

# Sly and Robbie: 'Dubrising' Album Review

Reviews Albums Other Posts Oct 30, 2014



*Courtesy of tabou1records.wordpress.com*

On December 5, 2014, **Tabou1 Records** will release **Sly and Robbie's** *Dubrising* LP, which reunites the riddim killers with dub maestro extraordinaire **Paul "Groucho" Smykle** for the first time in more than twenty years. The album, which will be released only on collector's grade vinyl, is the finest dub reggae album of 2014 and my pick for best reggae album of the year.

Anyone unfamiliar with the work of former Island Records in-house mixing engineer Paul "Groucho" Smykle need only drop the needle on any one of several landmark dub reggae recordings he mixed in the 1980s and 1990s. Have a listen to the afro-militant thump of "**Kunte Kinte**" (the version to Creole's "Beware of Your Enemies"); **Black Uhuru's** "The Monkey Is A Spy" ("Sinsemilla"), "Fire & Brimstone" ("Journey") and **The Viceroy's** "Dub of Gold" ("Heart of Stone"), all from the 1981 concept dub venture *Raiders of the Lost Dub*. Check his formidable skills as mixologist on "Ion Storm" and "Android Rebellion" from Black Uhuru's *The Dub Factor*. Smykle is the chupacabra of the mixing board, a semi-mythical maestro mixologist of dub who quickly made a name for himself in the post-Marley era with the best rhythm section to emerge from "the Rock" since the brothers Barrett.

Smykle is back in the mix with Sly and Robbie, this time mixing a set of largely unknown recordings by the likes of **Bunny Rugs** ("Rumours"), **Horace Andy** ("Zion Gate," "Rastafari Prophecy," "King of Kings"), Khalifa ("Accused") and **Chezidek** ("Devil You Can't Bully Me Out," "Surrender"). The instrumentals were recorded

live at Harry J's and Anchor studios in Kingston, Jamaica. Don Donovan (Big Audio Dynamite) was brought in by Smykle to lay down synthesizer overdubs and Bunny McKenzie to add harmonica. The overdubs bring a cohesion to the mix that can be heard throughout the entire album.

*Dubrising* is a whimsical Taxi ride back to **Channel One Studios** on Maxfield Avenue, West Kingston, 1980 where Sly and Robbie lay down riddims during sessions for Black Uhuru's *Showcase* album. On to 1981 when we first hear the "new sound of reggae" – the driving drums and thumping bass behind tunes like "Sponji Reggae" and "Puff She Puff" and 1982 when the voice of Uhuru pleads "Chill out, chill out, chill out New York." The only thing heavier than the heat on the street is the haze that fills the air from that "stalk of Sinsemilla growing in my back yard."

Yes, I tell you bredren and sistren, it is all here again in 2014 on tracks like "Drone Snipers," "Bully Tactics," "Flamethrower," and "Double Agent," titles eerily reminiscent of the apocalyptic dub mixes from *The Dub Factor*. Smykle takes on the modern roots of Chezidek with a vengeance on "Bully Tactics" and "No Surrender," two of the strongest tracks on the album. He stamps the end of the album by paying homage to the great Bunny Rugs of Third World who passed back in February. The brilliant and bittersweet "Double Agent" is the dub mix of the previously unreleased "Rumours," the Carlton "Tetrack" Hines-penned mega-hit for **Gregory Isaacs** that Rugs voiced shortly before his passing.

Sly and Robbie's *Dubrising* is not only the best reggae album of 2014, it is a testament to the sound and vibe that the duo created in the uncertain yet transformative post-Marley era of the early 1980s. It is an album which will lock the jaws of dub-mixologists everywhere as they ponder their future in a world inhabited once again by Sly Dunbar, Robbie Shakespeare and Paul "Groucho" Smykle.

## Review overview

Voice

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Lyrics

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Music

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Originality

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Delivery/Presentation

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Summary

4.8