

RECORDED AND ANNOTATED BY JOHN STORM ROBERTS



ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4228

JOHN CROW SAYS...

Jamaican Music of Faith, Work & Play



DIGGING SONG - SINGING THE BOBBIN TO KISANDER

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

M
1681
J3
J65
1981

MUSIC LP

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SIDE 1

- Band 1:** Adam Where Art Thou
(Alfred McLerty, vocal and harmonica; Henry Simpson, wooden trumpet; Hezekiah Brown, scraper)
- Bands 2-4:** Kisander; Rosibella; Half a Whole
- Bands 5-6:** Jane and Matilda Roll; Me No Wantee No Tea
(Alfred McLerty, vocal)
- Band 7:** Take Me Away
(Aaron Walker, vocal)
- Band 8:** Up on the Mountain With Jesus
(Valerie Walker, Mezma Gibson, Cedric and Stephen Gibson, Bryan Jackson and Gary Walker)
- Bands 9-11:** Hill and Gully; Army Boy; John Crow Say I'm Wan' Decent Woman
(Valerie Walker, vocal)

SIDE 2

- Bands 1-3:** The Blood of Jesus; How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds; I Saw the Lighthouse
(Revival Zion pastor and congregation)
- Bands 4,5:** Mumma Me Wan' Go Walk; Go Market, Buy Some Corn
(Cedric and Stephen Gibson)
- Band 6:** Quadrille
(Charles Welch, harmonica; Hezekiah Brown, grater; Henry Simpson, wooden trumpet)

Credits

Recorded by John Storm Roberts with Jane Roberts.
Produced and annotated by John Storm Roberts.
Mastering: Stephen Storm Roberts.

My thanks are due to all the musicians heard on this album, but especially to Alfred McLerty, of Maryland, St. James' Parish, who also organized the mento and digging-song sessions.

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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Liner Notes

Fashions in musical politics change perceptions quite profoundly. At one time, Jamaican music was seen as essentially British in origin, its many differences and crudities caused by lack of skill, or ignorance. More recently, as the many Africanisms that really caused those differences became understood, the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme. European elements are often downplayed, ignored or even criticised as the mimicry of a brainwashed and oppressed people.

As usual, the reality lies somewhere in the middle. Much Jamaican music is profoundly African, and much that is more syncretised contains important Africanisms. But to dismiss the enormous body of examples with British roots as unimportant -- let alone corrupted -- is absurd. Which is the soul of a chicken curry, the 95% that is chicken, or the 5% that is spice? Jamaican music is rich with the richness of two continents.

The fact that this recording shows very strong European (and white American) ingredients is not the result of any revisionist selection process. It accurately reflects the nature of the music which we found wherever we went. If the results help correct the undue neglect of the tradition's British aspects that has replaced undue neglect of its African elements, so much the better. But that is secondary. Musical politics come and go. Despite all pressures, the music lives on: Afro-European in its roots, purely Jamaican in its fruits.



Jamaica Mento Group—Harmonica, Home-Made Bass, Trumpet and Coconut Grater as Scraper

M 1681
J3 J65
1981

MUSIC LP

SIDE ONE

Band 1: Adam Where Art Thou, Alfred McLerty, vocal and harmonica; Henry Simpson, wooden trumpet; Hezekiah Brown, scraper. Rec. Maryland, St. Andrew's Parish.

An example of the strong English influence to be found in Jamaican country music, the origins of "Adam Where Art Thou" are totally unknown but clearly English. To judge from internal evidence, it may have started life as a round or canon.

Band 2-4: Kisander; Rosibella; Half a Whole. (Rec. Maryland, St. Andrew's Parish). These three digging songs, sung in field conditions to the rhythm of the picks, are typical of Jamaican music in their African call-and-response form, their English church-derived harmonies, and their exuberance. Kisander contains one rarity: the slow introduction used by this group with many of their worksongs. They called it a "bobbin" (the name is also often attached to the response section of the worksong itself), but I have been able to find no reference to such an introduction in the literature.

Band 5-6 Jane and Matilda Roll; Me No Wantee No Tea. Alfred McLerty, vocal. Rec. Maryland, St. Andrew's Parish. Three songs for nine-night, the last night of the traditional wakes that are still important social and musical occasions in rural Jamaica. Hill and Gully Rider is one of Jamaica's best known songs. Me No Wantee No Tea is jokingly sung when the hostess brings in refreshments. Jane and Matilda

Roll is typical of the mildly bawdy humor of the nine-nights and Jamaican life in general.

Band 7 Take Me Away. Aaron Walker, vocal. Rec. Chatham, St. James' Parish. A Jamaican version of a British ballad, complete with references to Port Royal and other local geographical features. The singer, 76 at the time of the recording, learned the song during the First World War, but it is probably a good deal older than that.

Band 8 Up on the Mountain With Jesus. Valerie Walker, Mezma Gibson, Cedric and Stephen Gibson, Bryan Jackson and Gary Walker. Rec. Barton Court, St. James' Parish. This hymn, with its clear white-gospel origins, is typical of a strong strand in Jamaican religious life (see Side Two, Tracks 1-3). Though it sounds as though it comes from the U.S. (which has influenced Jamaica since the 19th century), American religion was influenced by 19th century English Primitive Methodism, and the link between the original Wesleyans and Jamaica may be direct.



Revival Zion—Jamaica

Bands 9-11 Hill and Gully; Army Boy; John Crow Say I'm
Wan' Decent Woman. Valerie Walker, vocal.

