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**Sly & Robbie****Stepper Takes The Taxi**

MVD Audio

It will no doubt be the names of veteran Jamaican rhythm masters Sly Dunbar (drums) and Robbie Shakespeare (bass) that'll catch your eye on the cover of this album, but once you have it spinning, it'll be the sweet, sweet saxophone of Guillaume "Stepper" Briard that grabs your ear.

Briard, a longtime member of Dunbar and Shakespeare's Taxi Gang (the house band for their Taxi label) steps to the front for this one, offering up both tunes built upon classic riddims from the Taxi vaults and new tracks laid down for the occasion.

The neat thing is, nothing feels dated – nor do any of the newer start-from-scratch songs lack any of the vintage vibe of the vault riddims. The grooves are as solid as you would expect anything with Sly and Robbie's names on it to be; and with a bench of talent as deep as the Taxi Gang's, there are layers of sound to burrow into on repeated listenings. Nothing is rushed or in your face here: from the opener "Fistful of Horns" to the playful "Taxi Tune Up", the dominant mood is cool – just be cool. Even the drama of "Imminent Danger" is on island time, shaping it into a warning cry that you can dance to.

SPOILER ALERT: Hang tight for the bonus dub track tucked away at the end of "Matera Lounge". You'll recognize the melody line from "Occupy Downtown", offering itself up all funky and bold before shapeshifting into the remix's dubbed-out vapors. With a rhythm base such as this one, the deconstruction/reconstruction process never loses an ounce of wallop ... making the concept of an album full of Stepper dub versions seem a natural follow-up.

Whatever's next on Stepper's docket, keep 'em coming, sir. Horn-driven reggae is always a guaranteed smile, dating back to classic albums from the likes of trombonists Don Drummond, Vin Gordon, and Rico Rodriguez – along with the work of saxman Tommy McCook. *Stepper Takes The Taxi* features some great right-now reggae horn playing in the coolest of vibes.

You cannot listen to this without feeling better about things.

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Brian Robbins meanders among the dubbed out vapors over at [www.brian-robbins.com](http://www.brian-robbins.com)

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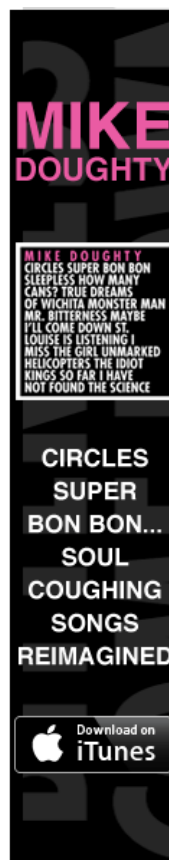
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