reviews. His legacy of recordings from the 1970s, however, maintain his status as one of roots reggae's leading talents.

Song Info

Junior Byles' song "Beat Down Babylon" is a militant anthem within the roots reggae genre, expressing a Rastafarian perspective against oppression and advocating for repatriation. The song, produced by Lee Perry, uses strong language and a powerful rhythm to convey its message of resisting "Babylon," a term used in Rastafarianism to represent societal and political oppression. It was a major hit and is considered a key track in the development of roots reggae. Lee Perry's distinctive production style, with its unique sonic textures and use of sound effects, contributes to the song's powerful impact.

Lyrics

Say, mi no like dem kind of babylon
Say, mi no dig dem kind of wicked men
For, I am a righteous Rasta man
And I am a dread dread one I man

I an' I goin' beat down babylon
I an' I goin' beat down babylon
I an' I must whip dem wicked men
I an' I must whip dem wicked men

Oh, what a wicked situation
I and I starvin'
This might cause a revolution
And a dangerous pollution

I and I goin' beat down babylon
I and I must beat down babylon
I and I goin' whip dem wicked men
I and I goin' beat down babylon (Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah)

Whip dem, whip dem (Lord)
Whip dem, whip dem (Lord)
Whip dem, whip dem (Lord)
Whip dem, whip dem (Lord)

Oh, what a wicked situation
I and I time for salvation
This may cause a revolution
And a dangerous pollution

I and I must beat down babylon
I and I goin' beat down babylon
I and I must beat down babylon
I and I must whip dem wicked men (Wicked!)

Whip dem, whip dem (Lord)
Whip dem, whip dem (Lord)
Whip dem, whip dem (Lord)
Whip dem, whip dem



The Harder They Come
by Jimmy Cliff
1972



Artist Info

Jimmy Cliff (born July 30, 1944, Somerton, Jamaica) is a Jamaican singer and songwriter who was instrumental in introducing reggae to an international audience, largely through his performance in the landmark film *The Harder They Come* (1972).

Just into his teens, Cliff began recording soon after moving from the countryside to Kingston, making several singles before topping the Jamaican charts with his own composition, "Hurricane Hattie," one of his earliest efforts for Leslie Kong's Beverly Records. He had several more hits that combined pop and ska influences. After relocating to London in 1965 at the behest of Chris Blackwell of Island Records, Cliff broadened his musical approach to incorporate soul and rhythm and blues as he moved in the direction of reggae.

Song Info

The soundtrack for the seminal Jamaican film of the same name, released in 1972, is said to have brought reggae to the world, or at least to the United States. Jimmy Cliff stars as Ivanhoe "Ivan" Martin, a character loosely based on the real-life Jamaican outlaw Ivanhoe Martin who writes and records the title track before getting caught up in a life of crime. It is impossible to overstate the importance of this song, this soundtrack, and this film in the history and legacy of Jamaican music.

Lyrics

Well, they tell me of a pie up in the sky
Waiting for me when I die
But between the day you're born and when you die
They never seem to hear even your cry

So as sure as the sun will shine
I'm gonna get my share now, what's mine
And then the harder they come
The harder they fall, one and all
Ooh, the harder they come
The harder they fall, one and all

Well, the oppressors are trying to keep me down
Trying to drive me underground
And they think that they have got the battle won
I say forgive them Lord, they know not what they've done

Cause as sure as the sun will shine
I'm gonna get my share now, what's mine
And then the harder they come
The harder they fall, one and all
Ooh, the harder they come
Harder they fall, one and all

And I keep on fighting for the things I want
Though I know that when you're dead you can't
But I'd rather be a free man in my grave
Than living as a puppet or a slave

So as sure as the sun will shine
I'm gonna get my share right now, what's mine
And then the harder they come
The harder they fall, one and all
Ooh, the harder they come
Harder they fall, one and all

Hey, the harder they come
Harder they fall, one and all
What I say now
What I say now
Oohh
What I say now
What I say, one time
The harder they come, the harder they fall, one and all
The harder they come, the harder they fall, one and all



Concrete Jungle
by Bob Marley and the Wailers
1973



Artist Info

Bob Marley and the Wailers (previously known as the Wailers and prior to that the Wailing Rudeboys, the Wailing Wailers and the Teenagers) were a Jamaican ska, rocksteady and reggae band. The founding members, in 1963, were Bob Marley (Robert Nesta Marley), Peter Tosh (Winston Hubert McIntosh), and Bunny Wailer (Neville Livingston). During 1970 and 1971, Wailer, Marley and Tosh worked with renowned reggae producers Leslie Kong and Lee “Scratch” Perry.

