



BimSkalaBim

Okay, here goes! It was May 7, 1989, 6 Feet Under (lp out soon), Panic, and the almighty BimSkalaBim played @ City Gardens (Trenton NJ). Last time I saw the BIMs was opening for Sister Carol. My goal this time was to work up a sweat, then interview! The sweat was no problem, and I later talked to Jackie, and earlier to John, mostly about Operation Ivy and a band called Freedom Of Expression, who I saw a few years back. Anyway they agreed the best time for the interview would be after the gig, though they'd be tired and it'd be a bit chaotic. Side note, City Gardens runs a tight ship, leaving basically no time between bands, which is great for the audience but terrible for potential interviewers. After the show, and after spending much time searching for an outlet (for me to plug the tape recorder into), the interview began, with Jackie supplying most of the answers....

SKA ' RECORDS

FOE Is the line-up that recorded "Tuba City" the same line-up that played tonite?

Jackie Yup, Jim Arhelger-drums, Rick Barry-percussion, John Cameron-keyboards & alto sax, Mark Ferranti-bass, Vito Incognito-trombone & vocals, Jim Jones-vocals & guitars, Jackie Starr-vocals, and Shanty Dan Vitale-vocals.

FOE Why is the new lp called "Tuba City"?

Jackie On our first tour we played Tuba City Arizona, its a Hopi/Navajo reservation, its really nice there. We had a friend there who taught at the high school, it was quite a trip.

FOE How do you keep such a large group of people together? Its tough enough to keep a typical 3-5 piece together!

Jackie Its hard. Theres times when some of us hate each other, but you get over it. You have to realize that we're all in this for the same thing.



We all like to play music, we all like what we do and we're not going to let a little thing come between us. Its not like its major, if it was a major thing, then it might break us up, but it hasn't yet. We all get along pretty well. A lot of times they're like brothers to me, they care about me, It's really nice.

FOE Time heals most wounds...

Jackie Yeah, we all usually do for each other as much as possible. When we get on each others nerves, we just stay away from each other, instead of butting heads against each other.

FOE Both of your lps are released on British labels.

Jackie Yeah, the first one we put out ourselves on our own label, Phonograph, and then it also came out in England, with a different cover, on Oi Records.

FOE Record sales-wise, do you find them doing better in the US or over there?

Jackie Actually, all over europe its been great, we've had a lot of sales, its been sold out. The second record already came out over ther a long time ago. The record company over here, Celluloid, hasn't put it out yet.

FOE So it is on a US label then, not just as an import.

Jackie Yeah, right, it should be out now, it was supposed to be a long time ago!



ON THE EDGE OF A KNIFE

FOE Have you ever played in Europe?
Jackie Yeah, we've played with Bad Manners. There was a ska festival. We did a whole tour. (At this time my power was cut, someone threw the breaker so I had to go downstairs and politely ask the man in charge for the power to be reinstated! Such is the life of an interviewer with dead batteries and no electricity! It took awhile for me to notice this, we were talking about how/if there's a mix at BimSkalaBim shows. Whether its ska fans or a mix of HC, noise, whatever. Conclusion: in Boston, (where BSB is from) its pretty much segregated, but elsewhere theres usually a mix. HC has changed in Boston. On with what was on the tape...!)

FOE How'd you get Roland Alphonso to play on the new lp?

Jackie We played with the Skatalites in Boston, and we met them and they were really nice guys. We met Lloyd Knibbs and they were really sweet. And we asked them to play on our lp and he was really excited about it and he was like "yeah yeah yeah"! And we met Coxsonne Dodd and were at his "Studio One" in Brooklyn. He told us to keep going, let the tradition keep going, ska music! (Note Roland Alphonso's tracks were recorded @ Studio One)

FOE Its great to have such a boost like that, I'm sure that was a good motivator
Jackie Oh sure, it was incredible being at Studio One, even though it wasn't in Jamaica, still, Coxsonne Dodd, Roland Alphonso, are incredible!

FOE When ska sorta got big in the early 80's, got to major label status, it then after a few years kinda died out, do you think, do you forsee major labels getting interested in bands like yourself?

Jackie I think they're afraid to get involved with bands like ourselves. I don't know.

I think the music industry is kind of, they decide what the trend is going to be (ed note: kind of like how lps are being eliminated) and they set...they'll take a band and mold it, instead of pushing raw talent. They sort of make some things. I won't mention what bands/people I'm talking about.

