

Sly and Robbie : Biography

Sly and Robbie are one of reggae's most prolific and long lasting production teams. The rhythm section of drummer Lowell Dunbar (nicknamed Sly after Sly Stone, one of his favorite musicians) and bass guitarist Robert Shakespeare started working together in the mid 1970s, after having established themselves separately on the Jamaican music scene. They are humorously also sometimes referred to as Sly Drumbar and Robbie Basspeare, one example being the sleeve notes of Black Uhuru's *Red* album.

Sly and Robbie may well be the most prolific recording artists ever. One estimate is that they have played on or produced some 200,000 songs, considering that some of their riddims such as "Revolution" have been used on over 100 songs.

Lowell "Sly" Dunbar is born Lowell Charles Dunbar, 10 May 1952, Kingston, Jamaica.

He played with The Aggrovators (1970); The Upsetters (1970), Serge Gainsbourg (1979 et 1981). He recorded for Barry O'Hare in the 90's. And recently for Bitty McLean .

As a member of Word, Sound & Power he played with Peter Tosh on the albums *Bush Doctor*, *Mystic Man* and *Wanted Dread & Alive* and during international tours from 1978 to 1981.

Sly enriched the beginning of his musical career by collaborations on several Jamaican reggae hits. He will bring to the studio Channel One this innovating aspect thanks to his rythm innovations on reggae drums. Lowell already has a strong reputation before joining Robbie Shakespeare, in particular with the Skin, Flesh and Bones Band or The Aggrovators.

Robert "Robbie" Shakespeare born Robert Shakespeare, 27 September 1953, Kingston, Jamaica

At the beginning of 1970s and of his musical career, Robbie Shakespeare plays in many clubs of Kingston under the name of Evil People. Then he signed with the producer Bunny Lee as a member of the backing-band The Aggrovators.

The gréât number of people coming to the studios is going to allow the meeting with Sly Dunbar with whom Robbie will play for the first time in 1975 within the band The Revolutionaries.

With this band, they are going to be at the beginning, from 1976, of the rhythmic called "rockers" which shall influence largely the reggae in the future. This work testifies above all of a big complicity between both men and a common passion for the music (fans of the productions of Motown, fine knowledges in the country music, and fan of the reggae generally). Then, it will not be any more question than of the duet Sly and Robbie, the twins Drum & Bass with the multiple musical innovations, counting an incredible number of collaborations in several different musical genres and of which activity do not stopped for no more than 30 years.

All over the world held to be the best rythm section at the end of the 70s, they did not delay recording with Mick Jagger, Bob Dylan, Joe Cocker, Grace Jones, Robert Palmer, or still Cindy Lauper. At the same time, they produced Jamaican artists of legend, as Jimmy Cliff. At the beginning of the 90s, they turned towards the Ragga, for example with their participation in the collective album " Silent Assassin ", the fusion Reggae / hip-hop, in particular via the modern process of IT programming of the percussions. As producers as well they turn out very current, whether it is with the hit " Murder she wrote ", or by their compositions for Luciano, Beenie Man or Shaka Demus. More than ever, Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare are major actors of the Jamaican Reggae, as well as the international music

Bitty McLean : from UB40 to the meeting with Sly & Robbie

Bitty McLean, is born in 1972 in Birmingham, UK.

The youngest of six children, he was nicknamed "Bitty" due to his small stature. As a teenager he performed with local sound systems, and after studying sound engineering at college, he was employed by UB40 as an engineer and producer, and occasionally also sang with the band.

He was most popular around the mid 1990s with cover versions of songs including The Shirelles' "Dedicated to the One I Love" (UK #6) and Fats Domino's "It Keeps Rainin' (Tears from My Eyes)" (1993), which was his biggest UK hit, peaking at #2. McLean's song "It Keeps Rainin' (Tears from My Eyes)" topped the charts in New Zealand and the Netherlands in 1993. McLean also played on three UK arena tours supporting UB40, Wet Wet Wet and Simply Red respectively.

In 2004, he released the album *On Bond Street KGN. JA.*, which featured his vocals recorded over vintage Tommy McCook and Duke Reid-produced, Treasure Isle rhythms from the rocksteady era, most with new lyrics of his own, but also using David Ruffin's "Walk Away From Love" and David Gates' "Make It With You".

He recorded a studio album in autumn 2007, entitled *Movin' On*, **with Sly and Robbie** at their One Pop studios in Kingston, Jamaica. *Movin' On* was released on Sly & Robbie's TAXI / Silent River / Mideya label in Europe and the US, while JVC released it in Japan. Bitty and Sly & Robbie toured Japan, Europe and Morocco in 2008 and 2009. Bitty McLean is preparing a new album with Sly & Robbie and a live DVD recorded with Sly & Robbie and the TAXI Gang during their concert in Paris in May 2009.

LINKS

Sly & Robbie :

<http://www.officialslyandrobbie.com/>

<http://www.myspace.com/slyandrobbie>

Bitty Mc Lean :

<http://www.myspace.com/bittymcleanmusic>

MEDIACOM « The Reggae agency » :

<http://www.mediacom-agency.com/>