

Cliff at forefront of reggae revival

By Brian Lysaght
staff writer

What began for reggae star Jimmy Cliff as an overdue holiday in 1986-87 in Zaire led to a recording session across the river in Congo.

Hanging out in African clubs and writing some songs, the Jamaican musician began rehearsing with Zairian bands. They went to the Congo to find a four-track recording studio.

The sessions' tapes were reworked and two tracks, featuring the Africa International Band of Zaire and Grand Zico Band of Zaire, landed on Cliff's latest album, "Hanging Fire."

Cliff said he has long been fascinated with African music, and although he has toured the continent extensively, he hadn't recorded before with African groups.

"I've always wanted to do some kind of collaboration, Africa being the place where I have my biggest audience," said Cliff in a recent telephone conversation.

But it is reggae, not African music that made Cliff famous, and he isn't abandoning that. He and his seven-piece band "Oneness," are working their way through the North American leg of a world tour. The new album contains several solid and accessible songs with reggae rhythms and soulful sound for which Cliff is known.

These are good times, he said, for reggae, which seemed almost to be slipping toward oblivion in the mid-1980s. Ziggy Marley, Bob Marley's son, is hot, and a reggae tune recently broke the Top 20 chart here, a difficult task because reggae has never really reached American mainstream, Cliff said.

THESE ARE good times for Cliff, who managed to survive the mid-80s

unscathed. Bruce Springsteen scored a big hit in 1984 with a remake of the Cliff tune "Trapped."

Cliff won a Grammy in 1985, toured with Steve Winwood in 1986, and is eyeing the continuation of his film career when the current tour ends.

Cliff said that even in Jamaica, where DJ, dub and rap music were hot, reggae is back.

"People are now getting back, wanting more harmony and melody," he said.

Cliff knows harmony and melody well. He began recording in Jamaica more than 25 years ago. He worked for a time with the island's hottest producer, Leslie Kong, then went to England.

His career changed with the 1972 release of the film, "The Harder They Come." Cliff was first asked to do the movie's soundtrack, then hired to star as the frustrated, musician-turned-outlaw Ivan.

"As a kid growing up in Jamaica, I know about the character because it was based on a real-life person," he said.

Cliff was born in the village of Somerton near Montego Bay and, like Ivan, drifted to Kingston to begin a recording career. Cliff lives in Kingston and has a home in the country, where he goes to unwind.

Cliff describes himself as a "global-thinking person" and is dismayed to discover in his travels the emphasis in the world on material goods and material wealth.

"I am aware that our world today puts more of an emphasis on physical things rather than on spiritual things."

THE NEW album concerns itself with heavier topics. On the song "In Girls and Cars," Cliff laments the



Jimmy Cliff, along with other artists like Ziggy Marley, is bringing a renewed interest to reggae.

lack of concern for morality, truth and justice.

"These things are very important. These are the things we build our society on."

He is also a movie fan and plans to find a feature film role when the tour ends. In addition to "The Harder They Come," he's appeared in "Bongo Man" (1982) and "Club Paradise" (1985).

The latter movie was different than "The Harder They Come," he

said. It was a big Warner Brothers picture with a \$20-30 million budget. His first movie was filmed for around \$1 million.

Two scripts are being written for him, and Cliff also would like to try his talent on the stage.

Jimmy Cliff will perform Wednesday, July 27, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For more information, call 961-MELT.

IN CONCERT

● **PANTHER BURNS**
Tav Falco's Panther Burns will perform tonight at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor.

● **JAY WALKER & THE PEDESTRIANS**
Jay Walker & The Pedestrians will perform Tuesday, July 26, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For more information, call 681-1700.

● **IODINE RAINCOATS**
The Iodine Raincoats will perform Wednesday, July 27, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-2747.

● **FLASH**
Flash will perform Wednesday through Saturday, July 27-30, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For more information, call 681-1700.

● **ROBERT NOLL**
Robert Noll and the Blues Mission will perform Monday through Wednesday, July 27 at Plymouthmouthrock Saloon, 8825 General Dr., Plymouth. For more information, call 455-9800.

● **JIMMY CLIFF**
Jimmy Cliff will perform Wednesday, July 27, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For more information, call 961-MELT.

