

NEW YORK—REGGAE: ONLY A MOTION AWAY (CONCLUSION)

(Last week, *Insight & Sound* was devoted to discussing the definition, sound and feeling of Reggae music. We realized its influences on many of our own popular acts such as **The Stones**, **Paul McCartney** and **Paul Simon**. Incidentally, the back up musicians on Simons' "Mother & Child Reunion" and "Me And Julio" tracks are none other than **Byron Lee** & **The Dragonaires**. This concluding segment will discuss some of the major Reggae acts now popular in Jamaica.)

The music of any given area is almost always influenced by its surroundings. The Jamaican atmosphere, with its bright sunny days and tranquil moonlit nights is reflected in a music that is both soft and driving at the same time. But, just as there are different kinds of rock, blues and jazz formats, Reggae too has its differences. All Reggae songs are basically similar in their harmonic structure and rhythmic feel. But they are dissimilar in audience appeal. There is the "Rastafari" Reggae sound which can be likened to our own FM or underground music. Much of this music, though is banned on local radio because of its social or political content. "Wet Dream," "Beat 'Em On Babylon," and "Doris, Open Your Legs" are three examples much like **Yoko Ono's** "Open Your Box" which was also banned on most American radio stations. The major portion of Reggae music, however fits into what we know as the MOR and R&B formats.

Last week we mentioned **Byron Lee** and **The Dragonaires** and one of their songs, "Meagre Dog" but to discuss Reggae music you must put Byron Lee in proper perspective. Byron and his band, the Dragonaires, have been the number one band on the Island in the same respect that **Woody Herman**, & **Guy Lombardo** have been considered top bands. We mean, then—the big band sound.

Byron's band concentrated on performing at functions, gatherings and parties rather than major shows. One of the group's main drawbacks is the fact that

HOLLYWOOD—IAN SAMWELL: BRINGING AMERICA HOME

"I only started producing because I was so fed up with the way other people were producing my songs." The speaker was **Ian Samwell**, a fixture on the English pop scene since the late 50's. Today, he has become a hot item in this country as well; his production of "A Horse with No Name" being this year's Cinderella story.

"I was the first guitar player with **Cliff Richard's** band, back when they were called **The Drifters**. Then I wrote a song called 'Move It,' which was a fantastic hit for Cliff. I simply wasn't good enough to play lead with the band anymore, so they brought in **Hank Marvin** and I moved to bass." Ian's chief success as a songwriter was in England, though one composition, "You Can Never Stop Me From Loving You" was a top-20 hit for **Johnny Tillotson** in this country nine years ago.

Ian moved into production, working on the first **Small Faces** album (and co-writing their single, "Whatcha Gonna Do About It") and producing **John Mayall's** first single. "I'd known **Steve Marriott** for years. I thought that he was very talented, but that the rest of them were terrible. I think they're wonderful now—in fact, I brought **Faces** to Warner Bros."

We asked Ian how he first met America. "Someone brought me a tape of a band. I wanted to hear them, so I went to their place. Their equipment had broken, and they weren't able to play for me. But they gave me another tape they had made. On it was a guitar solo that had absolutely nothing to do with the rest of the record—it obviously wasn't them playing. I asked who it was, and that's where they made their mistake: they told me. It was a fellow named **Gerry Beckley**. I contacted him, and America was what he was doing."



(Top)—Ken Lazarus & Barry Biggs
(Bottom)—Ian Samuel & Chris Darrow



Climax—With Sonny Geraci

they lack a front man, a versatile male lead singer. And though extremely popular in Jamaica, they do not have the track record that most other popular groups have. Following is a partial listing of some of the major Reggae acts:

Ken Lazarus: a little less than two years ago, one Jamaican newspaper had this to say about Lazarus who is known as the "King Of Reggae": "At this very moment, Ken Lazarus has nine songs in the top 15. He has taken over Guyana by storm . . . nobody knows anything about him except that he does the Reggae thing better than anyone else." Lazarus, who records for Steady Records, is still doing his Reggae thing, and is still quite a sensation at it.

Vic Taylor: Taylor is a young Jamaican who has mastered the art of perfect pronunciation. Thus, he can sing with the thickest of accents, and on the other hand, is able to deliver tunes such as "You'll Never Walk Alone" and "My Way" in perfect English.

Barry Biggs: Pictured above with members of **The Dragonaires**, Biggs is a personable Reggae artist who leans more in the direction of the R&B sound. "Show Me Your Company," a self penned tune is currently being prepared for release in America.

Hopeton Lewis: Lewis has also had a fling at performing as lead vocalist with **Byron Lee**. He had two huge singles, "Take It Easy," and "Music Got Soul," during the 60's Rock Steady era and he won the Festival '70 Song Competition Award for his own "Boom Shacka-lacka". Lewis also had an international hit called "Groovin' Out On Life."

Though there are dozens and dozens of top flight Reggae artists, (**Eddie Lorette**, **Eric Donaldson**, **Keith Lyn**, etc.) space limitations have allowed us to mention only a few.

As far as the future of Reggae music in America is concerned, it is interesting to note that **Byron Lee** is in the process of completing a brand new 16 track fully dolbyized recording studio in Kingston, Jamaica, while Federal Recording Studios already have quite a solid reputation. Also, many American and
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Samwell is currently in Los Angeles—or was, when we spoke with him—recording **Claudia Linnear**, whose greatest fame has come so far from her reputation as a background singer and from a featured spot in the "Mad Dogs and Englishmen" tour. We asked Ian what he thought of our theory that session musicians make lousy soloists and leaders. "I know what you mean, and I don't think that it applies to Claudia at all. She's had a chance to solo with **Joe Cocker**, and with **Leon Russell**, and did quite well. And the results of our recording have been excellent."

One side of the upcoming album will be devoted to the songs of another recent Warner Bros. acquisition, **Allen Toussaint**. "We started just doing one or two songs. Then we thought it would be a good idea to do a whole side. We phoned Toussaint in New Orleans, asking for suggestions. He wound up coming here to play piano on the sessions and do some singing, as well."

Ian is British, which means—among other things—that he exudes warmth and class. He spent a good portion of our talk chatting up the room service operator, with mixed success. Well, as a matter of fact, no success. Tea came instead of coffee, and when the coffee came to replace it, new cups didn't. But that's the kind of problem it's almost fun to put up with when you're riding a horse with no name.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE LONESOME PICKER

CHRIS DARROW—One of the many albums to have come out this year with a lot of critical acclaim but little or no success in the marketplace is the debut effort of one **Chris Darrow**. On the Fantasy label, "Artist's Proof" is a fine mixture of country, rock and folk picking and singing, and not necessarily in that order, either.

We've had a little bet with ourselves over the years that Chris has probably played the Troubadour more nights than any other single musician. The reason he has been able to do so is that he is an accomplished utility musician—able to provide excellent work on guitar, mandolin, fiddle and God knows what else, whenever needed. He finds himself, then, in constant call when pickup bands are
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