FOE I guess that might have contributed to it phasing out...

Jackie Probably. They want like the whole world to buy the records, they want to play it somuch on the radio its like brainwashing. I know this song, I know all the words to this song, now I'm going to buy the record. There's so many great college stations, and fanzines and little magazine things that are great, and I think that the whole underground thing is a seperate thing than from the commercial big time label type things. Its like theres two different phases of the music industry, you don't have to go major label.

FOE Would you go if they asked you?

Jackie It depends...

FOE Isn't Celluloid a pretty decent "indie" label? You'll get the distribution...

Jackie I hope!

FOE About that compilation you were talking about, during your set...

Jackie we put out compilations quite a bit, the band has a seperate record label...

FOE The label your first album came out on?

Jackie Actually no, theres another one called Razorbeat, its picking up other bands, there's one Boston comp called "Mash it up", this one here is from all over the USA. Bands we've met and have sent us tapes. Its called "Mash it up; The Nation". And they are also released in Europe. Theres other compilations we're on, we're on many records.

Vito (comes strolling in...) Hey you sat on my glasses!

Jackie Ooops...so Vin, tell him something!
Vito what do you want to know?

FOE I don't know? Tell me about the other band you are in (Geez I really did miss a lot when the power was shot! Cuz Jackie was also telling me about the band Vito's in and past bands people were in like I remember her saying about the drummer being in other bands...yeah well...)



Jackie Starr (Vocals) and Vito Incognito (Trombone).

BIM

Vito We do Yugoslavian, and Bulgarian; odd ethnic kind of music, stuff from Pakistan....

Some Unknown Person World beat...

Jackie Its not like World beat though, its a whole brass band...

Vito Yeah, its a brass band, 2 trombones, (I couldn't make out the rest of the line up cuz of too much noise coming from this unknown person's mouth)...and a sax.

FOE Did you develop your trombone playing from just high school?

Vito Actually since the 3rd grade, this year marked the 20th year of trombone playing for me!

FOE Now we can figure out how old you are.

Vito Yeah, I'm 48....

SKA

OK and thats that, BIMSKALABIM were off to eat pot roast at someone's mothers house... Some other notes: BIMSKALABIM were fantastic live, they will be touring the US and Europe with Bad Manners in the Summer 89. And BIMSKALABIM was playing with De La Soul soon in DC Damn that'd be KING!!!

LABIM

SKA RECORDS

I was first introduced to ska about the same time I was introduced to Hardcore/punk, (early 80's). The soundtrack from the movie Dance Craze, still holds a strong spot in my record collection, ranking as a true classic! With the Specials, English Beat, Bad Manners, Selecter, Bodysnatchers, and of course Madness, all contributing tracks to the lp what more could one ask for! Many of these bands also put out great lps, but thank God for "Dance Craze" else I might have been saying who's Bad Manners in the BIMSKALABIM interview!!!

Another compilation that further engulfed me in the ska sounds was "This Are Two Tone", which has just been reissued, at least thats what I perceived it as, same songs-different cover. The liner notes on the jacket sleeve, done by Adrian Thrills, probably said it best for why I like this music when he said "...Combining the energy of punk with the rhythms of Jamaican ska..."

If you are interested in the predecessor to the early 80's late 70's ska sounds, get a hold of the RAS catalog, P.O.Box 42517, Washington DC 20015. The origins of ska go back to the late 50's in Jamaica (so says Ras, a reliable source!). they've got stuff (mailorder dude!) by the likes of the Skatalites (60's), who also have a cassette available from ROIR, 611 Broadway, Suite 725, NY NY 10012. RAS also has several compilations available as well as material by Toots and the Maytals, Don Drummond, and Roland Alphonso (who plays sax on the current BIMSKALABIM lp "Tuba City"). As far as current ska, where are we at today??.....

YOW! Its like a prayer was answered! Once again ska is back! I don't know if it was ever gone, but geez, I hadn't heard anything for so long! No more Madness, English Beat even, what happened? I even got to writting to Becca of BYO in early 87 to see if he knew of any current ska, or anything I didn't own, such as stuff by the band the Hoovers, who I thought were from his neck of the woods. Anyhow I'm still looking for Hoovers' records!

COMMON BLUE BEAT