

## Women who shaped Jamaican music

Throughout the history of Jamaican music you will find many women who played an integral part in shaping it, such as &hellip;

**Marcia Griffiths** She was probably the best known and most durable female personality in Jamaican music history.

Griffiths was also the most consistently successful artiste among women and is comparable to any man in what is considered a male-dominated field. Born in 1954, Griffiths' first exposure to the public came by way of an Easter morning show at the Carib theatre put on by Byron Lee and the Dragonaires. The enduring artiste was taken to the show by Phillip James of the Blues Busters duo. Her performance was of such quality that she ended up at Sir Clement 'Coxson' Dodd's Studio One, that same day where she did her first recording Wall of Love. The first hit, however, was Feel like Jumping, written by Bob Andy and arranged by Jackie Mittoo. Her follow-up hits, all written by Bob Andy, then flowed out of Studio One in a veritable deluge of consistency. Her biggest hit was her duet with Bob Andy, for producer Harvey J in 1971 which topped the United Kingdom charts - Young Gifted and Black. **Phyllis Dillon** Born on December 27, 1944 in Linstead, Jamaica, Phyllis Dillon honed her musical talents doing concerts in her hometown. While Griffiths had power and range, Dillon possessed melody. It can be argued that there was never a voice in Jamaican music so sweet and melodious. Her earliest exposure to the public came by way of performances with her hometown's Valcanos band as a teenager and later when she came to Kingston, at nightclubs there and in Half-Way Tree. She was introduced to producer Duke Reid's Treasurer Isle Label by guitarist Lynn Taitt and did her first hit (1966), her biggest, Don't Stay Away, said to be the best performance by a female in Jamaica's popular music. Other hits followed, including One Life to Live, Love That a Woman Can Give a Man, Perfidia and Don't Touch My Tomato. She died from cancer on April 15, 2004.

**Cynthia Schloss** Wife of noted musicologist Winston 'Merritone' Blake, Schloss got into the music business in 1972 when one of her friends and co-worker at the Jamaica Telephone Company tricked her into auditioning for the Merritone Talent series that took place at the Glass Bucket Club each week. She impressed the judges and she quickly rose to prominence with an array of love songs which included, Surround Me With Love, You Look Like Love, As If I Didn't Know, and her biggest hit, written by Harold Butler Love Forever. Schloss was a regular on both the local and overseas charts. Born on April 12, 1948, she died on February 25, 1999 at the age of 50. **Hortense Ellis** Born in Trench Town, Jamaica, in the early to mid-1940s, Ellis began her career performing on the Vere Johns Opportunity Talent shows, appearing in four finals. She was twice awarded the honour of Jamaica's best female vocalist (in 1964 and 1969). Operating under the shadows of her more illustrious brother Alton Ellis, Hortense managed to put out a number of recordings of creditable standard. Some of her early recordings included I Shall Sing and Brown Girl in the Ring for producer Ken Lack (1960), and I'll Own Softly, I'm Just a Girl and Why do Birds Follow Spring, among others. She also worked alongside Byron Lee's band towards the close of the decade; with Bunny Lee who recorded Down Town Ting and Natty Dread Time; and with producer Gussie Clarke for whom she recorded the very classic cut Unexpected Places, which demonstrated her expansive vocal range. **Millie Small** Millie was the first Jamaican artiste to create an international impact with a recording, and that recording was a remake of Margie Day's 1957 R&B hit My Boy Lollipop.