● **FIGURE 4**
Figure 4 will perform Friday, July 29, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For more information, call 365-9760.

● **13 ENGINES**
13 Engines will perform with special guests, Static Alphabet, on Friday, July 29, at Rerun's Lounge, Warren Road, east of Schaefer, Dearborn. For more information, call 582-8826.

● **MORONS OF ROCK**
The Morons of Rock tour will land Saturday, July 30, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. On the card will be the Polish Muslims, Twiggy Barbus and the Lizards in Jars and Snake Out. For more information, call 961-MELT.

● **STRAIT**
St Strait will perform Saturday, July 30, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For more information, call 365-9760.

● **STEVE KING & THE DITTIES**
Steve King & The Ditties will perform Saturday, July 30, on the Bobo Moonlight Cruise. For more information, call 843-0700.

COLLEGE

Here are the top 10 songs on the play list of WAYN-AM, the campus radio station of Wayne State University.

1. "Fast Car," Tracy Chapman.
2. "Impatience," Orange Roegies.
3. "Tomorrow People," Ziggy Marley and the Melody Makers.
4. "The Rev. Jack and his Roman Cadillac Church," Timbuk 3.
5. "The House We Used to Live In," The Smithereens.
6. "High Expectations," Inside Out.
7. "Sluff Love," Trash Brats.
8. "Trash City," Joe Strummer.
9. "Kidney Bingoos," Wire.
10. "Ballroom Blitz," The Damned.

● **CINECYDE**
Cinecyde will perform with special guests, Just Say No, on Saturday, July 30, at Rerun's Lounge, 13027 W. Warren, east of Schaefer, Dearborn. For more information, call 582-8826.

● **REO SPEEDWAGON**
REO Speedwagon will perform with special guests, Honeymoon Suite, on Monday, Aug. 8, at Meadow Brook Music Festival in Rochester. Tickets are \$20 for pavilion and \$15 for lawn.



Figure 4 performs Friday, July 29, at the Hamtramck Pub.

LOCAL

Here are the top 10 songs receiving airplay on "Detroit Music Scene," which can be heard on WDTFR-FM from 4-5 p.m. Sundays and from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesdays.

1. "You Make It Hard," Before or After.
2. "Sex for the Handicapped," The Sillies.
3. "She's Fine," The Reputations.
4. "Pamela," Joey Harlo.
5. "Life Is a Place," Michael Davis.
6. "Dealer of the Crack," Swinging Erudites.
7. "They Were So Young," See Dick Run.
8. "Waiting for a Change," Johnny Allen and the Appeal.
9. "Rollercoaster," Echo & The Bonymen.
10. "Watch Me Fly," Beer on the Penguin.

CHRISTIAN

Here are the top 10 songs receiving airplay on WJUZ-FM, a Christian radio station in Detroit.

1. "That's What Faith Must Be," Mitchell Card.
2. "Outside These Walls," Breast Lamb.
3. "Find Us Faithful," Steve Green.
4. "He's Got the Whole World...," Prism.
5. "His Eyes," Steven Curtis Chapman.
6. "Saved By Love," Amy Grant.
7. "Coming Back Soon," Randy Stonehill.
8. "Change Your Nature," BeBe and CeCe Winans.
9. "Show Them the Light," David and the Giants.
10. "One of Us," Geoff Moore and the Distance.

Chevelles roll in rockabilly style

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Grab a pick ax and come along. The Chevelles are going on a little rock'n'roll archeological survey.

The five-member band scours the depths of the music archives to come up with some of the more obscure rock'n'roll fossils.

Drummer Rick Chevelle runs off a series of artists his band covers. Names like Ronnie Dawson, Ray Smith and Warren Smith are mentioned. Sure everybody knows these fellas, don't they? Oh, and yeah, the Chevelles also do a couple of numbers by Moon Mulligan.

Yes, that Moon Mulligan. "He played Texas swing music," said lead singer Brendan Murtagh of Redford Township. "He used to put his band on a travel and travel around. Nobody knows who Moon Mulligan is when we tell them."