Before signing to Island Records in 1972, the band released four albums. Two additional albums were produced before Tosh and Wailer departed from the band in 1974, citing dissatisfaction with their treatment by the label and ideological disagreements. Marley continued with a new lineup, which included the I-Threes, and went on to release seven more albums. Marley died of cancer in 1981, at which point the group disbanded.

Song Info

“Concrete Jungle,” Bob Marley and the Wailers In early 1973, Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, and Bunny Wailer were stranded in England following a tour with the American reggae singer Johnny Nash. That’s when record executive Chris Blackwell gave them an \$8,000 advance to return to Jamaica and record an album for Island Records.

Blackwell embellished the recordings for worldwide consumption, but here those embellishments have been stripped, leaving the raw “Jamaican version,” featuring the original Wailers at the top of their game, a chilling (“no chains around my feet but I’m not free”) and incomparably groovy account of life in the “Concrete Jungle.”



Lyrics

No sun will shine in my day today
(No sun will shine)
The high yellow moon won't come out to play
(Won't come out to play)
Darkness has covered my light
(And has changed) and has changed my day into night,
ooh
Now, where is this love to be found?
Won't someone tell me 'cause life (sweet life)
Must be somewhere (sweet life) to be found (out there
somewhere for me)
Instead of a concrete jungle (jungle)
Where the living is harder (concrete jungle)
Concrete jungle (jungle)
Oh man, you've got to do your best, yeah (concrete
jungle)

No chains around my feet but I'm not free
I know I am bound here in captivity
And I've never known happiness
And I've never known sweet caresses
Still, I be always laughing like a clown

Won't someone help me 'cause I (sweet life)
I've got to pick myself (sweet life) from off the ground,
yeah
(Out there somewhere for me)
In this yah concrete jungle (la la-la)
I say, what do you got for me, now? (Concrete jungle)
Concrete jungle (jungle)
Oh, why won't you let me be, now? (Concrete jungle)

I said that life (sweet life)
Must be somewhere (sweet life)
To be found, yeah, yeah (out there somewhere for me)
Instead of a concrete jungle (jungle)
Where the living is hardest (concrete jungle)
Concrete jungle (jungle)
Oh man, you've got to do your best, yeah (concrete
jungle)
Concrete jungle (jungle)
You name it
In this concrete jungle
(Jungle, jungle, jungle)
Concrete jungle, you name it, we got it
Concrete jungle, now (concrete jungle)
(Jungle, jungle, now)



Equal Rights
by Peter Tosh
1977



Artist Info

Peter Tosh, born Winston Hubert McIntosh on October 19, 1944, was a renowned Jamaican reggae musician and activist. He was a founding member of The Wailers alongside Bob Marley and Bunny Wailer, known for their revolutionary music and advocacy for social justice. Tosh's solo career further solidified his reputation with albums like Legalize It and Equal Rights, advocating for marijuana legalization and racial equality. He was tragically murdered in his home on September 11, 1987.

Song Info

In 1977 Peter Tosh released Equal Rights, a rallying cry against what he called the 'shitstem', his declaration of rage against the injustices he had seen all around him. It was his finest studio album, cementing his position as one of the most outspoken artists of the 70s. And although he'd suffered at the hands of the 'shitstem' many times before, the album notably called not for revenge but for justice. Revenge is personal, justice is political.