The song was recorded in early 1964 when Milly was just about 15 years old. Chris Blackwell soon took her to England to help set up his fledgling Island Recording Label. The song climbed to number one on the United Kingdom charts and literally opened a floodgate of opportunities for the many who followed. She could thus be regarded as one of the most important Jamaican artistes of that period. The song was arranged by guitar virtuoso Ernie Ranglin and was recorded in England, but was considered truly Jamaican. Small was, in fact, born in Clarendon, Jamaica, in the mid-1940s and first sang in a duet with Owen Greg on a recording titled Sugar Plum. She went on to record with Roy Panton on the ska piece We'll Meet and with Jackie Edward on a few cuts while she was in England. My Boy Lollipop also made the Australian charts, initially sold 600,000 copies in the UK, and has sold over seven million copies worldwide. **Adina Edwards** Little is known about Adina Edwards, except that she made a big impact with her gospel-tinged, 1972- Tommy Cowan-produced recording Don't Forget To Remember Me. She started her career as an inauspicious blind musical entertainer, who accepted collections for her performances on the streets until Byron Lee recorded that hit for her. **Enid Cumberland** One half of the duo of Keith and Enid who had probably the most popular and best remembered R&B recording during the ska era - Worried Over You, which climbed to number one on the Jamaican charts in 1960. The duo followed up with other R&B songs such as Send Me, It's Only a Pity, and What Have I Done, which somewhat represented a transition of Jamaican R&B and boogie into the ska beat. Enid, now in her 80s, became an ordained deacon in her later years. **Girl Satchmo** Acquired her name from the great Louis 'Satchmo' Armstrong who she imitated. Born Kentrist Fugan, she was originally a fish vendor, who got into the music business via the Vere Johns Opportunity Knocks talent shows at the Palace and Ambassador theatres. Her recording of Darling in the 1960s was a massive R&B hit with a Latin flavour. With the assistance of Vere Johns, she migrated to England and made some impression there, recording with some of Europe's top jazz bands, while doing other recordings in various genres. **Judy Mowatt** Born in Kingston in the early 1950s, she did some early recordings for producer Sonia Pottinger - I'm Alone, I love You and Too Good For Me. Later on she formed the group The Gaylettes and had the double-sided hits Silent River and I Like Your World. Possessing one of the best female voices in Jamaica, Mowatt, along with other members, backed many artistes of the day. She returned in the 1970s along with Rita Marley and Marcia Griffiths to do backing vocals for Bob Marley. She was one of the first, if not the first artiste to record at Bob Marley's Tuff Gong Studio in Kingston. One such session produced the album Black Woman. The album was Mowatt's production, the first time that a woman was combining as both artiste and producer. Her album Love is Overdue brought her a Grammy nomination, also the first for a Jamaican

woman. Sheila Hylton Born in London, England in 1956, Sheila Hylton moved to Jamaica at age three. Working at Total Sounds, she got exposed to music and had her debut in 1979 with Don't Ask My Neighbour. She followed up with Dusty Springfields' Breakfast in Bed for Lorna Bennett which became an international hit and The Bed's Too Big Without You.

Millicent Todd Better known as 'Patsy', Todd recorded during the ska and rocksteady eras in duet with Derrick Morgan and Stranger Cole. You Don't Know, better known as Housewives Choice, was probably her best known hit with Morgan during the ska era. Learn Not To Brag and Don't You Worry were also big hits for her along with Derrick during that period. With Stranger Cole, she recorded the very popular When I Call Your Name in 1962. She also recorded with Cole the cuts Tom, Dick and Harry, Yeah Yeah Baby and Come Back for Ken Khouri. As a solo act, she had the very inspiring Love Divine for producer Sonia Pottinger.

Doreen Schaffer Female vocalist with The Skatalites during the 1960s, Schaffer had two big hits for Studio One in duet with the Barbados-born Jackie Opel. Backed by The Skatalites, the songs were resounding pieces titled Welcome You Back Home and The Vow.

Rita Marley Born Alphonse Constantia Anderson in Cuba on July 25, 1946, she migrated to Jamaica and linked up with Sir Clement 'Coxson' Dodd's studio One. Wife of Reggae King Bob Marley, she recorded a number of hit with Coxson in addition to others for herself and other producers. She formed the Bob Marley Foundation and Trust to assist worthy causes, recorded in the early days with the group Soulettes consisting of her cousin Constantine Walker and Hortense Lewis. Her 1981 recording of One Draw was her most popular and was very popular during the 1980s. Rita, along with Judy Mowatt and Marcia Griffiths, known as the I-threes, harmoniously backed Bob Marley during his heyday with producer Chris Blackwell.

