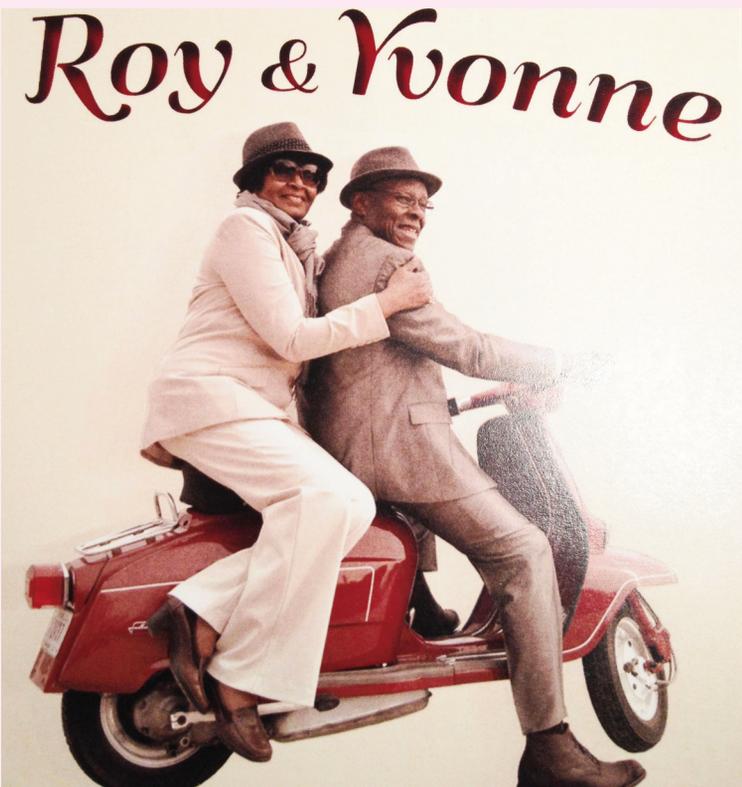


# Roy and Yvonne:

## One of Jamaica's Best Kept Secret



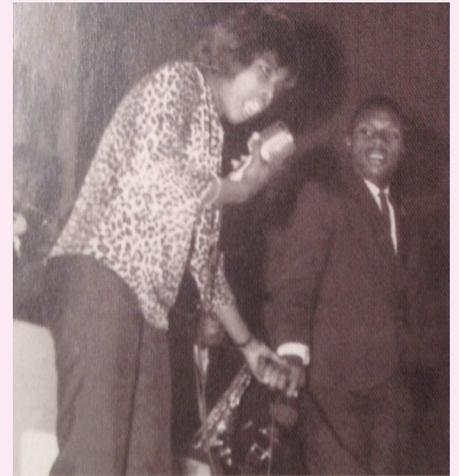
When it comes to music and Jamaica, everyone knows Bob Marley, Beenie Man, Barrington Levy and Toots and the Maytals but there's another gem to add to this group – the duo of Roy Panton and Yvonne Harrison. These talented singers have been performing since the late 1950's/early 1960's. The Vinyl Record Collectors Association's (VRCA) board members representing Toronto, Delroy Messam and Phillip "Marco" Davis had the privilege of sitting down with them recently for an interesting chat and shared in a bit of nostalgia.



went to Beverly's where he connected with Eric "Monte"

Roy's singing career began in 1958 when he did his first recording with Stranger Cole. Early recordings "Freedom Land" and "Adam and Eve" were done for the iconic Duke Reid. The latter song was released with a different title - "Come and Hold my Hand", on which the artistes were listed as Willburn Cole and Roy. He then

Morris, another great from that era. They recorded two songs as the duo known as Monte Morris and Roy Panton (or Monte Morris and Roy). Before recording with Yvonne, Roy did recordings with Millie Small - of my Boy Lollipop fame. One of their most popular songs was "We'll Meet". The pair collaborated over a two-year period doing a number of other songs.



Millie Small & Roy Panton

Yvonne began her singing career with her first recording being with her cousin Derek Morgan. Other duo recordings were to follow with popular male artistes including Lloyd Clarke, Lascelles Perkins, Prince Buster, Lord Tanamo and Clancy Eccles. Yvonne was very much in demand on stage touring the island with the very popular Byron Lee.



Her versatile talent led to appearances in local theatre Pantomime (an annual musical play that still exists in Jamaica today). She performed in multiple roles as a beauty queen; a villager and a revivalist in the Pantomime play Anansi and Doumbey.

In 1964 Roy met Yvonne and the rest, as they say is history. They exclusively recorded songs for Tip-Top (a recording centre) and also recorded a song with Prince Buster. Before solidifying a duo career with Yvonne, Roy recalls recording music with two other female singers; Annette Clarke and Patsy. He also reminisced about a recording he did with Rita Marley which unfortunately was not released. Roy and Yvonne's first album they put together was called "Roy and Yvonne with Friends". The pair separated when Roy moved to Canada and Yvonne then embarked on a solo career.

An intriguing part of their story is their memories of live performances in Jamaica. Roy remembers that in some theatres there was no dressing room. “In the country there was no dressing room, you had to change behind the stage and for the girls you had to hold up a little screen”. Yvonne reminisced that, “even though it was primitive, we just loved working” and for Roy, “money was not the object”.

The initial steps towards their European successes began with manager Mark Moralis from L.A. who wanted to put on a show and contacted Roy through Facebook (social media is a powerful thing). At the time he was unaware that Roy and Yvonne and Roy came as a package deal, needless to say he was elated that he had gotten two for one! They were then introduced to Manny Manola who was interested in managing them. In 2013, after being away from the stage for more than 25 years, they performed their first show in Mexico. After such a long hiatus in order to get back into the business and to reintroduce their music on the European market, the duo did a compilation album. Their first European show was in Spain. “When we went to Spain we did many interviews” recalls Yvonne “and that opened doors as it was the early Ska (that) they were interested in”. Roy recalls that “the first place we performed was called Benny Cassin”. In June 2014 they returned to Spain and then traveled to Germany.

Currently, the duo has a strong European fan base; where Ska music is very popular---even more popular than in Jamaica. Roy chuckles, “all the fans are young adults, we’re senior citizens and the crowds are huge”.



Yvonne Harrison

At each performance, they do no less than 15 songs. “The crowds in these places, make you come alive”, says Yvonne. “You don’t have to sing, just hold the microphone, they’ll sing for you”. Roy adds, “In Mexico, I was pleasantly surprised as you know they speak Spanish and they are all young adults and you don’t expect to be singing English songs and they would be singing along with us. It was an awesome experience”. Roy proudly commented “In Mexico, the song “Endless Memory” is like a national anthem”.

Although their last visit to Jamaica was in 1984, a search of the Internet reveals just how instrumental they have been (and continue to be) on the Ska music scene. Roy and Yvonne’s most recent album, “Moving On” was released in 2014 and in October 2015, the pair will embark on a 10-day tour of Germany.

What is so fascinating and inspiring about Roy and Yvonne is how their love of music has transcended across geographical boundaries and touched the lives of the young and the old for so many years. With all their success, they remain genuinely humble. Though they went on separate paths for nearly 30 years, it was faith that brought them back together again. In 2011, the couple made their association an “official duo” when they tied the knot in a quaint ceremony witnessed by family and friends in the Bahamas. According to Yvonne, “he’s my friend, he’s my husband, and he’s my singing partner. He’s the whole package and if I didn’t come here (to Canada) I would not be singing -nor would he, and it’s the best thing that’s happened to me”.