

## NORRIS MAN: FIT TO CARRY THE BATON

In the field of reggae, there are few names that could be called when one thinks of talent fit to carry on the high standard set by the pioneers of Reggae music. One of those names is Norris Man. This artiste has risen from the doldrums to become one of the leading lights in the reggae genre.

Norris Man was born Christopher Campbell in the impoverished community of Hannah Town, Kingston, Jamaica. He was not able to achieve much in terms of formal schooling and much of his education was gained from informal sources. "The corner college and ganja university" is how he puts it.

The young man always had a penchant for the performing arts. He grew up listening to and admiring the music of King Yellowman, Papa San, and Lt. Stitchie. He also honed his skill by toasting around sound systems in his area. Soon he coined the name Norris Man from the name Chuck Norris - who was his favorite movie star at the time.

Before he came into prominence, Norris used to hang around the Cell Block and Celestial Sound studios seeking the big break. He had voiced a few songs but had no real success until he forged links with a young producer at Kings of Kings, Colin 'Iley Dread' Levy. This union proved to be very successful for



both artiste and producer. The first song recorded by this chanter for the Kings of Kings label was titled *Congo Shanti*, which spoke about the life of the Congo man living in the hills of Jamaica. The next song, *Persistence*, became an international hit and an album of the same name soon followed. Since then, this artiste has grown from strength to strength and his style has

Photo: Diane Adam

become undoubtedly unique.

His sophomore CD, *Better Your Soul* - produced by **Jah Scout Records**, is presently enjoying reasonable sales in the U.S. and Europe. He is set to tour the latter continent later in the year. So far, Norris Man has performed in Africa, Switzerland, and all over the United States and the Caribbean; the list has just begun.

Norris is presently working on his third album which will be produced by Kings of Kings and is set for release around mid-year. This artiste is definitely not an ordinary talent and is certainly leaving his mark on the reggae community. RasVibe had the pleasure of gaining insight into the mind of one of Reggae music's finest.

**RV:** What do you want people to get from your music?

**NM:** I want people to be informed about what is going on. I want people to enjoy the music. I would love to be able to change people's lives by encouraging them to do something positive. I hope that through my music people will know that there is always a way out and that bright days are ahead; they just need to read the Bible and keep up.

**RV:** Dancehall has recently had so much controversy. What is your response to Jamaica's indecent-language law?

**NM:** ...Rappers can use indecent language but a reggae artiste cannot. If

such a law is to exist, the standard has to be the same for everyone. I don't approve of the government keeping back artistes who use indecent language but I also don't approve of artistes being disrespectful to women.

**RV:** That leads to the next question, do you think it is a contradiction for a Rasta to subscribe to those aspects of dancehall?

**NM:** Well, first of all, if every Rastaman

was like me - they would leave the dancehall. Dancehall was created out of nonsense and stupidity; two sounds go to war, each selector telling the other about each others girls and mothers. That's disrespect for a few dollars. Reggae, on the other hand, represents something good about Jamaica. That song *Log On* by Elephant Man is the number one song in Jamaica and that, to me, is a shame because **Burning Spear**, **Beres Hammond**, and **Luciano** all put out wonderful albums and none of their songs are number one.

**RV:** Do you think it is a problem with the Jamaican public?

**NM:** No, it goes back to the media and the radio DJ's. If I am evil and crazy and I hear a song in the radio that preaches love and prayer, it will motivate me to do what's right - but if I hear *Log On* it's all about bling bling and pretty cars. Songs like that are party songs and don't last long. I have tried to sing mature songs that will uplift people. When my songs play in the dancehall no one should want to fight or quarrel. When my songs on in the dance people should want to waltz or bubble or do the cool-and-deadly - no gun or knife. Nowadays, it is not like that in the dancehall because the generation is fed on bad blood and so they are poisoned against the foundation of reggae.

**RV:** Jamaica has changed tremendously. It is not the same place I remember.

**NM:** Everything is Americanized. People are not good anymore; the bible speaks of the new generation.

**RV:** What gives you inspiration?

**NM:** The Most High gives me inspiration. Life experiences also give me inspiration; for example, my relationships. My latest song, *She Never Knew*, was for my wife. She has shown me many things and as a result I can write many songs.

**RV:** When are you most happy?

**NM:** I am the happiest man when I come home and see my wife and I know my child is well. I am happy when I hear I have a new hit. I am also happy when I hear that I will be on the next big tour (*laughs*).