

Ska, reggae music icon, Pat Kelly on a mini tour

In an effort to safeguard Ska, Rocksteady and early Reggae, Pat Kelly will be launching a mini tour of Southern California and Mexico,

with stops at the elegant Los Globos Night Club, at 3040 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles California 90026, August 25th; Leon Negro Bar, Tijuana, Mexico, August 31st; The Ramona Bowl, Hermit, September 1st; and The Mighty Quinn concert, Mexico City, on September 8th.

Profile of Pat Kelly

Pat Kelly was born and raised in the Reggae Mecca of the world, Kingston, Jamaica on September 6. Upon completion of his studies in Jamaica, he migrated to Springfield, Massachusetts, United States where he studied electronic engineering. Pat was not particularly keen on living outside of Jamaica, subsequently, after obtaining his degree, he returned to the Island.

In 1967 when Rocksteady was at its zenith, lead vocalist extraordinaire and composer Keith Smith & Slim Smith parted ways with The Techniques. Needless to say his departure created a mammoth vacuum in the group subsequently, Kelly was invited by Winston Riley a member of the group to replace Slim. Although Pat never sang in public prior to, without hesitation and with great confidence he willingly accepted the invitation. After rehearsing with the group, Winston Riley, unbendable on maintaining the massive success that The Techniques had enjoyed with Smith, used his connection with Treasure Isle label head Arthur "Duke" Reid, to secure a recording session at Reid's Treasure Isle Recording studio located at 33 Bond Street, Kingston, Jamaica.

This was a particularly celebrated era in the chronological evolution of Jamaican music. In fact, at that time Treasure Isle label was the supreme leader dominating Jamaican music scoring hits after hits with The Paragons, The Melodians, The Tree Tops, The Silvertones, and solo acts the likes of Dobby Dobson, Alton Ellis, Phyllis Dillon to name a few. With Kelly's sweet and majestic falsetto supplying the lead vocals, the Techniques which consisted of Pat Kelly, Winston Riley and Bruce Ruffin were ready for the immense global stage once more. Their first recording was an absolute 'made to order' for the group retitled 'You Don't Care', popularized by the American R&B giant Curtis Mayfield. The Mayfield's cut was entitled 'You'll Want Me Back'. The song slaughtered both RJR and JBC the Islands two radio stations at the time, spending an unchallenged six weeks at the number one position. Having found the winning formula, their follow up was another Curtis Mayfield sleeping classic, "Queen Majesty", which impacted the local charts with just as much force. More hits followed such as "My Girl", "Love Is Not a Gamble", and "Run Come Celebrate", their entry to the Jamaican Festival competition in 1968.

Solo career

In 1968 Pat Kelly was fully ready to launch his solo career. His choice favorite producer was the relatively new up and coming, Edward O'Sullivan Lee, better known as Bunny "Striker" Lee, who had risen to prominence in 1967, scoring hits with the likes of Roy Shirley's brother in law, Derrick Morgan, Wilburn Theodore Cole, 'Stranger Cole' and Delroy Wilson to name a few. Lee was challenging the old guards Duke Reid, Clement Seymour "Sir Coxsone" Dodd, Leslie Kong, Joel A. Gibbs, 'Joe Gibbs', Vincent Randy Chin, 'Randys', and the only female producer at the time, Sonia Eloise Pottinger OD, the leading producers of the Rocksteady era.

When Kelly went solo, his debut single for Lee was another Mayfield composition 'Little Boy Blue'. The follow up was the earth shattering self penned 'How Long Will It Take'. Not surprising the later became the largest-selling Jamaican single of 1969. Pat was on a roll! Further hits included 'Try To Remember', and 'How Long'. In addition to recording for Bunny Lee, he made recordings for Rainford Hugh Perry, Lee "Scratch" Perry, and his old boss, The Duke scoring the hit single 'Sunshine'; a John Denver cover, and the Phil Pratt produced 'Talk About Love' which many pundits have referred to as his best effort to date.

Having focused much of his energy up to this juncture on singing, Kelly decided to return to his first love, studio engineering, thus taking a job in the producer's hot seat at Channel One Studio. One of his production was his self produced 'Youth and Youth' album which appeared in 1978. He went on to co-produce 'The Impassible' with former label mate John Holt in 1979. Although his output has dropped significantly, he was never at a standstill. In point of fact, he still records periodically and tours regularly to diverse places such as the US, Europe, US and Brazil.