Rec. Chatham, St. James' Parish. Hill and Gully
is a Jamaican classic, one of a handful of songs
known to all. Army Boy goes back at least to the
beginning of this century (a version is given
in Walter Jekyll's Jamaican Song and Story --
Folklore Society 1904 and Dover publications,
1966). Its form is that of the older digging
songs, with a very short bobbin, or refrain.
John Crow is part of a large body of songs and
stories about a favorite folk figure vainer and
less ingenious than Anansi the spider. Both
characters are typical of the kind of African
fables that became naturalized in the countries
of the Black diaspora.

SIDE TWO

Bands 1-3 The Blood of Jesus; How Sweet the Name of Jesus
Sounds; I Saw the Lighthouse. Revival Zion pastor
and congregation, Maryland, St. Andrew's Parish.

The encounter of Christianity and African religions
in the Caribbean produced an entire spectrum of
faiths, ranging from the slightly Christianized
Yoruba lucumi religion of Cuba to somewhat
Africanized Protestant Christian denominations
such as Revival Zion. Much Revival Zion music
comes from mainstream Protestant hymnals, as do
all these examples, recorded in difficult conditions
during a rural service. The first and last are "choruses"
sung (as is usual) to drumming of European provenance

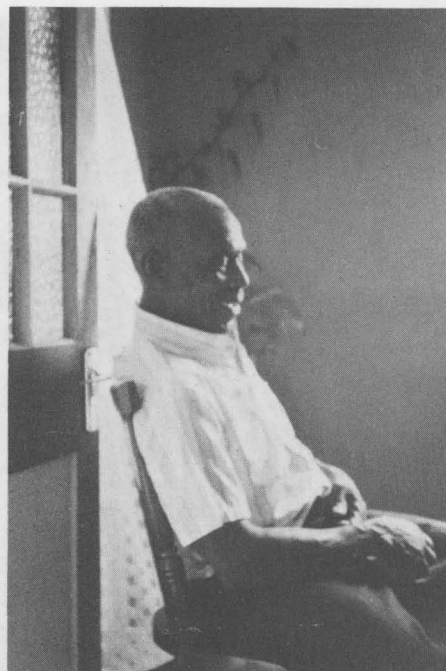
Bands 4,5

but African flair. The second, a hymn, shows the survival
of "lining out" -- common in 19th century England and
U.S.A. -- in which the pastor calls each line or two
of the hymns before it is sung.

Mumma Me Wan' Go Walk; Go Market, Buy Some Corn.

Cedric and Stephen Gibson. Rec. Chatham, St. James'
Parish.

Originally a digging song, Mumma Me Wan' Go Walk has
become a children's play song under the influence
of school and community efforts to preserve Jamaican
traditional music. Go Market, with its heartfelt
comment on spelling lessons, is by children, for
children.



Aaron Walker



Valerie Walker

Band 6 Quadrille. Charles Welch, harmonica, Hezekiah Brown, grater; Henry Simpson, wooden trumpet. Rec. Maryland, St. Andrew's Parish. The country dance music called mento is almost dead from the scorn of the young and the competition of reggae. So are the bourgeois dances that moved into the folk tradition during the 19th century, like this quadrille.

Other record compiled and annotated by
John Storm Roberts

BLACK MUSIC OF TWO WORLDS

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4602

Side 1

- Band 1. Xylophone-Bapende of Zaire
- Band 2. Marimba from Columbia
- Band 3. "Let 'Em Jump"
(Pete Johnson)
- Band 4. "Akonoday" - Ghana
- Band 5. Call to Prayer - Muslim
- Band 6. Mende Muslim song-Sierra Leone
- Band 7. Song from Malaga - Spain

Side 2

- Band 8. "Black Woman" by Vera Hall
- Band 9. Kpelle Brush-cutters - Liberia
- Band 10. "Imo Gal" - Jamaica
- Band 11. "Let Your Hammer Ring" USA
- Band 12. Los Congos de Villa Mella - Criollo
- Band 13. "Palomita Nueva" - Dominica

Side 3

- Band 14. Drum and fife quadrille - W.I.
- Band 15. "Wheel and Turn" - Jamaica
- Band 16. De La Suarez-Caribbean
- Band 17. "War," (Sir Lancelot, Executor,
Caresser, Atilla, Lion)
- Band 18. "Fire Brigade" - Calypso
(Atilla the Hun)

Side 4

- Band 19. "Ezulie" - Haiti
(Le Jazz Condo)
- Band 20. "Retour des Cayes" - Haiti
(Fabre Diroseau)
- Band 21. Mazurca
- Band 22. "Sutileza" - Cuba
(Septeto Nacional)
- Band 23. "How Long Blues" - USA
(Jimmy Yancey)

Side 5

- Band 24. Revival Zion - Jamaica
"How Sweet the Name"
- Band 25. Revival Zion - Jamaica
"I Got a Lighthouse"
- Band 26. "Roll Jordan Roll" - USA
(Fisk Jubilee Singers)
- Band 27. "He's a Friend of Mine" - Gospel
(Spirit of Memphis)
- Band 28. "Frankie" - USA
(Mississippi John Hurt)

Side 6

- Band 29. "I Believe I'll Dust my Broom"
(Robert Johnson)
- Band 30. "Leave My Love Alone" - Jazz
(Coleman Hawkins)
- Band 31. "Vijana Niwambie" - Kenya
(Williamu Osale)
- Band 32. "Kenyatta Aliiteswa Sana"
(John Mwale)
- Band 33. "Maboke Nde Temoin" - Zaire
(Bholen and Orch.)

LITHO IN U.S.A. 