AT A Chevelle's show, one's likely to get an assortment of originals along with a dose of covers by early rock heavyweights, such as Little



Mark Trapchak of Farmington Hills (left), Rick Chevelle of Dearborn, Mark Alexander of Dearborn and Brendan Murtagh of Redford Township are the original members of the Chevelles. The fifth member is Rick Demont of Royal Oak.

Richard, Buddy Holly and Eddie Cochran.

But at least the patrons of local music know who the Chevelles are. The group's repertoire reads more like an early volume of American Music. Blues, folk and soul are some of the band's influences.

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REVIEWS

LONGHOUSE
— Longhouse



This is a debut album from this New York-based band that is really a conglomeration of people directed by the band founder, Lisa Herman.

Herman said she brought together the best background vocalists she could find. The band formed in 1985 and played clubs until it scored a big label (Warner Bros.) contract.

Herman wrote or co-wrote the disc's 10 songs and arranged them all. She sings lead vocals, she sings background vocals, and she plays piano and an occasional guitar.

This is a vocal album from a vocal group. Herman seems to have picked her singers well. The sound is very full, not with clanging guitars or synthesizer riffs, but with terrific vocal harmonies. The background singers sometimes seem to have a life of their own repeating, following and echoing the lead vocal. A couple of tunes here are sung a cappella. Although the comparison is proba-

RADICAL DEPARTURE
— Ranking Roger

Ranking Roger comes with a formidable heritage.

He is the ex-lead singer of two excellent bands — The English Beat and General Public. Of course, he shared those duties in each band with the marvelous Dave Wakeling.

Having such a strong background can be both a blessing and a curse. Obviously, a blessing is that he has enough of a reputation to justify the release of a solo record. But along with that comes the curse of constant comparisons.

With this record, "Radical Departure" (I.R.S.), he has assembled a bunch of musicians around him who do not create in accordance with the LP title. Even within the terms of Roger's previous experience, this is not a radical departure although there is a radical difference.

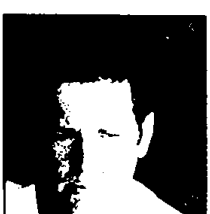


The songs on the album give cursory nod to a variety of styles, ranging from reggae ("Smashing Down Another Door"), guitar-pop ("Your Problems") and light-weight dance ("In Love With You").

On "Mono Gone to Stereo," he complains about the pace of life and modernization. "Society today is just getting more deranged/Everything point to individuality/You buy a new car you get a computer."

As you can see, Roger's lyrics are very awkward almost to the point of being embarrassing. Take this cringe-inducing example from "I Told You": "Today they'll ask you your name/Tomorrow they'll give you a number/Keep your head, you know what I mean/or you could end up a statistic in a magazine."

BRIAN WILSON
— Brian Wilson



Brian Wilson came down from his room, walked to town and here's what he found — violence in the movies, violence on TV and loneliness in a crowded bar.

His solution: "Love and Mercy," leadoff track on the first solo album of his quarter-century old career.

After a long, harrowing absence, dotted with personal demons and a severely blocked muse, Mr. Good Vibrations is back.

The concerns are new — check the subtle anti-child abuse message in "Little Children." But the sound is pleasingly familiar.

"Children" taps Wilson's long running fixation with Phil Spector's "Wall of Sound" production. "Love and Mercy" as well as other tracks, including "Baby Let Your Hair Grow Long" and the oddball gem "Rio Grande," could have easily fit on any late 1960s Beach Boys album. (The record company Sire takes great pains to draw comparisons with "Pet Sounds" the group's Wilson-inspired 1966 masterpiece.)

for those of us who grew up loving such late Beach Boys/Wilson classics as "Heroes and Villains," "I Can Hear Music" or the haunting "Caroline, No," the album is a welcome return for a vital musician.

For those who rooted these long years for a full return of Wilson's creative powers, the album is a triumph.

Whether this is a fresh start that re-establishes Wilson as a major pop guru or merely a fitting final farewell remains to be seen.

These weaned on today's harsher, more cynical pop music may find Wilson's sunny benedictions the actual equivalent of a lava lamp.

That's their outlook. Those of us who knew Wilson when should be more than content to bask in the album's glow.

After all, sunset can be just as warm as sunrise. — Wayne Peal