

It's not all One Love

Jamaica's musical infrastructure has been involved with politics from the very birth of reggae.

In 1955, a long time before he went into politics and became prime minister (1980 - 1989), a young Edward Seaga supervised an album of what was then called 'ethnic music' and this whetted his appetite to do more with music. He later produced sessions by Jamaican artists for more commercial recording organisations and founded his own label - West Indies Recording Limited. At one stage, Mr Seaga also managed the famous Byron Lee & The Dragonaires. In 1964, when Seaga became Jamaica's Head of Social Welfare and Economic Development, he arranged for the Byron Lee & The Dragonaires, Jimmy Cliff, Prince Buster, and Millie Small to travel to the New York World's Fair to promote Jamaica and showcase its talent. Duke Reid - the Trojan One of the most famous and pioneering Jamaican record producers, sound system operators, and record label owners in the 1950's was Arthur "Duke" Reid. He was an ex police officer. He went into the music business by hosting and sponsoring his own radio show on Radio Jamaica Rediffusion (RJR) in order to promote his shop 'The Treasure Isle Liquor Store'. And he named his radio show and record label after the store 'Treasure Isle'. One of his countless productions was 'The Tide is high' by The Paragons - which also went on to be a hit for American rock band Blondie in 1980 and British pop group Atomic Kitten in 2002. Duke Reid, named the Trojan so-called because of the British-manufactured 'Trojan' truck that transported his Sound System, had various record labels including the legendary Trojan Records. Marksman Duke Reid was said to be a tough character in the music business and his guns from his days as a police officer were ever present and always on show, ensuring no one messed with any of his business. Duke Reid was also known to hand out food to the poorer locals such as rice, flour, cornmeal, bread and peas every Sunday morning. Marley's role Probably the most famous example of Jamaican music and politics involves the King of Reggae Music himself - Bob Marley. In 1976, Bob Marley was due to appear at the Smile Jamaica Concert which was endorsed by the Cultural Department of Jamaica's Peoples National Party (PNP) government. Some opposing Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) members felt that Marley was supporting their political rivals in the upcoming elections. The rest is history - one day before the concert an attempt was made on Marley's life and, to date, no one has ever been accused or found guilty of the shooting. Although he was hurt in the arm and chest, and fearing for his life, Marley went ahead with the concert. After the show he immediately left Jamaica to fly to England. Eighteen months later, two reputed gangsters from rival political factions Claudius 'Claudie' Massop who supported the JLP and Aston 'Bucky' Marshall who supported the PNP decided that the best means to bring the country together was to use music as a uniting factor and organize a major concert. This was to become the famous One Love Concert. Here Bob Marley got then Prime Minister Michael Manley & his political rival Edward Seaga to hold hands on stage symbolizing unity. Bob Marley spent the rest of his life not only making music but trying to get the gangs to make peace. Tivoli 2010 For the people of Tivoli, the link between music and power has changed very little. Many DJ's report that they rent their sound systems from the gangs for street parties and other events. And the gang leaders are also expected to take the lead in patching up feuds on their turf. Sources have confirmed for BBC Caribbean that the recent end of the feud between dancehall artistes Vybz Kartel and Mavado had been brokered by none other than one Christopher Dudus Coke. The feud between the two controversial singers which led to fights between their supporters had led to their concerts being banned in three other Caribbean territories.- BBC Caribbean