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Desmond Dekker

In Memoriam 1941-2006

Secret Records

Reggae original bows out with a beauty

The mention of Desmond Dekker's name always brings a smile to my lips, though not for the reason you might assume. You see, I can't think of him without being reminded of an item in the UK humour magazine Viz about alliterative celebrity insults. The series ran as follows: Alan Alda's Arsehole, Brian Blessed's Bouncing Bollocks, Charlie Chaplin's Cheesy Chopper, Desmond Dekker's Dirtbox. Quite why that stuck in my mind so particularly can only be answered by a series of expensive therapies (which would probably conclude that I'm basically an immature and easily amused pillock with more issues than Private Eye), but nonetheless I am unable to think of one of Jamaican ska's genuine greats without picturing his hairy hole in all it's glory.

More fool me. Dekker was indeed one of Jamaica's finest and most famous musical exports after Bob Marley (upon whom he was a great influence), as well as being the first reggae musician to have a major hit in the UK with his number one smash "Israelites" (later hilariously re-jigged in a memorable ad campaign and hence remembered by millions as "Me Ears Are Alright"). "In Memoriam" is the final recording he made before popping off to the great jam room in the sky earlier this year, and includes among it's twenty tracks a re-recording of his most well-remembered moment.

Not that there is much wrong with the rest at all; though by and large they are all variations on a theme, he wouldn't be the first musician to have made his name rewriting the same song time and again, nor will he be the last. Plus, it is of course a bloody good one! Get this on your stereo and try not to dance - it's a physical impossibility...
<http://www.desmonddekker.com/>

By **EDDIE THOMAS**

This release was published on 06 Nov 2006.

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