

ROOTICAL VIBES

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Berlin Reggae Runnings

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THE LIVE SCENE IN BERLIN

by GweN Do

Greetings massives....this is my first contribution to the "vibes", so I wanna be sure to continue in the tradition of my former colleagues who have moved on to other things. So yah, how is the scene in Berlin today..???....reggae-wise and livewise...it's a mixed up situation really, but roots music has never ever been just another "commodity", so there are quite a few problems surrounding the vibes here in Berlin these days and times. First of all, there is an up and coming fleet of of serious outfits who are currently blazing new dubtrails all over the city. From new labels and releases, to sounds that seem to have sprung up from nowhere, Berlin seems to be coming up to standards of the international scene. The usual problems remain, however...from making spliff smokers go outside and the fact that there is always the complaint that the bar don't sell enough, and too much ganja smoke in the place. What can or should be done??....well, Rootical Vibes has hammered away at this subject from time immemorial but the "problem" still persists. There also seems to be some confusion among those responsible for advertising or letting the public be aware of the scene. If you want to know where the vibes are, you better have online connections and know where to search. Most places where things used to roll sweetly are now full blown clubs with lots of international (rock) appearances. Forget about trying to book there like years ago..."yah yah we know you band is great but just check our rates page and ..." so you have it. Booked up to the fullest on weekends for the next six months but you can always get a Wednesday or so...and if the next day is a holiday (holy shit!!), well it's calculated like a weekend. Good for the big boys ...the acts just have to feature....For a Berliner, there is hardly any reason to know that there is some great happening out there whenever...for tourists, it may be more interesting. What is missing here is a kind of "House of Blues" where all kinds of roots musics are featured. So if someone can tell de BeeBee peeples about that, maybe they would open one over here.

LOCAL PROFILE

sounds and DJs from da city

Yo....this piece will be written without mentioning any names..... because there are so many sounds and systems and Dees and Jays out there that omitting one or the other may seem to indicate preferential treatment or some kind of that linguistic mumbo jumbo. So I `n I will begin by giving a super big up the multitude of spinners and purveyors of turntablism here in Berlin. One one side we have the roots dubbers who are constantly sticking to dubbing and there are the others who are really into hiphopism and it's related genres, so naturally a good ragga will work there too. More and more sounds are getting into soca because it revvs up the crowd and that also means good business for the barboys. Little by little we see the roots and culture sounds take backstage to the more "everything blackish" sounds. Before used to be that the crowd would gravitate to the spot where the roots would be heard, danced to and whatever else comes after was always irie...nowadays with the gap between DJing and rapping becoming ever smaller, a "sound" today is a combination of a Dj contest with some rappers thrown in as extras....it works well most of the times but there's also when the vibes doh mix so well, and in that case is best everybody stick to his or her thang. A close look at the people running and working the sounds reveal interesting things. Lots of musicians are now fulltime DJs with local sounds and feature at least once every week. Looks like there is more action on this side of things than musicianship in concert. I would not mention it if I had not thought about it, but it looks like musicians playing reggae onstage is maybe already a thing of the yesteryear....but for how long? Things always come around in circles and we may just as well see a resurgence in music being played as opposed to today`s version of a concert which is singing or DJing or rapping to recorded stuff.

IMPRESSUM

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Rootical Vibes is a timely
magazine checking reggae
and related scenes outta
Berlin and beyond.

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DREADERITORIAL

Well yes, hail up me idren and sistren...long time no see or rather read. Well not so much new news to report about except that the topics remain as hot as ever. Year in year out and it really getting from Bad to worse to borrow a phrase from Mr. Burning Spear. All over the world people are yearning for the days when vibes were at least real and cool and not the daily bombardment of how many people blown up in places where there is serious war going on as we sit back and enjoy our use of cyberspace. In years gone by there would lots of works denouncing the senseless killings that go on daily...but if there are songs protesting, we never get to hear them...all is well organised and like a popular artist says..."is a real war machine at work...controlling the vibes and keeping everything neat neat under wraps....in the days of "appafried" the chanting went on and until something had to be done...window dressing kinda solution but at least there was some movement. Azania have some strides to make still but today is better than before....up to a certain point. In this issue, the question of what to do about ganja again rears its beautiful buds. Still a dangerous drug for most of the people who could actually do something about the situation.....but the waters flowing more than ever. New writers have also come into the fold. The others have moved on to other heights but the reporting quality will not be adversely affected. In fact look out for more "in your face" reporting from the new crew. All except one are musicians and therefore write from a standpoint of personal experience.