Lyrics

Everyone is crying out for peace, yes
None is crying out for justice
Everyone is crying out for peace, yes
None is crying out for justice

I don't want no peace
I need equal rights and justice
I need equal rights and justice
I need equal rights and justice
Got to get it, equal rights and justice

Everybody want to go to heaven
But nobody want to die, Father of the Jesus
Everybody want to go up to heaven
But none of them, none of them want to die
What is due to Caesar
You better give it all to Caesar, yeah, yeah, yeah
And what belong to I and I
You better, you better give it up to I

'Cause I don't want no peace
I need equal rights and justice
I need equal rights and justice
I have got to get it, equal rights and justice
I'm a fighting for it, equal rights and justice

Everyone is heading for the top
But tell me how far is it from the bottom
Nobody knows but everyone fighting for the top
How far is it from the bottom

Everyone is talking about crime
Tell me who are the criminals
I said everyone is talking about crime, crime
Tell me who, who are the criminals
I really don't see them
I don't want no peace
I need equal rights and justice
We got to get equal rights and justice
And there will be no crime, equal rights and justice
There will be no criminals, equal rights and justice

Everyone is fighting for equal rights and justice
Palestinians are fighting for equal rights and justice
Down in Angola, equal rights and justice
Down in Botswana, equal rights and justice
Down in Zimbabwe, equal rights and justice
Down in Rhodesia, equal rights and justice.



Mr. Cop
by Gregory Isaacs
1977



Lyrics

Please Mr. Cop....Cool down now
Please Mr. Cop....Down to the ground

Cool down your temper...Mr. Cop
Cool down
Hear me when I say, I said
Cool down your temper...Mr. Cop
Cool down now

Put a smile on your face while passing through
Put away the frown and that awful screw
Were just sipping a cup and having some fun
And it's better than in the streets busting gun.

Tell 'em me say tell 'em

Cool Down your temper Mr. Cop,
Cool Down
We're just licking a cup I said,
Cool down your temper...Mr. Cop
Cool Down now
Said we are just sipping a cup

Beat dey a market marrow inna bone (?)
What don't concern ya please leave it alone
Cause the grass was meant for the cows and ass
And the herb on this land for the use of man

Tell 'em me say tell dem
Cool down your temper Mr. Cop
Cool down
We're just licking a cup I said,
Cool down your temper...Mr. Cop
Cool Down now
Said we are just sipping a cup

Artist Info

Gregory Isaacs (1951-2010) was a highly influential Jamaican reggae singer and songwriter, known as "The Cool Ruler" for his smooth, seductive vocal style. He was a prolific artist, releasing numerous albums and singles throughout his career, with hits like "Night Nurse" and "My Only Lover". Isaacs is celebrated for his contributions to both lovers rock and roots reggae, often blending romantic themes with social commentary.

Gregory Isaacs, the Cool Ruler, is the bad boy of reggae music. Busted 49 times by his own count, constantly battling with drugs, object of countless rumours, Isaacs is still highly respected and deeply loved by his countrymen and fans all over the world.

Song Info

Gregory Isaacs, aka the Cool Ruler, will reach the height of his powers in the early '80s as the godfather of lovers' rock, a romantic subgenre of reggae.

But in this 1976 roots collaboration with Lee "Scratch" Perry, he sings about the police targeting of Jamaica's youth, by now a common theme.

The image of the Rasta rebel proliferated in reggae throughout the '70s, sometimes battling macro forces, other times staying closer to home, as with Isaacs's plea here to "Cool down your temper, Mr. Cop."



Two Sevens Clash
by Culture
1977

TWO SEVENS CLASH



Artist Info

Culture is reggae's preeminent harmony group. Born in the 70's golden age of reggae, the ever viable Culture garnered continual US and international acclaim for its long series of classic "roots" albums. Culture's legendary "Two Sevens Clash" (Shanachie) was Reggae Album of the Year in 1977 and is acknowledged today by Rolling Stone Magazine (April 11, 2002) as #25 of the 50 all time coolest records (the only reggae album to make the list).

Culture's music, featuring the shining lead vocals of Joseph Hill, is solidly roots, perfectly executed and delivered with genuine emotional fervor. Joseph Hill's devotion to the traditional Rastafarian values of purity, simplicity and justice is exemplified by Culture's lyrical themes. Milo Miles, writing for The New York Times, named Culture as "the leading exponent of 'conscious reggae'". Hill's songwriting abilities are outstanding and music reviewers have lauded his achievements for two decades

Song Info

This smash single is the title track from Culture's explosive debut. The group's singer and songwriter, Joseph Hill, borrowed the phrase from a prophecy allegedly made by Marcus Garvey, who believed that something in the number seven was synonymous with social upheaval.

