

Home » Interviews

A Review Of Talk About

Submitted by **Mike Reuther** on March 15, 2010 – 10:53 pm

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After listening to Mishka's new album, "Talk About," it is evident that this artist has an innate knack for creating music that is an amalgam of island and American influences (the same blend is also enjoyably inherent within his vernacular and accent as well). This is not overly surprising considering that Mishka grew up as a child of the Caribbean islands, and currently calls Bermuda home. However, he has also called London home and it is apparent that while his musical and physical roots are planted in the Caribbean, he has been exposed to more.

To say that one's music falls within the genre of 'reggae' can be a vague statement, at best.

Mishka's strain of reggae follows that of roots-reggae, the kind often well founded by a sauntering bass line that interacts with minimal – yet skillful – guitar and piano/organ playing to create a jovial groove with consistent inertia. The kind of timeless rhythms established by the esteemed practitioners of the past: Marley, Toots, Tosh, etc.

In all probability, Mishka could make solely "traditional" reggae songs, stop there, and be successful. Yet, as previously mentioned, he has been exposed to more and this can be heard within many of his songs on this album. Where Mishka's artistry shines is in his ability to delicately fuse the blues, acoustic singer/songwriter, or pop/rock with his base of thick-rooted reggae. To be sure, Mishka is not the first to do this, yet the adroit manner in which he can casually coalesce genres separates him from others.

It is in *Fallen to Rise* and *Music of the Moment* when one can best hear the fascinating and unique integration of a blues sound & sensibility seamlessly installed into reggae. The music never gets unduly complicated, and the way in which the emotive wailing of a melancholy electric guitar is fit within the timing of a reggae beat really is quite captivating. It may make one feel as if they are in a Chicago bar, and simultaneously on the beach in Montego Bay.

For *Can't Get Enough* and *Bittersweet* Mishka blends his reggae styles with more of a pop/rock influence to create a very toe-tapping and winsome sound. For *Shadow in the Shade* - maybe his best slow paced song on the album – he injects more of a singer/songwriter feel. In each instance he has created a sound that is highly accessible without being overly 'poppy.'

Mishka creates tunes that are wholly reggae as well. Some of the real highlights within "Talk About" are *Way out of Babylon*, *Talk About*, and *Dead End Street*. All three are first-rate, mid-tempo reggae numbers in which Mishka best employs two of his skills; one is his way of using keys (synth, piano or organ) together with guitars to hold a beat – relying less on the traditional drum set – the second, is the manner in which he employs his vocal styling to engage the listener. He has a very convivial voice, with an accent that pleasantly walks the line between island and American, and when he makes his voice a more pronounced and central part of the songs it is to his advantage (as is exemplified within those aforementioned tracks).

Overall, "Talk About" is an adept and gratifying exemplification of roots-reggae songs presented in varying contemporary styles, without ever becoming unorthodox or inaccessible in anyway. The album also carries with it veritably positive messages throughout the album, which only adds to the appeal of the music. This may be heard on such tracks as *Just Keep Living*, *Keep On Lovin'*, and *Music of the Moment*.

Mishka's reassuring optimism within his vocals comes across as wholly authentic and it also bleeds over into his music – a feat that reggae can accomplish like no other genre – to create for a very palpably sanguine energy. Combine that with the raw and inventive musicianship present throughout the album and it is clear that Mishka has created a record that reggae fans could "Talk About" for some time.

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