

Mumia Abu-Jamal, *175 Progress Drive* (Alternative Tentacles)

Mumia Abu-Jamal's voice rings loud and clear from behind Babylon's walls after twenty years on Death Row. He cannot be silenced. *175 Progress Drive*, compiled by the Prison Radio Project, features previously unreleased radio essays recorded during Mumia's continued incarceration, as well as rare material aired on NPR, WHYY and other stations prior to his arrest. This award-winning journalist and radio activist's words are so powerful and truthful that he was banned by National Public Radio. He is still the "Voice Of The Voiceless" as he continues his tradition of challenging the mainstream ministries of misinformation. Also on the CD are the voices of Rubin Hurricane Carter, Ruby Dee, Jimmy Carter, Martin Espada, Chuck D, Hugh Masekela, Michael Franti, Ossie Davis, and others. Mumia interviewed Bob Marley in 1979, and a portion of that insightful interview is found on this CD, as well as music by I Was Born With Two Tongues, Unbound Allstars, and Seeds of Wisdom, -- the revolutionary youth of the MOVE Organization, ages 9 to 22, as they continue the profound wisdom of John Africa, MOVE's founder. In Mumia's words, "Here you will find the voices of our people, the voices of resistance, and the voices of struggle. Thank you for your important part in making that struggle possible, and helping it to grow." Join the movement for Mumia's freedom, and the freedom of all political prisoners, today! [For more information, visit www.mumia.org, www.prisonradio.org, www.alternativetentacles.com.]



- Sister Yasmin

Chris Murray, *4-Trackaganza!* (Asian Man)



Chris Murray, mastermind of Venice Shoreline Chris and no stranger to countless ventures out and about in the world of ska, is back and at it again on his very handy 4-Track. This time with a collection of pieces entitled *4-Trackaganza!* Chris is no stranger to flexing his music muscles in a thoroughly creative manner. It seems that all of that time honing his ska and rocksteady skills with the best of the best allows him to play with that which he already knows.

As we should expect with Chris, *4-Trackaganza!* employs a variety of instrumentation (most thankfully the gifted guitar), and allows us to step a little further into his thoughts and lyrical capabilities. Just imagine, this is only what he has successfully transferred from thoughts to paper to sound system. From my experiences, the good stuff is always a little harder to convey, so the best is yet to come. While I am a fan of lyrical creativity, it should be rather easy for anyone to appreciate the lyrical abilities on display here, for they are complimented nicely with sober and sincere grooves that make you want to listen carefully. "One Everything" speaks a truth and contains a grasp on reality that listeners don't always hear with their ears, "California Time" goes a little deeper than it seems to go each time you listen...and I swear I heard the Wilson brothers take part in a few harmonies. "Dinosaurs" gives us an eerie history lesson through Chris' eyes and songs like "Back Rooms & Diesel Fumes" (folk and blues jams is good), "So Many Roads" and "Brave New Brian" more than deserve and require a listen to more than once. And even though he didn't write it, "Science Fiction Double Feature" and its seemingly out of nowhere subject matter fits right in on this jigsaw-like collaboration of Chris'. I say thanks to Chris for keeping it with a guitar and a 4-Track and a mind and desire to boot. [For more information, visit www.chrismurray.net]

- Jason Kohler

Mr. Vegas, *Damn Right* (Greensleeves)

It's been nothing short of a busy last two years for Mr Vegas. With the success of his debut album from Greensleeves, *Heads High*, came plenty of performances and promotional trips. He's spent time focusing on building up his own label, In Da Streetz, and now comes the sophomore album - *Damn Right*. This album is a testament to his work as it even contains five songs from his own label release. Further, there's production from the heavy hitters; Richard 'Call Me Shams' Brownie, Jeremy Harding, Steely & Clevie, Lloyd 'John John' James, Shaggy with Chris Birch & Rik Rok for Big Yard and Computer Paul. Well stacked! The album starts off with "How About That," previously released by J Harding's 2Hard Records. Definitely a good intro! Of course the album has several high-lights...songs like "Duppy Durex," the highly successful "Girls Time," "Bun It," "She's A Ho" - one of his own productions and "Hot Gal Today." Other



songs that are worth taking more than a second listen on include songs like "Kokane," which has a great anti-drug message, laced over a hip-hop dancehall fusion and features rapper Ayo. "Feel It" is a track that showcases his singjay style over a very pop market friendly track. That's not to say it's not a dancehall riddim, you dun know how Big Yard does it. It just has an excellent appeal and I would be surprised if it wasn't one of the singles selected to push in the American Market. "Easy Easy," produced by Computer Paul is another great singing tune that has 'big market' all over it.