The album was released in 1977, and reggae mythology holds that many shops closed 7/7/77, anticipating a Rastapocalypse. Hill's lyrics on this roots classic cover many key points of Rasta philosophy, including references to Garvey's fabled steamship fleet, the Black Star Line.

Lyrics

Wat a liiv an bambaie
When the two sevens clash
Wat a liiv an bambaie
When the two sevens clash

My good old prophet Marcus Garvey prophesied, say
"St. Jago de la Vega and Kingston is gonna meet"
And I can see with mine own eyes
It's only a housing scheme that divide

Look up a cotton tree out by Ferry police station
How beautiful it used to be
And it has been destroyed by lightning
Earthquake and thunder, I say, what?

Wat a liiv an bambaie
When the two sevens clash - it dread
Wat a liiv an bambaie
When the two sevens clash

I take a ride sometimes
On Penn Overland and Bronx
And sometimes I ride on bus X-82, say what?

Wat a liiv an bambaie
When the two sevens clash
Wat a liiv an bambaie
When the two sevens clash

Marcus Garvey was inside of
Spanish Town district Prison
And when they were about to take him out
He prophesied and said
"As I have passed through this gate
No other prisoner shall enter and get through"
And so it is, until now
The gate has been locked, seh what?

Wat a liiv an bambaie
When the two sevens clash - a man a go feel it
Wat a liiv an bambaie
When the two sevens clash - you better do right

Wat a liiv an bambaie
When the two sevens clash..



The Sun
by Burning Spear
1977

BURNING SPEAR



Artist Info

Burning Spear, born Winston Rodney, is a highly influential Jamaican roots reggae singer and musician known for his Rastafarian beliefs and advocacy for Black liberation.

He emerged in the late 1960s and gained international recognition for albums like “Marcus Garvey” and “Man in the Hills,” solidifying his status as a luminary of reggae music.

He has won two Grammy Awards and continues to tour, spreading his message of peace, love, and social justice.

Song Info

Burning Spear, is a devout Rasta and devotee of Marcus Garvey, who, like Spear himself, as well as Bob Marley, was born in the parish of St. Ann.

Originally produced by Coxsone Dodd at Studio One in the early '60s, Burning Spear later made his own albums for Island Records, beginning with 1977's powerful Dry and Heavy. “The Sun” is a shining example of Spear's trance-inducing power.

Lyrics

So, when the sun goes down
And we move along
I will call on you
(Call on you)

When the sun goes down
And we move along
I will call on you
(Call on you)

Are you ready?
Are you ready?
Are you ready?

I will call on you
No cry, my brother, cryin'
No stall, no-no-no stall
No time to lose, time to lose
We must go on, soon
Yes, we must

So, when the sun goes down
And we move along
I will call on you
(Call on you)

When the sun goes down
And we move along
I will call on you
(Call on you), call on

Are you ready?
Are you ready?
Are you ready?

I will call on you, yeah-yeah
No cry, my brother, cryin'
No stall, no-no-no stall
No time to lose, time to lose
We must go on, soon
Yes, we must

We must go on soon (call on you)
When the sun goes down (call on you)
And we move along, whoa
(Call on you)



Shine Eye Gal
by Black Uhuru
1979

BLACK ^{RED} UHURU



Artist Info

Black Uhuru is a highly influential Jamaican reggae group formed in the early 1970s in Kingston's Waterhouse district, known for their innovative sound and global impact. The group's name, "Black Uhuru," is a combination of Swahili words meaning "black freedom".

Black Uhuru is celebrated for their distinctive blend of roots reggae, incorporating deep basslines, sharp keyboard work, and intricate vocal harmonies, often featuring the signature "woh oh oh" refrain. They are particularly recognized for their successful period in the 1980s, with their album "Anthem" winning the first-ever Grammy Award for Best Reggae Album.

Song Info

The earliest incarnations of Black Uhuru included many future stars, but the group came into their own when lead singer Michael Rose began working with studio wizards Sly and Robbie in 1979.

This version of the band was a new kind of roots outfit, expanding the genre considerably from its harmony-group heyday only a few years before to include hard-edged drive and experimentation with electronic and rock elements. This seven-minute track features an attached dub section, as well as guest guitarist and devoted reggae student Keith Richards.

