



Deep Roots Music 1

In late 1982 the UK based company Channel 4 TV broadcasted the Deep Roots Music series, a total of six episodes, exploring the extraordinary origins of reggae. From the music of the slaves which were brought in from Africa to the soundsystem days of the early 1980s, it's all here. It unlocks the lost music of the Maroons and of plantation society, and it traces a line from the buru-men and obeah-men through to the dancehall days of the early 1980s. The excellent narrator is artist, producer and radio host Mikey 'At The Controls' Dread. He actually performs a little toast here and there! His poetical style of narration matches the content perfectly and shows his engagement. The series was produced in 1981 by Howard Johnson and Mike Wallington (Executive producer). Special assistants were Rasta preacher Pepe Judah and Leggo Beast.

This DVD contains the first two episodes: 'Revival' and 'Ranking Sounds'. 'Revival' offers rare footage of African music in Jamaica and how the revivalist churches carry a mix of Christian and African themes into the Jamaican mainstream. This episode features music by the St Catherine Kumina Soul Searchers, Jimmy Cliff, Don Drummond, Count Ossie, Toots And the Maytals and Jimmy Riley. Furthermore there is full length interview with Jamaican folklorist and poet Louise Bennett-Coverly aka Miss Lou who passed away in 2006. She excitingly lectures about the history of reggae music. Former Skatalites members Jah Jerry and Scully, together with guitar player Aston Thomas talk about the past, the Studio One days and play some music in Jah Jerry's back yard. At the end we see Jimmy Riley recording the tune 'Poor Immigrant'.

The second episode 'Ranking Sounds' focuses on the phenomenon of Jamaican sound-system with the deejays and soundsystem owners that are an integral part of Jamaican music. The episode offers some fantastic rare footage of U Roy, Millie Small, Prince Buster and The Skatalites in the Harry J studio. There's an interview with the late great Tommy McCook, who recalls his days at Alpha Boys School, Studio One and Duke Reid. Here he gives his view about the development of Jamaican music. The next part is an interview with Luceille Reid, the wife of producer Arthur 'Duke' Reid, who died in 1975 and Pampadour, the dancehall promotor of the Duke.

The best part is an interview and performance with Count Machouki and his sidekick Sir Lord Comic. The two legends discuss about the history of the music and their contribution. It's funny to see how they disagree about some topics. Their performance is a must-see! The episode closes with the Jack Ruby Hi-Power soundsystem, playing at a Saturday night in Oche Rios, with -among

others- the late vocalist Mickey Simpson performing a nice lovers tune.

Too bad the DVD comes without subtitles. In some cases it's hardly possible to understand what's been said. However, if you're interested in reggae music, its origins and development you should get this DVD! It's an essential historical document.