Pam Hall Has been recording since the mid-1970s and has had reasonable success. Coming from a musical family, her brother Raymond, and her sister Audrey are quite competent singers. She recorded You Should Never Do That with Tinga Stewart early in her career. Her recording of Hard To Be A Woman is still one of the best show ballads created in Jamaica.

Lorna Bennett Born in the early 1950s, Lorna Bennett will always be remembered for her 1972 hit Breakfast In Bed. She began her career singing in nightclubs, and on one occasion, producer Harry J, spotting her talent, requested that she make a recording of that song. This she did and the rest was history. She followed up with the Dixie Cup's Chapel of Love and Other Woman, her own composition.

Sophia George The words of probably her only hit Girlie Girlie were on the lips of almost every music lover in Jamaica in 1985.

Carlene Davis Now a Christian and a singer of gospel, Carlene Davis showcased quite an impressive output, while she sang secular music. Her music was mostly produced by her husband, renowned producer/promoter/vocalist, Tommy Cowan. Davis became a very popular draw at dances and stage shows as she displayed such hits as The First Word In Memory Is Me arranged and produced by Willie Lindo, Reggae Rebel, Like Old Friends Do, Stealing Love and Going Ddown to Paradise, the last three appearing on the very impressive album titled Paradise. Born on February 23 1953, she was probably the most consistent voice in reggae music.

Norma Frazer Became known through her hit recording The First Cut Is The Deepest, done in 1967 for producer Sir Clement 'Coxson' Dodd. She made her first record in duet with Trinidad-born singer Lord Creator, titled We Will Be Lovers in 1961. The song, written by Creator for Norma to sing solo, was transformed into a duet when Creator said she couldn't manage all on her own. She was voted the Best Female Newcomer in the United Kingdom in 1967.

Tanya Stephens Born in Jamaica in 1973, she came into the recording business in the early 1990s and by 1996 her career was in full swing. She was critically acclaimed at Sting in 1995 and at the Penthouse showcase. She then recorded an album of risqué material and had a number of successful singles including Hang Up The Phone, Man Fi Rule, Big Heavy Gal, Nuff Man Flop and Work Out. Her best works were captured on two albums Gangsta Blues and Rebelution.

J.C. Lodge (June Carol Lodge) She made a very dramatic entry on the music scene alongside producer Joe Gibbs in the early '80s with a version of the Charlie Pride country and western song Someone Loved You Honey. It went straight to the top of the charts, Gibbs, however, got into a legal wrangle with the authors. Her follow-up More Than Words Can Say wasn't as successful. Her biggest was the 1988 Telephone Love for producer Gussie Clarke, which also topped the charts in Jamaica and in the United States. The rhythm of the song became very popular and was used extensively. In the process, she secured a contract with the overseas Warner Brothers subsidiary Tommy Boy, becoming the first female reggae artiste to secure a major contract with an overseas label.

Nadine Sutherland She appeared on the Jamaica music scene as a teenager in the early 1980s. She was born in 1968 into an education conscious family who tried to balance her entertainment career with her education. She pursued and was successful in the area of business administration. She did her early recordings for Bob Marley's Tuff Gong label, the best remembered cut being Until in 1984, written by Willie Lindo. Prior to this, she gained worthwhile exposure and experience abroad, performing alongside the Marley family. The remainder of the 1980s saw her putting out moderate hits that failed to make an impression on the reggae charts. During the early '90s, she worked with producer Donovan Germain at Penthouse studios. Her 1993 hit with Terror Fabulous Action was used by the Jamaica Labour Party to help bolster their political campaign even without her permission. After years, she became a noted musicologist, having been elevated to the status of a judge for the very popular 'Rising Stars' competition.

Olive Lewin, OD Born in 1927 is an anthropologist, teacher, author of several books, and is noted for having recorded anthologies of old Jamaican folk songs. She studied music and ethnomusicology in the United Kingdom and held several top positions with Government in the fields of art and culture.

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