Lyrics

Shine eye gal is a trouble to a man
Shine eye gal is a trouble to a man

I rise early looking some tea (rise early)
Looking for the daughter but she nuh on ya (she nuh on yah)

I take a walk down the street, oh yeah ooh
The gal deh pan corner weh push mouth lorna?
And her bed nuh spread

Shine eye gal is a trouble to a man
Shine eye gal is a trouble to a man

The next day she want I to take her route, oh yeah, ooh
Take her to the beach party
Feeling everything would be irie
Wrinkles on her face
Like the things I've done she don't appreciate

Shine eye gal is a trouble to a man, oh yeah, ooh
Shine eye gal is a trouble to a man

She want it, want it, and now when she really, really get it, ooh
Rastafari know she can't take it
She said natty turn off your light, oh, oh, oh, eeh eeh oh eeh
Give me dreadlock weh you give me first night

So I say
Shine eye gal is a trouble to a man
Shine eye gal is a trouble to a man
Shine eye, shine eye, oh yeah, aah ooh, aah uunh unnh

I rise early looking some tea (rise early)
Looking for the daughter but she nuh on yah (she nuh on yah)
I take a walk down the street, oh yeah ooh
The gal deh pan corner weh push mouth lorna?
And her bed nuh spread, spread, spread...

She want it, want it, and now when she really, really get it, ooh
Rastafari know she can't take it, it, it...



Firehouse Rock
by The Wailing Souls
1980



Artist Info

The Wailing Souls are a legendary Jamaican reggae group formed in the late 1960s, known for their unique blend of Motown harmonies with roots and dancehall sounds. They emerged from the same vocal classes as The Wailers, learning from Joe Higgs in Trench Town.

The group has been nominated for three Grammy Awards and has enjoyed a long and influential career, spanning over four decades. Their music often carries messages of peace, love, justice, and truth. They have remained a popular live act, adapting to the changing landscape of reggae music.

Song Info

Yet another veteran group from the Studio One machine, the Wailing Souls recorded under different names (The Renegades, Pipes and the Pipers) throughout the late '60s and early '70s to avoid being confused with the Wailers. After several hits as the Wailing Souls in the late '70s, they teamed up with Sly and Robbie to record their 1980 masterpiece, "Fire House Rock."

They would go on to make more internationally popular records, but for songwriting, creativity, and timeliness, it simply doesn't get any better than this true roots high-water mark. This one is the 12-inch extended dub remix version.

WAILING SOULS

Lyrics

Some call it Waterhouse
Firehouse rock
Oh yeah, oh yeah
Some call it Firehouse
Waterhouse rock
Look at that, look at that
Some call it Waterhouse
Firehouse rock
Oh yeah, oh yeah
Some call it Firehouse
Waterhouse rock
Look at that

Their eyes are staring
They are comparing
The difference between I and you
Ears are listening
Mouth keep on chattering
Trying to find out what I and I know, oh yeah

Some call it Waterhouse
Firehouse rock
Oh yeah, oh yeah
Some call it Firehouse
Waterhouse rock

Look at that, look at that
Some call it Waterhouse
Firehouse rock
Oh yeah, oh yeah
Some call it Firehouse
Waterhouse rock

Then one day the fire, get hot (the house start to burn)
And the people were all in confusion
Natty revealed a gift in his yard (though nothing is gone)
They never know his meanings was for survival (fi meet his rival)

Take a little walk, down on the gully bank
Say we go check brother Feeble.
Him say Lord live upright
Come let us share this small morsel
Let's give Jah thanks and praise
For living another day
For Rastafari knoweth all things
And he shall lead the way, oh yeah

Some call it Waterhouse
Firehouse rock
Oh yeah, oh yeah.



Bam Bam
by Sister Nancy
1982



Artist Info

Sister Nancy, also known as Muma Nancy, is a Jamaican dancehall DJ and singer, born Ophlin Russell on January 2, 1962, in Kingston, Jamaica.

She is widely recognized as the first female dancehall DJ and is known for her powerful and dominating presence in the genre for over two decades.

Her most famous song, "Bam Bam," is a well-known reggae anthem and a classic, often sampled in various music genres. Sister Nancy currently lives in New Jersey and is retired from her career as an accountant.