WHY IS GANJA STILL A "CRIMINAL" PLANT?

Yes I, here we are again with the touchy subject. Now we will try to look at it from another angle. The law is the law and so today if you smoking a spliff, you are in fact breaking their law. Get caught with a joint and it seems like you will just get a small kinda punishment. If you have a truckload, then is something else, but is the same ganja. Looks like is the money involved that is the problem and not the grass itself. I never heard of any negative effects of ganja smoking except ending up in jail or having to pay money after being dragged up before a judge. So is not people's health that seems to matter, but the fact that lots of dust is being made by certain people precisely because of the illegal status of the plant. So what to do? Lots of politicians have the view that the thing should be freed up and controlled. Many others just check that it is nothing other than another problem drug in the society like rum or cokes. These guys usually say what they say because they never smoke a spliff and prefer to see the land planted with hops to make beer than to set up a couple plantations. The amount of money that rolls in the illegal bizz is awesome...why don't they just move in and use the profits in improving the nations's health? Man drink and make trouble, the law takes care of that...man smoke and make trouble, the should also be able to take care of that. The only funny thing is that the spliff-smoker rarely ever gets into the kind of "trouble" that alcohol drinking eventually leads towards. So here we are again folks, time passing and the profiteers do their thing while those who wanna smoke have to be satisfied with what they get. Recent local papers have even hinted that the quality of street ganja today is highly questionable. Boys mix all kinds of anything just to make a killing on profits and maybe people too. They found out that crushed glass, flour and refined sugar are the prime "additives" identified from recent street purchases. Bad news for smokers!!! So until there comes some level-headed reformists, we are doomed to be at the mercy of the pushers. An infernal cycle....but then again who knows who behind what? Surely the health of people is not on the top of the priority list.

HOW TO PLAY CADENCE ON A DRUMSET

Are you ready? If yes, then I suppose that you have everything set up and willing to get into the vibe. In the meantime, make sure that the neighbours (if any) will not call the authorities and that the baby is not sleeping etc etc.. So here we go... a standard set is o.k. hi-hats, toms snare and cymbals. The first thing to know is the background of this riddim. If one has never taken part in, or witness carnival celebrations in the Caribbean, then you have to do some work on that.... taking a shoot or two of rum will not help. even though the music itself is based upon partying and rum and punch drinking and sewing until the wee hours of the morning. Anyway, it must be emphasised that the hats and cymbals are what drives this music. The foot has to go steady boop boop boop and the hats just syncopate in between. The main idea is to be relaxed yet rolling down full speed. First try is with the pedal....boop boop boop until you really feel like accompanying a lapeau kabwitt band...dunno what that is? again one must be familiar with the terms and lingos associated withCarnival!!! So **boop-boop**, **boop-boop** and then the hi hats do the rest in between. Snare is just used like a kinda percussion rimwise....tok tok tok interplay with the hats.. To ease up and at the same time to provide more thrust, the drummer usually switches to playing the hi-hats part on the cymbals, but not just crashing away at them. They are held half muted and struck to give a contrasting dry sound as opposed to when the sweet hats just drive the beat to infinite joyriding. The best way is to put on some popular band like Gramacks, Groovers or Exile One (The old albums because they all make it with mouse today) and check how the boys did it. Cadence drummers have a lot of support from the percussions because the bands usually have at least two perc-people who sometime are the backing vocalists. Special mention must be made of the main perc which is the floor tom and cowbell player. Just listen...he plays tok-tok, **boop** tok-tok-tok....steady....the tok being the bell and the boop is the floor tom. So, aspiring cadence drummer, try doing that a couple times a week and with the right attitude you will land where the others were and then cut out your path and move on.