You really also have to check out "Rise," a beautiful love song also produced by Computer Paul for Vegas' label. For anyone that questions Vegas' ability to sing, this is the song you should tune to first! It's certainly another that should be considered as a single! The song, "I Love Dancehall," which was produced by Delano Thomas of Renaissance Disco and Derrick Perkins is a great tune. It features the addition of singer Jackie. The song "Some-Boy" paints a picture of some of the things that are sadly a reality for many in Jamaica. There's an R&B influenced remix for "Girls Time" that many will find a favorite with its breezy flow. Overall, the album is a full collection of songs for Mr Vegas. It not only shows some of the colorful productions of some great producers, but it showcases Vegas' progression as a singer and singjay. With over eight hits (including current hits and potentials) how can you make a mistake?

- RudeGal

Norris Man, *Better Your Soul* (Jah Scout)

Kingston born Christopher Campbell is back with *Better Your Soul*, the follow-up to his debut album *Persistence* on the VP label. Fresh from his 2000 tour with fellow Rasta youth Anthony B, Norris Man (named because of his enthusiasm for karate king Chuck Norris) is a gifted reggae soldier who possesses proficient songwriting, creating lyrical content that is more potent, more socially uplifting, and more meaningful than ever. He uses his talent on all tracks to convey his faith into conscientious and inspiring songs about life, love and liberation. Ranging from Rastaman chanting and singing to R&B flavored love songs and hip hop grooves, *Better Your Soul* shows there is no limit to this artist's musical exploration. This album features the great works of Executive Producer Colin McGregor of Jah Scout Records, including riddims produced by Rankin Scroo of Crucial Youth Productions, backing vocals by Jamaica's hottest new singer CeCile, and a special appearance by hip hop artist Money B of Digital Underground on "She Grooves." Each of its seventeen songs are filled with sweet, warm, uplifting melodies and sophisticated lyrics - all true gems. You might already be familiar with three of them - "Jah Love Us," "Last Days" and the title track "Better Your Soul" - as they are previously released 7 inch singles. This is one great album, by one great up-n-coming artiste. [For more information, visit www.jahscout.com]

- Eric Kohler



Ernest Ranglin, *Gotcha!* (Telarc)



The great Jamaican guitarist, Ernest Ranglin, was one of the architects of ska who cut his musical teeth touring the Caribbean islands with various Jamaican dance bands in the 1950s. He is widely known for his diversity and has kept his interest alive in both jazz and traditional Jamaican musics. On *Gotcha!*, his latest release for Telarc, he builds on the jazz-tinged reggae sound of his classic 1996 *Below The Baseline* album, as he combines his experience with the excitement of new companions and fresh compositions. His amazingly tight band includes saxophonist Antonio Hart, percussionist Errol 'Crusher' Bennett, bassist Anthony Jackson, pianist Warren Bernhardt, keyboardist Gary Mayone, and drummer Steve Jordan, as they display a fluent command of traditional and contemporary styles. The tunes on this CD are interesting and diverse, ranging from reggae, jazz, ska, and other bubbling grooves, which are varied, fresh and exciting. This is a totally enjoyable album from this subtle and tasteful virtuoso.

- Sister Yasmin

Tony Rebel, *Realms of Rebel* (RAS)

Don't call it a come back! Tony Rebel's long awaited CD is finally here (his last was 1997's *If Jah*) and these sixteen tracks have the Rebel at his best. The CD "jumps" off with "Loyal Soul Jah" that has the riddim hook of Destiny Child's R&B hit "Jumpin Jumpin," and from there the CD rolls on with solid tune after tune. Included is Tony's Spanish language version of "If Jah" titled "Si Jah Esta A Lado De Me" that has a fresh sound with the Latin flavor of the music also for the international fans. The Penthouse influence with Donovan Germain and Rookie Productions are who Tony does some of