Song Info

Now a classic reggae anthem, this song celebrates Sister Nancy's success as a woman in the male-dominated dancehall scene of the 80s.

Nancy was the first woman to perform at Reggae Sunsplash, a Jamaican reggae festival, and the first woman Jamaican DJ to tour internationally.

The song's chorus has been sampled, remixed, covered, and interpolated in several songs after its release. This hook is in fact sampled from the 1965 song of the same title by the Maytals.

Lyrics

Ah me seh one thing Nancy cyaan understand
one thing Nancy cyaan understand
wha' mek dem a talk 'bout me ambition?
seh, wha' mek dem a talk 'bout me ambition?
'ca me seh some a dem a ask me whey me get it fram
'ca some a dem a ask me whey me get it from
a true dem nuh know it's from creation
a true dem nuh know it's-a from creation

bam bam, ey-ya, what a bam bam,
bam bam dilla, bam bam
bam bam dilla, bam bam
'ey what a bam bam, seh what a bam bam

Dis woman nevah trouble no one
I'm a lady, I'm not a man
MC is my ambition
I come fi nice up Jamaica
so bam bam, da what a bam bam
bam bam dilla, bam bam
bam bam dilla, bam bam

'ey a me seh what a bam bam,
seh what a bam bam
tell'em, tell'em
Me born an me grow inna Princeton 6
I Nancy write, me presents lyrics
when you hear dem nuh sound like (??)
You come inna di dread so me seh well well slick

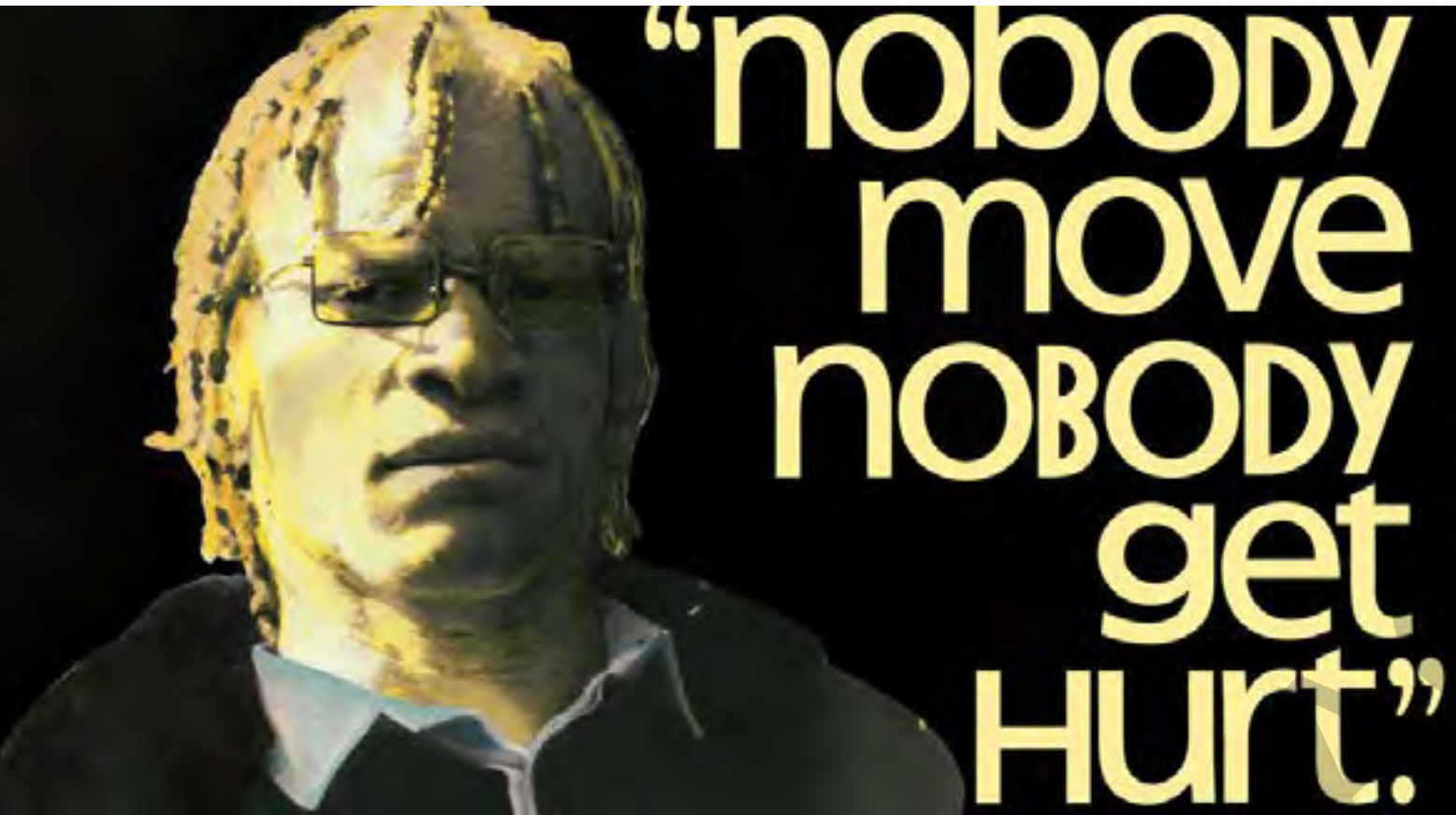
bam bam, 'ey seh what a bam bam
bam bam dilla, bam bam
bam bam dilla, bam bam
'ey seh what a bam bam, seh what a bam bam

