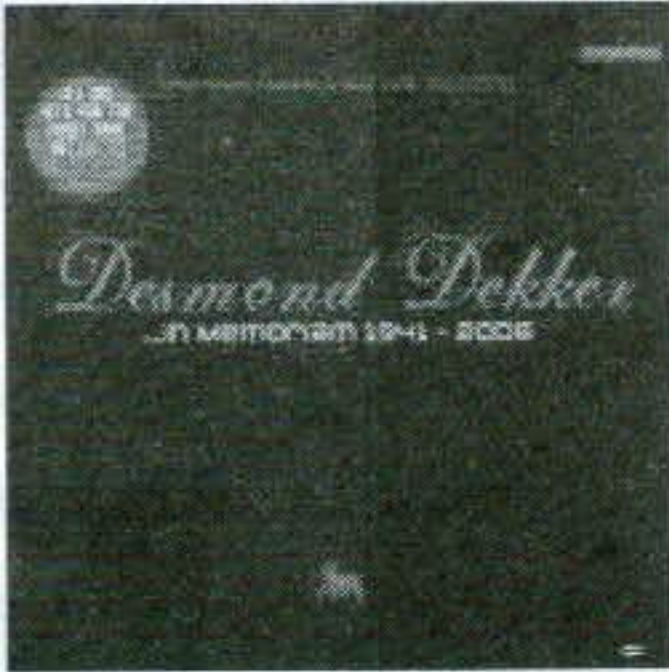


ALBUM REVIEWS

Memory of Dekker Rocks On



By JOE AHERN
STAFF WRITER

Music, like any other art form, has been passed down, shaped and stolen more than a hundred times over. We always forget the original roots of New Orleans' zydeco music, hip-hop, blues, soul, jazz and rock 'n roll since they are all genres that have been re-shaped so much through the ages that have become quite different today. So it's no surprise that if you ask most students they think of ska, they'll mention punk bands with dance beats, brass instruments and funny striped pants. In the evolution of culture, we have forgotten that Jamaica was the birthplace of ska, that ska started before reggae and that at the center of this whole thing, sat Desmond Dekker.

Desmond Dekker: In Memoriam 1941-2006 is an album that demonstrates how much the world owes to Dekker's contributions. The album is a collection of some of his most outstanding songs which were entirely recorded in London this year, just before he died of a heart-attack in May '05. Knowing that this is the last of his recordings makes the songs even more poignant.

The CD starts with "007 (Shanty Town,)" Dekker's 1967 hit that described Dekker's life working as a

welder at the construction sites in Trench Town, where he got the reputation for being a rude-boy and a gangster, with his stories of "lootin' 'n shootin'." Dekker said he never felt that way, but growing up in Jamaica revealed to him civil war, which became everyday events to him. Music was an escape, and he put his life into the lyrics because he grew up knowing nothing else.

The album's music never feels heavy in the way he may have intended it too, but our generation has been desensitized through the blunt obscenity of current day hip-hop. The best songs are his relentlessly optimistic pop hits, like "You Can Get It If You Really Want," and "Wise Man," which finished up the *Memoriam* album. These are classics and we owe it to Dekker to recognize the roots of the music. Where would we be without the feel-good dance beat of ska, subconsciously pumping in the ethos of the islands? Probably still tipping our hats and dipping our skirts with the Pilgrims.



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Desmond Dekker's *Memoriam* album (top) features hits from his entire career, from his start in the 60s (above left) to present day (above right).

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