Haddi S

THE RISE OF TURNTABLISM

Yo...greetings to all music lovers and in particular the fans of reggae and roots musics. With the pr-programmed death of the CD came out the obvious response.....Soundsystems.....Today these outfits outnumber and outplay most struggling ensembles trying to etch out a "name" in this complex music business world. Gone are the days when the spinner would be the one keeping the vibes flowing before the live act came on and performed. Today it is quite the opposite. Live bands come and do their thing and the folks just wait until the end and start to enjoy themselves when the discs start spinning. Well, is that progress or is something fishy at work here?. Lots of people want to live by the motto "give the people what they want", but if the people want poopoo, should it really be handed down to them? It's hard to know about anything that one has never heard about, or is unfamiliar with, so the argument just falls into the ditch. Yes man, today lots of Mikeholders have exchanged the traditional appearance with backing band to just chanting over whatever the spinners dish out.....and to take it even further, today most "sounders" doh have time to waste carrying loads of 45s and 33s..all is in the 'top' and is just plug in and choose from thousands of saved loops and "riddims". But at the same time we have to give heavy big ups to the likes of David Raddygan who really knows how to deliver a soundshow. Most of the so called heavy duty sounds that advertise their way to hell and back are no more than deep-rooted reggae fans who just want to entertain the public with the sweet sounds of reggae....still cool...Raddy and the likes, really perform while they spin and lots of the sound neophytes around may be well advised to go to one of his shows and see how it's supposed to be done. There is nothing as boring as looking at a stage with two dudes nose embedded into the top's screens...one just choosing what next and the other maybe playing tricks with the light system or worse, adding "fx" (noise is a better word) to boost the level of mental tearup so that befuddled minds will be quick to jump in and join the "fun". Now some of you are blue vex already and think that I am against the Sounds, but you're wrong again...There is sound, and then there are "Sounds".....if is just to get a "top" and load it and start advertising as the latest baddest, then here we go with "soundwagonism". Today it is much easier to be "on the scene" with the above-mentioned equipment than to take time to learn to play sax or drums and go through the process of finding like minded musicians and doing something positive. You can have all the money in the world, but that will not make you a musician. have some dust and buy the correct things, then you can soon be featured as a contributor to the "reggae scene". Still, it's a way to survive, and I have to really commend and BIG UP all the Positive Sound men and women out there keeping the flame of reggae burning. With the rapidity at which electronic gadgets "improve", I can only hope that in the future there will be at least some people operating the "tops"...it looks like there will soon be the (if not already operating) possi-ability to make a "Sound" from home....wireless tricknology and all that.

O'Fwepp

THE MYSTICAL THEORY BEHIND REGGAE

Greetings folks...lots of things have been said and written about reggae....from its conception and birth up to "grownup" stage. It is really a wonder that music coming from where it did, could have such a worldwide and positive impact. Let's face it...jazz boys can play as well as country or whatever the genre, but the music called reggae is very special. The sheer simplicity just blows the top off all dem so called "heavies" or "professionals". They can study all their "feeorrie" they want but some of them cannot come back in after the dub. Colleges and Universities have gone through all available artists and pressings, but they just cannot come up with the proper "methodology". Why? the answer is simple...reggae is not just a music like the others..First of all, it is the music of the Rastaman. When revelation time came, it was obvious that the drum was indeed the heartbeat of all musics and so the elders started out with the Nyabingi scene. Reggae comes from these roots, and so if you try to deny rastafari and still want to come into music via reggae, then the road ahead will be filled with contradictions and woe. So here the whole thing opens up and one can clearly see the "workers" as opposed to the charlatans. To get to the true feeling of reggae, one must be in some way acquainted with its original form and realise also that "it ain't going nowhere"....it is here to stay. Familiarity with reggae's history will at once show that the mystic revelation of JAH RASTAFARI embodies itself through the music. That also explains why ganja plays an important part in the life and history of reggae. Lots of people shy away from that because they doh want problems with the "Govvaments" of the day, who last time I checked, have no regard for the concerns of others. They come up with all kinds of fancy words and phrasings just to prevent I an I from living like we want to...smoke our ganja and feel irie. But alcohol and cokes flowing like lord have mercy and off and on we hear how they "décalay" such and such drug dealers' business. But that again is another intertwined subject. To put it simply...If grass was freed-up the world would be more loving and conscious....looks like ganja threaten the rumboys business so they have to keep downpressing I an I....but for how long? The answer is blowing in a puff of ganja smoke that I just released.

Haddi S

NEXTISSUE

The War on Poverty...awaiting a Declaration

The Ites Gold and Green Factor

Reggae and Rap...Black Musics, but....

Reggae Engineers, Technicians and Producers..a mental overview..

QUOTES

*Only sick music makes money today.
Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 - 1900)*

*The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, but wiser people so full of doubts.
Bertrand Russell (1872 - 1970)*

*Women need a reason to have sex. Men just need a place.
Billy Crystal (1947 -)*

*Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter
Martin Luther King Jr. (1929 - 1968)*

*Learning is not compulsory... neither is survival.
W. Edwards Deming (1900 - 1993)*