A some a dem a seh me a go mash up dem plan
a true dem nuh know me a one bisnis woman
Sister Nancy she a one inna 3 million
Sister Nancy she a one inna 3 million
So bam bam, bam bam dilla, bam bam
bam bam dilla, bam bam
'ey seh what a bam bam, seh what a bam bam

Seh go, Sister Nancy, mek you go
I tell yousel' fi go Sister Nancy, mek you go
I know it from me head straight down to my toe
A tee-tar-toe Sister Nancy ah me go
A some a dem a ax a Sister Nancy mek you bad so
bung dung didle-a Sister Nancy mek you bad so.



Nobody Move, Nobody Get Hurt
by Yellowman
1984



Artist Info

Yellowman, whose real name is Winston Foster, is a Jamaican reggae and dancehall deejay, known for his pioneering role in the genre and his distinctive albino appearance. Born in 1956 or 1959, he gained prominence in the early 1980s with a series of hit singles. According to Wikipedia and other sources, he is considered one of the first dancehall artists to achieve international recognition.

Yellowman is considered to be one of the genre's pioneers and has been credited with "almost single-handedly [creating] the coarse, crude and fearlessly direct sound of today's dancehall. Spearheading the first generation of dancehall deejays, he brought the genre to an international audience.

Song Info

By the early '80s, reggae was moving stylistically and technologically toward what would become "ragga" and eventually dancehall. After Bob Marley died, the self-proclaimed new King of Reggae turned out to be an albino DJ who called himself Yellowman and eventually achieved Marley-ish status in Jamaica.

Working with Sly and Robbie, Yellowman here borrows from "54-46 Was My Number" and demonstrates a new rhythm-riding, "toasting"-style delivery.

Lyrics

Well this one called the volcano eruption
Well you see in a '84 crowd of people
Yellowman a fe come new brand

It name
Nobody move, nobody get hurt
Nobody move, nobody get hurt

The youth them just a dress up in a white collar shirt
And some of them wear it till it resemble dirt
He said he want me to join the army
I ain't gonna do it, officer
No way. I ain't gonna do it
Turn out your left pocket
A searching for a Colt automatic
A searching if you have any ratchet
He said what is your number? I didn't answer
What is your number? I still don't answer
What is the number boy? I really don't answer
Him crank up him chopper. Mi mamma!
Then me started to answer
Guess wha' me say?
64, 46, BMW!
64, 46, BMW! Lord!
He say give it to me one time!
Give it to me two time!
Give it to me three time! Lord!

It name
Nobody move, nobody get hurt
Nobody move, nobody get hurt

Natty don't nyam cattle
Natty don't nyam dirt
Him come from the planet of earth
He come from the planet of earth
Say granny in a kitchen a cook rice and chicken
The dread out a door a cook ital stew
No trouble granny, granny never trouble you
Natty cook up him ital stew

It name
Nobody move, nobody get hurt
Nobody move, nobody get hurt

